THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON

TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON, HEBREWS, ST. JAMES

THE

Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS

New York
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1896

A

HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE TO TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON

BY

REV. GEORGE BARLOW

ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

AND

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES

BY

REV. ROBERT TUCK, B.A. (LOND.)

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THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

INTRODUCTION.

Timothy was the son of a Christian Jewess named Eunice and a Greek whose name is unknown. Though nothing can be said definitely as to the place of his birth, Acts xvi. 1 would seem to indicate that it was Lystra or some place in the immediate neighbourhood. There St. Paul first made his acquaintance, when he was already a disciple. Paul, after circumcising him by way of expedient, adopted him as his fellow-worker. They journeyed together through Asia Minor to Philippi. At Berœa we find them together again. Thence he followed St. Paul to Athens, and was sent on to Thessalonica; and having fulfilled his mission there, returned to St. Paul at Corinth. He was with the apostle during his residence in Ephesus, and also when the epistles to the Corinthians and Romans were written. When St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome, Timothy was still with him. The apostle's high regard for his junior is evident in many ways. Though of frail health, he was the true child of an indomitable father in the gospel who had "no other like-minded."

Date and circumstances of writing the epistle.—Considering (*a*) the close resemblances of the Pastorals, it seems incredible that they are separated by any long intervals of time. (*b*) The almost insuperable difficulties of fitting them into the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. (*c*) The even greater difficulty of harmonising their notes of time and place with those mentioned by St. Luke. Add to these (*d*) the peculiar and developed character of the

false teachers and teaching alluded to in these epistles, and (*e*) the advanced Church organisation which they specify—and from all this it would seem impossible to refuse the ancient tradition that St. Paul was twice imprisoned at Rome, or to refuse the simple reasonable and highly natural opinion that the Pastorals are to be assigned to the period between these two imprisonments, about A.D. 66 or 67 (*Ellicott*).

Contents of the first epistle.—The epistle passes from subject to subject with all the ease and familiarity of a private communication written by an old man to a favourite disciple (*Farrar*).

Ch. i. 1—2. Greeting.
3—7. Warning against theosophic Judaism.
8—14. Sphere of the law, and thanksgiving for grace.
15—20. Personal relations to that grace of Paul, Timothy, and men like Hymenæus.
Ch. ii. 1—3. Prayers enjoined for authorities.
4—7. Universality of God's gracious purpose.
8—15. Public prayers of men and women.
Ch. iii. 1—7. The ideal overseer of the Church.
8—13. Qualifications of deacons and deaconesses.
14—16. Personal message to Timothy and a rhythmic confession.
Ch. iv. 1—16. Timothy's attitude to the current speculations.
Ch. v. 1—16. His attitude to his elders, to widows, especially the younger ones.
17—19. Treatment of the presbyters.
20—22. Treatment of offenders.
23—25. Personal directions—the different kinds of sin.
Ch. vi. 1—2. Relationship of slaves to believing masters.
3—10. Insolence and avarice of the heterodox teachers.
11—16. Solemn command to Timothy (*a*) concerning himself.
17—19. (*b*) Concerning the well-to-do.
20—21. Final cautions against pernicious error.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **By the commandment.**—The usual expression has been "by the will of God." There is a perceptible ring of austerity about the word for "commandment." Paul is an apostle in accordance with the behest of God. **God our Saviour.**—A designation not often found outside the Pastoral epistles in the New Testament, but frequent in the Old Testament. **Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.**—R.V. "Christ Jesus our hope." Not only the object of it, nor the author of it, but its very substance and foundation; "in eo solo residet tota salutis nostræ materia" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 2. **Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith.**—R.V. "my true child in faith." Every part of the appositional member has its complete significance. "Son" denotes the affectionate as well as spiritual nature of the connection. "Own" specifies the genuineness and reality of it. "In faith" marks the sphere in which such a connection is alone felt and realised (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 3. **Charge some that they teach no other doctrine.**—R.V. "charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine." It is doctrine that differs in quality that was not to be taught. In his impassioned address to the Galatians St. Paul would anathematise "even an angel from heaven" who should dare to proclaim another gospel, "'different,' from its commixture with an unedifying, vain, and morbid theosophy."

Ver. 4. **Fables and endless genealogies.**—Rabbinical fables and fabrications, whether in history or doctrine—these, according to Ellicott, are the fables, and the genealogies are to be taken in the proper sense with which, however, these wilder speculations were very probably combined. Most modern commentators refer the terms to the spiritual myths and emanations of Gnosticism. **The which minister questions.**—The wordy wars in which the Christian community would be involved by these genealogies would be as long as they themselves, and as vacuous. **Godly edifying.**—R.V. "a dispensation of God." The A.V. is an impossible rendering of the word from which our "economy" comes. The translators followed another reading, and the Vulgate "ædificationem."

Ver. 5. **The end of the commandment.**—The end is not the same thing as the fulfilment of the law. It is the goal towards which, with strenuous endeavour, each Christian must press on. "Commandment" (R.V. "charge") is the monitory teaching—a touch of severity clings to the word from the old "economy." **Unfeigned.**—So of "love" (Rom. xii. 9); of "wisdom from above" (Jas. iii. 17) (without hypocrisy).

Ver. 6. **Some having swerved.**—Margin, "not aiming at." R.V. margin, "Gr. missed the mark." This metaphor was suggested, probably, by the word for "end" in ver. 5. Compare St. Paul's graphic word to the Galatians, "You were running gallantly: what sudden spell has been laid upon you?" **Have turned aside.**—The figure is that of the racer who breaks away from the prescribed course. **Unto vain jangling.**—R.V. "vain talking." The Pastoral epistles more than once warn against this fault (Tit. i. 10, iii. 9).

Ver. 7. **Desiring to be teachers of the law.**—The R.V. also gives the same rendering. Perhaps we might note that it is not so much a wish as a determination. They would be legalists. **Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.**—They neither see the significance of the words they use, nor do they know anything of the subjects they profess to teach. St. Paul knew too much of Judaism to be imposed on by a parade of phrases. Here, as so often, loud and positive assertion makes up for the lack of profounder knowledge.

Ver. 8. **We know that the law is good.**—The "grace and truth" which "came by Jesus Christ" did not abrogate the law. That law had a moral excellence, was indeed an admirable thing, provided that it was used legitimately.

Ver. 9. **The law is not made for.**—As we say "is not laid down." The vices which follow are enumerated first under terms more general, and then more specific. **Lawless and**

disobedient.—R.V. "lawless and unruly." Both imply opposition to law—the former a more passive disregard of it, the latter a more active violation of it arising from a refractory will (*Ellicott*). **For the ungodly and for sinners.**—This second pair of terms points to want of reverence for God, the third to want of inner purity and holiness, the fourth to want of even the commonest feeling (*ibid.*). **Murderers of fathers . . . mothers.**—So R.V., but margin, "smiters." This seems to soften the word; but if the blow should prove fatal, the crime of manslaughter is aggravated by a parent's death.

Ver. 10. **If there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.**—St. Paul has followed the order of the commandments, making them all bear on human relationships.

Ver. 11. **According to the gospel.**—The gospel is more stern than the law against such deeds.

Ver. 12. **He counted me faithful.**—For the very reason that he had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," the Jerusalem Christians looked askance at him when he was introduced as a brother; Ananias at Damascus thought his penitence a ruse, and Paul himself does not complain of the mistrust (Acts xxii. 19); but the grace of God that treats him as trustworthy fills him with thankfulness.

Ver. 13. **A blasphemer.**—In the general acceptation of the word. He was one who would say vehemently, "Jesus anathema!" (1 Cor. xii. 3). To revile the name of Christ—as the martyrs were asked to do—was to blaspheme. **A persecutor.**—Lit. one who pursues another. **And injurious.**—One who does not content himself with an anathema, but proceeds to personal violence. **I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**—The Saviour had intimated that blind rage would confuse the murder of men whose only crime was belief in Christ with a sacrifice to God. Our Lord does not regard ignorance as sufficient excuse, but asks that the ignorant be forgiven (Luke xxiii. 34). So St. Paul says he obtained mercy—was dealt with leniently.

Ver. 14. **And the grace . . . and love.**—The full sense is: "[And not only was I pardoned,] but the grace of our Lord so superabounded [beyond my deserts] that I was also brought to believe in and love Jesus Christ whom I had blasphemed" (*Blomfield*).

Ver. 15. **This is a faithful saying.**—R.V. "Faithful is the word." This expression, with variations, occurs five times in the Pastoral epistles, and probably was used in a liturgical manner. Compare 1 Kings x. 6; Rev. xxi. 5, xxii. 6. **Of all. acceptation.**—An excellent translation (*Ellicott*). **Came into the world to save sinners.**—Not to be limited to the sense—His mission in life was to rescue sinners. Many scriptures remind us that the purpose was not formed when Christ found Himself surrounded by sinners, but before. **Of whom I am chief.**—To explain away the force of this expression is seriously to miss the strong current of feeling with which even in terms of seeming hyperbole the apostle ever alludes to his conversion and his state preceding it (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 16. **Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy.**—The "howbeit" is the same word as "but" in ver. 13, which the R.V. gives as here. It marks the contrast between the apostle's own judgment on himself and the mercy which God was pleased to show him.

Ver. 17. **Immortal.**—R.V. "incorruptible": an epithet only found in union with God in Rom. i. 23, besides this place. **The only wise God.**—R.V. drops "wise," on the overwhelming authority of the MSS.

Ver. 18. **Prophecies which went before on thee.**—The prophecies went forward, as it were the heralds and avant-couriers of the actions which they foretold (*Ellicott*). See iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 16. **Thou by them mightest war a good warfare.**—A frequent metaphor of St. Paul's. He would have his young friend to be as loyal

> "unto his Captain Christ,
> Under whose colours he had fought so long,"

as he had been himself.

Ver. 19. **Holding faith, and a good conscience.**—The shield of faith is to cover a pure heart.

> "He is but naked, though locked up in steel,
> Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

Which some having put away.—The apostle means that they have found the protests of conscience so irritating that they have, so to say, taken it up with violence and flung it far out of doors.

Ver. 20. **I have delivered unto Satan.**—A form of Christian excommunication declaring the person to be reduced to the state of a heathen, accompanied with the authoritative infliction of bodily disease or death (*Ellicott*, after Waterland). **That they may learn.**—R.V. "may be taught," *i.e.* by punishment.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

Apostolic Greeting.

I. **Asserts the Divine source and authority of the apostleship of the writer.**—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope" (ver. 1). It was not necessary to assure Timothy of his apostleship; but Paul had others in view to whom this epistle might be read, and for his own sake and Timothy's he set forth His Divine call. No man can make himself an apostle or a minister of the gospel. This is God's work, and whom He calls He charges with full authority to proclaim the truth. The responsibilities of the preacher are so great, and the difficulties of his work so perplexing and oppressive, that nothing short of a profound consciousness of his Divine commission can sustain him. The apostle recognises the united action of God the Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ in his appointment; and without any argument—for the fact to him was beyond the necessity of argument—he states the Divinity of Christ and His equality of nature with the Father. Both were as one in the work of salvation, and in a beautiful and suggestive expression he designates Christ as "our hope." The hope of salvation which dawned upon men by the manifestation of Christ becomes a blessed reality to all who believe in Him.

II. **Addressed to one standing in a special relation to the writer.**—"Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith" (ver. 2). It was through the instrumentality of Paul that Timothy was brought to accept the gospel, and a friendship between the two then began which deepened in affection as the years rolled on, notwithstanding their disparity in age. It was a friendship as intimate and as dear as that which mutually exists between father and son. In this case, so different in other friendships, it was the aged one who had the enthusiasm and enterprise, and the younger one the timidity and reflective reserve: yet the one was the complement and true helpmeet of the other. It is not easy to say which gained most from the affection and devotion of the other. Timothy's indebtedness to Paul was great; but few men could have supplied the apostle's needs as Timothy did. The craving for sympathy so often disclosed in the writings of Paul found a loving response in the sensitive and thoughtful nature of Timothy. The young and capable evangelist entered appreciatively into the ideas and plans of the apostle, and with willing obedience and heroic fortitude helped to carry them out.

III. **Supplicates the bestowment of Divine blessings.**—"Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord" (ver. 2). From the same source as salvation come the blessings of grace, mercy, and peace—the results and evidences of salvation. To the accustomed formula of the apostle, "grace and peace," he now adds "mercy"—an internal evidence of the genuineness of the epistle. "Grace, mercy, and peace illustrate the character of the gospel as essentially different not only from the law, but from every merely human and philosophic system of religion. All grace, mercy, and peace which God can bestow come to us only through and in communion with His Son. We may call grace the highest good for the godly, mercy for the suffering, and peace for the struggling disciple. In its harmony this ravishing threefold chord expresses all the spiritual gifts which the Christian should ask for himself and his brethren" (*Lange*).

Lessons.—1. *Ministerial qualification and authority are from God.* 2. *The minister has a tender regard for those he brought to Christ.* 3. *The work of the ministry is beset with difficulties.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3, 4.

A Difficult Pastoral Charge.

I. **A sphere of active and distracting heresies.**—"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith" (ver 4). The Gnostic problem was now beginning to manifest itself, and to mingle with the development of the gospel. The heresy spread with marvellous rapidity between A.D. 70 and 220; and Eusebius tells us that "as soon as the apostles and those who had listened to them with their own ears had passed away, the conspiracy of godless error took its rise through the deceit of false teachers, who endeavoured with brazen face to preach their knowledge falsely so called in opposition to the preaching of the truth." The Gnostic theory was that matter is eternal and that evil resides inherently in matter, so that there were two coeternal existences—God and matter. This theory afterwards developed the creed that there are two coeternal and coequal powers—good and evil; and the doctrine of emanations from the supreme God of a series of inferior deities, the last being regarded as the creator of the world. Here was scope for the "fables and endless genealogies" which the apostle condemns and against which he warns Timothy. The existence of these confusing errors, which were rife in Ephesus, rendered the position of the young pastor both delicate and difficult. Not less difficult and anxious is the relation of the minister to modern speculations and doubts. The activity of the propagators of false ethics, of scepticism, theosophy, agnosticism, materialism, and a crude unformed socialism in the present day, creates concern in the breast of the earnest preacher of the gospel.

II. **Requiring caution and fidelity in enforcing the true doctrine.**—"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus . . . that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine . . . so do" (vers. 3, 4). The apostle's specific for the errors of that day was not to advertise and spread them by injudicious controversy, but to teach with the more care and faithfulness "no other doctrine" than the gospel of Christ. Error must be slain by a clearer and more emphatic statement of the truth, of which it is a distortion and caricature. The same method is applicable to the times in which we live. The modern preacher must know and therefore study the theories of unbelief, however wild and extravagant they may seem, and much as he may recoil from the disagreeable and dangerous task. He must fight his own way through the wicked antagonisms of the truth to faith and certainty; but he must not introduce into his pulpit ministrations the details of the errors he seeks to refute. He need not expose the progressive steps by which he reaches his conclusions, but should use those conclusions in the most condensed and concrete form. Error is most effectually quenched by a faithful preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus, and insisting upon a holy and consistent life. Unbelief is more an obliquity of the heart than the head; and if the heart is to be reached and changed, we must "teach no other doctrine" than that which Timothy was exhorted to expound and enforce.

III. **Retained with evident reluctance.**—"As I besought thee" (ver. 3). Timothy shrank from the formidable task proposed to him. He saw its vital importance and its difficulties too, and perhaps his natural timidity tempted him to exaggerate these. He was subject to moods of discouragement (compare 2 Tim. i. 7, 8, ii. 1-13, iv. 5). It was only after earnest and affectionate persuasion on the part of Paul that he at length consented to undertake the difficult work. It was impossible for him to resist the pleading of his father in the gospel; and, fearful and hesitating, his instinctive obedience led him to

comply. When he parted from Paul—probably at Miletus, where he first received this charge—Timothy was in tears (Acts xx. 36-38). Duty is not always easy: the more difficult it is, the greater the honour and the more distinguished the reward. St. Ambrose relates a legend that, when persecution arose in Rome, the Christians, anxious to preserve the life of Peter, advised him to flee. He was in the act of leaving the city when he met our Lord. "Lord, whither goest Thou?" asked the apostle. "I go to Rome," was the answer, "there once more to be crucified." Peter understood the rebuke, returned at once, and was crucified. Duty must be done whatever the result. We may safely leave that with God.

Lessons.—1. *The minister should be awake to the tendency of modern error.* 2. *Faithful preaching of the truth is the best antidote to error.* 3. *The work of the ministry is beset with difficulties.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 4. "*Godly edifying which is in faith.*" *Moral-building.*

I. The soul is edified only as it advances in godliness.

II. The materials for moral-building are supplied by the gospel.

III. Moral-building is hindered by the discussion of frivolous questions.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—7.

The Grand Moral Aim of the Gospel—

I. Is to elicit the exercise of Christian love.—"Now the end of the commandment is charity"—love (ver. 5). 1. *This love emanates from a purified heart.* "Charity out of a pure heart" (ver. 5). The word "commandment" may here be taken in the larger sense as comprehending the gospel—the latest expression of the will and commandment of God. The great burden of the gospel theme is love, which is the sum and end of the law and of the gospel alike. The gospel is a development and fulfilment of the law in all its essential demands, and expresses its spirit in gentler and more winning terms. Love springs from the heart as from a fountain, but it is a fountain cleansed and purified by faith. There is little taste for jangling and the strife of words when the heart is sanctified. When Archbishop Ussher was urged by a friend to write on sanctification, and had begun to do so, he confessed he could not proceed, as he found so little of that grace in himself; and when his friend expressed amazement to hear such an admission from so grave and holy a person, the prelate added: "I must tell you we do not well understand what sanctification and the new creature are. It is no less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his own will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love, as a whole burnt offering to Christ. And oh! how many who profess Christianity are unacquainted experimentally with this work upon their souls!" Love is rare, but a truly sanctified nature is rarer. 2. *This love is regulated by a good conscience.* "And of a good conscience" (ver. 5). A pure heart and good conscience go together. Bengel says: "In Paul the understanding is the seat of conscience, the heart the seat of love." In the work of sanctification the conscience benefits with every other faculty of our nature. A Christianised and sanctified conscience governs the exercise of love, and saves it from degenerating into a mere sensual passion or weak sentimentality. 3. *The exercise of a love like this is made possible by*

a genuine faith. "And of faith unfeigned" (ver. 5). Not a hypocritical, dead, and unfruitful faith, but faith working by love. The false teachers drew men off from such a loving, working, real faith, to profitless speculative questions and jangling. A good conscience is joined with sound faith, a bad conscience with unsoundness in the faith (*Fausset*). To be a power in the Christian life, stimulating the growth of every Christian grace, faith must be active and sincere. Conscience is warped and love is feeble when faith is feigned and a mere make-believe.

II. **Is utterly missed by pretentious teachers.**—"From which some having swerved . . . *desiring* to be teachers of the law" (vers. 6, 7). They would fain be teachers of the law, but were utterly incompetent for the task. They swerved from or missed the mark at which even an honest teacher of the law aimed—to produce uprightness of conduct and life. 1. *They are foolish talkers.* "Have turned aside to vain jangling" (ver. 6)—silly, empty talk. Their utterances were waste words, containing no rational sense, no unity of reasoning, no depth and reality of conviction. A friend admiring the eloquence of a certain preacher said to Archbishop Whately, "What a fine command of language!" "Nay," said the prelate, "the language has the command of him." 2. *They are grossly ignorant.* "Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (ver. 7). Says the old proverb, "Ignorance is rash." Some men speak with the greater confidence of that which they know least about. Ignorance is both coarse and dogmatic. The more a man knows he is not the less certain about truth, but he is the more circumspect in dogmatising about it. "The Judaisers here meant seem to be distinct from those impugned in the epistles to the Galatians and Romans, who made the works of the law necessary to justification in opposition to gospel grace. The Judaisers here referred to corrupted the law with fables which they pretended to found on it, subversive of morals as well as of truth. Their error was not in maintaining the obligation of the law, but in abusing it by fabulous and immoral interpretations of and additions to it. They neither understood their own assertions nor the object itself about which they made them. They understood as little about the one as the other" (*Fausset, Alford*).

Lessons.—1. *The gospel is a message of love.* 2. *Christian love is based on the righteousness of faith.* 3. *False teachers are unloving and unlovable.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 5. *The Genuine Sources of Christian Charity.*

I. **The apostle's declaration of the excellence of charity as the end of the commandment.**—1. *The commandment may signify the moral law.* 2. *May also signify the gospel of Christ, or in general the whole of God's revealed will.* 3. *May mean the charge the apostle gave to Timothy as a Christian minister* (ver. 18). That the great design of the gospel Timothy was to preach as worthy of men's acceptation and of the law he was to inculcate as the rule of their duty was simply and supremely this: "Charity, or love, out of a pure heart."

II. **The principles from which true charity must spring and by which it must be upheld.**—1. *From a pure heart.* A heart purified by the power of Divine truth from the love of sin and the dominion of evil passions. In proportion as the heart is purified it is filled with charity; and charity is genuine in proportion only as it springs from the heart thus made pure by the Spirit and truth of God. 2. *From a good conscience.* A conscience well informed as to the will of God, purged

from guilty fears by the blood of Christ, and preserved tender by the influence of Divine grace. 3. *From faith unfeigned.* A sincere belief of the truths revealed in sacred Scripture; a reliance on the Son of God and the promises of God through Him for salvation.

Lessons.—1. *Search earnestly how far you have this Divine principle of charity dwelling in your hearts.* 2. *Examine and prove the nature of those inward principles from which your love of God and man proceeds.* Look to the state of your heart—consult your conscience—examine your faith.—*J. Brewster.*

Vers. 6, 7. *A Corrupt Conscience—*

I. **Is a prey to useless controversy.**

II. **Is ambitious to pose as a teacher and guardian of consciences.**

III. **Is misled and confused by utter ignorance.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—11.

The Function of the Law.

I. **The law is good in itself.**—"We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (ver. 8). The law is blameless: the blame is in the improper use of the law. The law is the standard and guardian of right, and has no quarrel with the man who obeys its enactments. We spoil the law when we try to improve it. In the Jewish Talmud we read that there was a flute in the Temple preserved from the days of Moses: it was smooth, thin, and formed of a reed. At the command of the king it was overlaid with gold, which ruined its sweetness of tone until the gold was taken away. There were also a cymbal and a mortar, which had become injured in course of time, and were mended by men of Alexandria summoned by the wise men; but their usefulness was so completely destroyed by this process that it was necessary to restore them to their former condition. So when we try to improve the law by overlaying it with what we call the gold of rationalism, but which in truth is the dross and tinsel of human conceits, we injure and divert both its beauty and its usefulness.

II. **The law does not avail in producing personal righteousness.**—"Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man" (ver. 9). The law regulates the outward life, but it does not touch the heart, until it is planted there as the law of love. But it has in itself no power thus to transform itself: this is done only by the soul being made righteous by faith in Christ. Then the law is not destroyed, but it is rendered powerless by being obeyed. The righteous man is "not forensically amenable to the law," though he still needs it to show him his lapses and shortcomings, and the requirements of a holy God.

III. **The function of the law is to convict the sinner of his manifold transgressions.**—"But for the lawless and disobedient . . . and any other thing contrary to sound doctrine" (vers. 9, 10). The catalogue of sins contained in these verses includes every kind of transgression. They differ in baseness and violence; but they are all violations of the law; and the root of these evils is in the obstinacy and rebellion of the human heart. The law not only reveals the enormity of these transgressions, but inflicts pains and penalties upon their perpetrators. The gospel is not placed so high above the law as to favour sin: it denounces all sin as "contrary to sound doctrine." The doctrine that deals with meaningless questions and false interpretations of the law is diseased.

IV. **The function of the law is in harmony with the teaching of the gospel.**—"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (ver. 11). "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" is a striking and suggestive phrase, as though the arrival of the time when the glorious news of salvation was announced to man was an occasion of Divine joy. We

say it with profound reverence—the gospel was proclaimed with Divine hilarity. God was happy that man should be at length told of the reality of the Divine blessedness. The law represented God as a rigid, unbending Magistrate—the gospel as a loving, forgiving, joyous Father. In the presence of this glorious evangel, how paltry the distorted, emasculated gospel of the false teachers would appear! There is no real antagonism between the law and the gospel: the law is a preparation for and introduction to the gospel. Both are included in God's method for saving men. An old divine writes: "It is ordinary with the prophets first to discover the sins of the people and to denounce judgments; and then to promise Christ upon their coming in to enlighten and make them lightsome with raising their thoughts to a fruitful contemplation of the glory, excellency, and sweetness of His blessed kingdom. Isaiah in his first chapter, from the mouth of God, doth in the first place behave himself like a son of thunder, pressing upon the conscience of those to whom he was sent many heinous sins, horrible ingratitude, fearful falling away, formality in God's worship, cruelty, and the like. Afterwards he invites to repentance, and assures them of God's willingness to forgive and cleanse—'Come now, and let us reason together.' Nathan, to recover even a regenerate man, first convinces him soundly of his sin, with much aggravation and terror, and then upon remorse assures him of pardon (2 Sam. xii. 13)."

Lessons.—1. *The law is terrible to the disobedient.* 2. *The law convinces of sin, but cannot remove it.* 3. *The gospel as a remedy for sin is a glorious revelation of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 8. *The Lawful Use of the Law.*

I. **It is lawful to employ it as a schoolmaster to lead the sinner to Christ.**

II. **It is lawful to use the law as a rule of life.**—1. *The gospel dissolves no relation to God.* 2. *Obedience is the object of the gospel.* 3. *The law shall be eternally obeyed.*

III. **It is lawful to use the law as a test of our spiritual state.**—1. *God uses the law for this end, in judging.* 2. *We may anticipate the judgment.* 3. *The law the standard by which the believer's progress is ascertained.*—*Stewart.*

Ver. 11. *A Noble Eulogy of the Gospel.*

I. **The gospel of the glory of God.**

II. **This God the blessed God.**

III. **Through this blessed God the ministry of the gospel is entrusted to a man like Paul.**—*J. P. Lange, D.D.*

The Gospel Glorious.

I. **As it is a splendid revelation of the Divine felicity.**

II. **In the sublime themes it declares.**

III. **In the grandeur of the moral benefits it confers on man.**

IV. **In the dignity and power with which it invests its messengers.**

The Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.

I. **It contains a bright display of the perfections of God.**—His wisdom, His power, His justice, His holiness, and His love are all exhibited, and the exhibition is striking and harmonious.

II. **It is admirably adapted to the moral and spiritual necessities of man.**—Man is ignorant, guilty, polluted, miserable, immoral, impotent.

III. **It exerts, wherever it is believed, a mighty influence.**—It civilises, reforms, exalts, strengthens.

IV. **It has already won signal triumphs.**—Contrast the infant Church in Jerusalem with Christendom as it is.

V. **It secures eternal happiness.**

VI. **It combines with the utmost grandeur of result the utmost sim-**

plicity of requirement.—It is of faith that it might be by grace.—*G. Brooks.*

The Blessed God.

I. Let us contemplate the happiness of God.—1. *Its nature is beyond our comprehension, because it is beyond our experience.* 2. *It consists of many elements.* Infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. 3. *It is communicated to sentient creatures.* 4. *It furnishes a lofty and delightful subject of thought.*

II. Let us collect some of the practical lessons which the contemplation of the happiness of God suggests.—1. *It teaches us how great God is.* He is all-sufficient. 2. *It teaches us how great man is.* He is capable of friendly relations with Him who is blessed for ever. 3. *It teaches us the evil of sin.* It has alienated man from the source of all bliss. 4. *It teaches us the grandeur of the gospel,* whose aim is to make believers partakers of God's happiness. —*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—17.

The Distinguished Honour of the Service of God—

I. Supplies a ground for devout thankfulness.—"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (ver. 12). So far from boasting of the honour conferred upon him in being a minister of the gospel, the apostle attributes it all to the goodness of God, and is full of devout gratitude. He would have been in the same position as the false teachers he exposes but for the grace of God. His fidelity in his apostleship he does not regard as of himself, but as the result of the imparted strength of God: if he was faithful in his stewardship, it was God who made him so, and for this he gives thanks. 1. *Remembering the mercy shown to the most notorious of sinners.* "Who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy" (ver. 13). Paul not only himself blasphemed the sacred name of Jesus, but persecuted others, compelling them to do the same, and took a wanton and insolent delight in violence and in outraging the feelings of others. He does not refer to his past sins by way of boast—this is the most besotted form of self-glorying; nor to excuse himself for his ignorance and unbelief; but to exalt the mercy of God, which, notwithstanding his outrageous wickedness, found him out and pardoned him. "In John Bunyan," writes Guthrie, "God calls the bold leader of village reprobates to preach the gospel—a blaspheming tinker to be one of England's famous confessors. From the deck of a slave ship he summons John Newton to the pulpit, and by hands defiled with mammon's foulest and most nefarious traffic brings them that were bound out of darkness, and smites adamantine fetters from the slaves of sin. In Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, He converts Christ's bitterest enemy into His warmest friend: to the man whom a trembling Church held most in dread she comes to owe, under God, the weightiest obligations. How much better for these three stars to be shining in heaven than quenched in the blackness of darkness—better for the good of mankind, better for the glory of God!" 2. *Recognising the abundant outflow of Divine grace.* "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 14). The grace of God was so abundant that the remembrance of his past sins was effaced and their guilt forgiven: the unbelief which had blinded his mind was replaced with the bright vision of faith in Christ Jesus, and the hatred which prompted his cruelty towards the Church, with love. "Grace will not be confined, for God's goodness cannot be exhausted. He is rich enough for all. God's mercy is both free and rich, both bountiful and plentiful, bursting forth round about, round about all ages, round about

all nations, round about all sorts, surrounding all those rounds, and with surplus and advantage overflowing all. Not only an abounding grace, abounding unto all, to the whole world, but a grace superabounding, that, if there were more worlds, grace would bring salvation unto them all" (*R. Clerke*). 3. *Declaring the universal blessedness of Christ's advent.* "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (ver. 15). The advent of Christ into the world means blessing to all in it; and the purpose of His advent to save sinners is so well authenticated by experience as to merit the unreserved acceptance of all. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of either the advent or its purpose. "It is not without good reason," says Bengel, "that the name Christ is sometimes put before Jesus. From the Old Testament point of view progress is made from the knowledge of Christ to the knowledge of Jesus: from the New Testament point of view the progress is from the knowledge of Jesus to the knowledge of Christ." As the condemned man believes first the king's favour to all humble suppliants before he believes it to himself, so the order is, not to look to God's intention in a personal way, but to His complacency and tenderness to all repentant sinners. This was St. Paul's method, embracing by all means that great and faithful saying "Jesus came to save sinners" before he ranked himself in front of those sinners.

II. **Bestowed upon a notorious sinner as typical of the compassion extended to all.**—"Of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy . . . for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (ver. 16). If Paul, the chief of sinners, obtained mercy, so may all others—from the same source and on the same terms. The worst need not despair: the most abandoned may be recovered. "You have heard of stereotype-printing. When the types are set up, they are cast, made a fixed thing, so that from one plate you can strike off hundreds of thousands of pages in succession, without the trouble of setting up the types again. Paul says, 'That I may be a plate never worn out, never destroyed, from which proof-impressions may be taken to the very end of time.' What a splendid thought that the apostle Paul, having portrayed himself as the chief of sinners, then portrays himself as having received forgiveness for a grand and specific end—that he might be a standing-plate from which impressions might be taken for ever, that no man might despair who had read his biography!" (*Dr. Cumming*).

III. **Calls forth a fervent ascription of praise and adoration to the bountiful Giver of all good.**—"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (ver. 17). A vehement exclamation of gratitude, of lofty admiration, of adoring awe. God is the King of all the ages, and in the process of time the typical significance of the conversion of a man like Paul can be fully realised. How different his conceptions of the duration of God from the fanciful and misleading æons of the Gnostic heresy, and of the character of God, who alone has immortality in and of Himself, underived from any, and in His very nature is invisible, in opposition to the intermediate deities of the Gnostic dreamer! The Divine wisdom renders foolish and condemns as vanity all the wisdom of men. The thought of eternity, terrible as it is to unbelievers, is delightful to those assured of grace. Calvin well says: "God alone is worthy of all glory; for while He scatters on His creatures in every direction the sparks of His glory, still all glory belongs truly and perfectly to Him alone. There is no glory but that which belongs to God."

Lessons.—1. *It is an unspeakable honour to be a servant of God.* 2. *It is impossible to estimate the results of the conversion of one sinner.* 3. *Praise should be offered to God continually.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12-14. *Ministerial Responsibility*—

I. **Should be thankfully acknowledged as a proof of the Divine favour** (ver. 12).

II. **Should be contrasted with a former life of disobedience and unbelief** (ver. 13).

III. **Should be used to magnify the abundant grace of God** (ver. 14).

Ver. 15. *The Grand Purpose of the Redeemer's Advent.*

I. **A most stupendous fact.**—"Christ Jesus came into the world."

II. **A most gracious design.**—"To save sinners."

III. **A most appropriate estimation.**—"A faithful saying . . . worthy of all acceptation."—*W. T.*

The Essential Truth.

I. **The saying.**—Christ came not to teach, not as an example merely, but to die.

II. **What is said of it.**—1. *A faithful saying.* 2. *Worthy of all acceptation.*—*Homiletic Monthly.*

The Chief of Sinners.—"Of whom I am chief." Every true Christian should feel that he is the chief of sinners—

I. **Because he knows himself better than he knows any other man.**

II. **Because he judges himself by a different standard than other men.**

III. **Because conscience is more enlightened and more tender.**

IV. **Because he labours more earnestly to subdue his native depravity.**

V. **Because he lives in closer fellowship with God.**—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 16. *St. Paul a Pattern of the Long-suffering of God.*

I. **The mercy Paul obtained.**

II. **The cause for which he obtained it.**—*E. Cooper.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 18—20.

Moral Fitness for Special Work—

I. **Recognised by previous indications of character.**—"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee" (ver. 18). There were features and tendencies of character in the youthful Timothy, evident from the time of his conversion, that indicated his suitability for the ministerial office. Paul and those who knew Timothy best detected these; and the apostle saw that God had called him to the sacred work. "The prophecies which went before" were no doubt certain sacred utterances that Paul and others were inspired to make on the ordination of Timothy, and which indicated a Divine commission and Divine approbation publicly expressed respecting his choice of the ministry. These prophecies were a means of blessing to the young minister, and would often animate and sustain him in the difficulties and discouragements of his mission. "The gradual cessation or discredit of the function of the Christian prophet is thoroughly intelligible. Possibly the spiritual gift which rendered it possible was withdrawn from the Church. In any case the extravagances of enthusiasts who deluded themselves into the belief that they possessed the gift, or of impostors who deliberately assumed it, would bring the office into suspicion and disrepute. Such things were possible even in apostolic times, for St. Paul and St. John give cautions about it, and directions for dealing with the abuse and the false assumption of prophecy. There will always be those who crave for something more definite and personal than the Scriptures, who long for and

perhaps create for themselves and believe in some living authority to whom they can perpetually appeal. If a man will not hear Christ and His apostles, neither will he be persuaded though a prophet was granted to him. If we believe not their writings, how shall we believe his words?" (*Plummer*).

II. **Shown by the fortitude and fidelity maintained in the midst of conflict.**—"That thou by them shouldest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience" (vers. 18, 19). The Christian life is a conflict, and ministers are standard-bearers and leaders, and must not only believe and preach the truth but defend it. Armed with faith and a good conscience, the gospel champion must maintain the fight with bravery and fidelity to the end of the campaign. Whoever falls or withdraws, he must press forward, though he should stand alone. The true spirit of the pioneers of the gospel should be like that of Edward III., amid the fiery sands of Syria, where his small force of soldiers fainted, died, deserted, and seemed to melt away. But his prowess made light of it, and he said, "I will go on, if I go on with no other follower than my groom."

III. **Conspicuous by the failure and fate of the unworthy.**—"Which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (vers. 19, 20). "If one's religion better not his morals," says Archbishop Whately, "his moral deficiencies will corrupt his religion. The rain which falls pure from heaven will not continue pure if it be received in an unclean vessel." Hymenæus and Alexander had lost both their faith and their good conscience, and had so far retrograded as to blaspheme the name of God and Christ by doings and teachings unworthy of their Christian profession. The personality of Satan was not a question of hesitation and doubt with the apostle. Satan was to him, as he is in the emphatic teaching of the Bible, a real, active, and living embodiment of evil; and for their punishment and reformation he hands over the two delinquents to the great power of darkness. "In the apostolic sentence upon the two blasphemers we have to notice four points. 1. It is almost certainly not identical with excommunication by the congregation, although it very probably was accompanied by this other penalty. 2. It is of a very extraordinary character, being a handing over into the power of the evil one. 3. Its object is the reformation of the offenders, while at the same time—4. It serves as a warning to others, lest they by similar offences should suffer so awful a punishment. To all alike it brought home the serious nature of such sins. Even at the cost of cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye, the Christian community must be kept pure in doctrine as in life. Satan inflicts suffering from love of inflicting it, and leads into sin from love of sin; but God knows how to bring good out of evil by making the evil one frustrate his own wiles. It is for us to take care that in our case the chastisements which inevitably follow upon sin do not drive us further and further into it, but teach us to sin no more" (*Plummer, passim*). When we lose our faith in God and truth, we lose our better selves and rush upon defeat and disgrace. What power had the last Brutus at the moment when he abandoned his faith? From the time of his melancholy vision, produced by a diminution of that faith, it might have been predicted that his own destiny and that of the republic were finished. He felt it himself: it was with a presentiment of defeat that he fought at Philippi; and such a presentiment always realises itself.

IV. **Commands the confidence of the good.**—"This charge I commit unto thee" (ver. 18). Paul had many proofs of the eagerness and fidelity of Timothy in prosecuting the work of the ministry; and it is with ingenuous confidence that he commits to him the charge of the truth, as a sacred deposit, to keep and

to defend, and to keep and defend it by diligently spreading it. "The remembrance of the hopes of a former teacher is a great stimulus, an earnest call to be and do what others have expected of us" (*Heubner*).

Lessons.—1. *The good in us is found by others.* 2. *Difficulties test and develop our virtues.* 3. *The defection of others should stimulate our zeal and fidelity.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 18. *A Good Warfare.*

I. **The Christian warfare.**—1. *Is a struggle of Christ against Satan, holiness against sin.* 2. *The Christian is a soldier in Christ's army.* 3. *The warfare implies numerous foes.*

II. **The excellency of this warfare.**—1. *It is good because its object is to destroy that which is evil and promote that which is good.* 2. *It is under a good Commander.* 3. *It will issue in complete triumph.*

III. **Claims of this warfare upon the Christian.**—1. *He must be sensible of his own incompetence.* 2. *Must understand the character of his enemies.* 3. *Have confidence in the skill and power of his General.* 4. *Must do battle with His foes whenever they oppose him*—(*Helps*).

Ver. 19. *Faith and a Good Conscience.*

I. **Some try to hold faith without the good conscience.**—That soon becomes a hollow and hypocritical thing.

II. **Some try the good conscience without faith.**—That becomes a superficial, unspiritual, and barren thing.

III. **The union of the two.**—Faith is the spring and quickener of conscience—conscience gives truthfulness and reality to faith.—*Dr. J. Ker.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Supplications, prayers, intercessions.**—The first is a special form of the second. Intercession is prayer in its most individual and urgent form—prayer in which God is sought in audience and personally approached (*Ellicott*). Thanksgivings are always to accompany prayers.

Ver. 2. **For kings, and all that are in authority.**—It is very noticeable that the neglect of this duty on the part of the Jews led to the commencement of their war with the Romans. **That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.**—A life that is free from the rude shocks consequent on political strife, and equally free from participation in intrigue or sedition. **In all godliness and honesty.**—R.V. "in all godliness and gravity." The former word describes the direction of our reverence to whatever is truly worthy of it. "Honesty denotes the decency and propriety of deportment which befits the chaste, the young, and the earnest, and is as it were the appropriate setting of higher graces and virtuos" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 4. **Who will have all men to be saved.**—The emphatic word here is "all men." The good purpose of God is as universal as it is good. It is *not* the will of the Father that any should perish; and if some will be punished with eternal destruction, they reach a doom that was never meant to be theirs. **To come to the knowledge.**—As we have seen elsewhere, it is the full or complete knowledge of which St. Paul thinks.

Ver. 5. **For there is one God.**—In his wide travels the apostle had met the beliefs in "gods many and lords many." In contrast to these, of whatever name, he opposes the one God. **And one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.**—R.V. "Between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus." "The human nature of Christ is specially mentioned as being the state in which His mediatorial office was visibly performed" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 6. **Who gave Himself a ransom for all.**—There is no possibility of evading the vicariousness of the work of Christ as here stated. As the idea of Christ's substitution comes out in the compound word for "ransom,' so the benefit accruing therefrom is clear in "for all." **To be testified in due time.**—R.V. "the testimony to be borne in its own times." "The import of the testimony to be set forth in its proper seasons" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 8. **I will therefore.**—R.V. "I desire therefore." An active wish is implied. **That men pray.**—R.V. the men in contrast to women to whom St. Paul gives all honour in that which is purely womanly. **Lifting up holy hands.**—Compare Ps. cxxxiv. 2 (R.V. margin), "Lift up your hands in holiness"; and Isa. i. 15, "When ye spread forth your hands." The folding of the hands in prayer may be illustrated from the monuments, where captives approach the conqueror, or vassals draw near with tribute.

Ver. 9. **That women adorn themselves in modest apparel.**—"In seemly guise." The word for "apparel" includes more than dress—taking in the whole deportment, whether manifest in manners or dress. "Do not people speak of 'loud dress'? I suppose that by this is meant a discord in shape, a shock in colours, a flashy advertisement, to say the wearer is very foolish, but with a kind of folly that is not very innocent" (*Bishop Alexander*). **With shamefastness.**—The innate shrinking from anything unbecoming. **And sobriety.**—The well-balanced state of mind resulting from habitual self-restraint. **Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.**—"The saints in all ages have allowed themselves to be sarcastic about dress. Isaiah was so (iii. 16), and Paul and Peter. Jerome is angrier and fiercer. To Lœta he writes, 'Load not your child's hair with gems, nor sprinkle on her young head some of the red fire of hell'" (*Alexander*). Let those who do not fear the red fire smile at the narrowness.

Ver. 11. **Let the woman learn.**—The apostle speaks with the assurance of one who has the fitness of things on his side. It would be interesting to have St. Paul's judgment on certain developments of our own times.

Ver. 12. **Nor to usurp authority over the man.**—It is very certain the translators of 1611 held the supremacy of the man, as this phrase shows. The R.V. says, "to have dominion over."

Ver. 13. **For Adam was first formed, then Eve.**—An important reason St. Paul thinks why man should take the headship. Its force would be more evident to Jews than to our own day. The same reasoning, it might be said, would show Adam inferior to the brutes.

Ver. 14. **And Adam was not deceived.**—But the woman was not only later than man in point of creation—she was earlier in sin than he.

Ver. 15. **But she shall be saved in child-bearing.**—There are two most reasonable explanations of this difficult expression. (*a*) "She shall be saved by fulfilling her proper destiny and acquiescing in all the conditions of woman's life"; and (*b*) "by *the* child-bearing, *i.e.* by the relation in which woman stood to the Messiah." Bishop Ellicott argues strenuously for the latter.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

Prayer a Universal Duty.

I. **Should be offered for all classes.**—"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority" (vers. 1, 2). There is very little difference of meaning in the terms here used for prayer. "And yet this heaping up of words," says Calvin, "is not superfluous; but Paul appears purposely to join together three terms for the same purpose in order to recommend more warmly and urge more strongly earnest and constant prayer. We know how sluggish we are in this religious duty, and therefore we need not wonder if for the purpose of rousing us to it the Holy Spirit employs various excitements." While we are to pray for all men, "kings and all that are in authority" are mentioned as especially needing our prayers: their exalted position and great responsibilities needing help from heaven that their duties may be discharged with impartiality and justice. Though public authorities may be opposed to the gospel, as was the case in the apostle's days, they are not to be neglected in our prayers. "The scope of a Christian's desires and gratitude, when he appears before the Lord, must have no narrower limit than that which embraces the whole human race. The solidarity of the whole body of Christians, however

distant from one another in space and time, however different from one another in nationality, in discipline, and even in creed, is a magnificent fact of which we all of us need from time to time to be reminded, and which, when we are reminded of it, it is difficult to grasp. Members of sects that we never heard of, dwelling in remote regions of which we do not even know the names, are nevertheless united to us by the eternal ties of a common baptism and a common belief in God and in Jesus Christ. The Eastern sectarian in the wilds of Asia, and the Western sectarian in the backwoods of North America, are members of Christ and our brethren, and as such have spiritual interests identical with our own, for which it is not only our duty but our advantage to pray. What shall we say, then, about the difficulty of realising the solidarity of the whole human race? The population of the globe, those who are not even in name Christian, outnumber us by at least three to one" (*Plummer*). For these we should not fail to pray, and give all the assistance we can to missionary enterprise and humanising efforts.

II. **Should be accompanied with thanksgiving.**—"And giving of thanks" (ver. 1). Prayer is cold and meaningless unless it is interfused with a thankful spirit. Gratitude prompts prayer, and in the answers God is continually giving, finds new themes for supplication. A Maryland planter was riding to one of his plantations under a state of religious awakening. He heard the voice of prayer and praise in a cabin, and, listening, discovered that a negro from a neighbouring estate was leading the devotion of his own slaves, and offering fervent thanksgiving for the blessing of their depressed lot. His heart was touched, and with emotion he exclaimed, "Alas! O Lord, I have my thousands and tens of thousands, and yet, ungrateful wretch that I am, I never thank Thee as this poor slave does, who has scarcely clothes to put on, or food to satisfy his hunger!

III. **Should be offered in order to secure real progress in the Christian life.**—"That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (ver. 2). Here is a reason for praying for kings and magistrates—that they may use their power in the maintenance of peace and good order and in defending the interests of true religion, that while restraining the violence of wicked man they may not recklessly plunge the nation into war. The Christian has a reverence for law, and the maintenance of law and order is helpful to growth and progress in religion. "I have been benefited by riding alone a long journey in giving that time to prayer. Making an errand to God for others, I have gotten something for myself. I have been really confirmed in many particulars that God heareth prayers, and therefore I pray for anything, of how little importance soever. He enables me to make no question that this way, which is mocked and nicknamed, is the only way to heaven" (*S. Rutherford*).

IV. **Prayer for all classes has the Divine approval.**—"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (ver. 3). God is willing that all should be saved; therefore we should meet the will of God in behalf of others by praying for the salvation of all men. More would be saved if we prayed more. "Since God wishes that all should be saved, do you also wish it, and if you wish it pray for it. For prayer is the instrument of effecting such things" (*Chrysostom*).

Lessons.—1. *True prayer is ever unselfish.* 2. *Prayer is the vital element of religious progress.* 3. *Acceptable prayer is answered prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-3. *Forms of Prayer in Public Worship.*

I. Are useful and necessary to obviate and prevent all extravagant levities or worse impieties in public worship.

II. That ministers less learned may have provision of devotions made for them.

III. That all the members of the Church may know the condition of public communion and understand beforehand what prayers they are to join in.

IV. To secure the established doctrine and faith of the Church.—*Bishop Bull.*

Vers. 1, 2. *Prayer for Kings and Governors.*

I. Common charity should dispose us to pray for kings.

II. We are bound to pray for kings out of charity for the public.

III. Subjects are bound in gratitude, equity, and justice to pray for their princes.

IV. Princes need our prayers.

V. Prayer is the only allowable method for redressing our case if we suffer by princes.—*Barrow.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—8.

The Universality of Redemption—

I. Is in harmony with the Divine will.—"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (ver. 4). The provisions for the salvation of the race are the outcome of the Divine will; but while He wills the salvation of all, He also wills that that salvation should be obtained by coming to the knowledge of the truth. Hence our prayers for others, in order to their salvation, should be that their eyes may be opened to see the truth, and that they may be induced to embrace it. Because God wills salvation we should pray for it: had He willed the contrary, prayer for salvation would be useless. Our prayers should include all, as God's grace includes all. Men cannot be forced into the truth; but they may be prayed into it. When Augustine was on the eve of his departure for Rome, where she knew he would have to encounter so many temptations, his mother Monica prayed for the prevention of his going. But he went, and was there converted. 1. *The unity of God implies the comprehension of all His human offspring in the provision of redemption.* "For there is one God" (ver. 5). 2. *Redemption was effected by the one Mediator who represented in His humanity the whole human race.* "And one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (vers. 5, 6). The word "for" links the unity of God and Christ with the universality of the redemption of the race: prayer should therefore be offered to the one God on behalf of all men. The unity of God is here placed distinctly in the foreground to show how arbitrary is any limit of Christian intercession; the unity of the Mediator to prove that the Jew has not the least advantage over the heathen, since both must be saved in one and the same way. God's unity in essence and purpose is a proof of His comprehending all His human children, created in His image, in His offer of grace. All mankind constitute, as it were, one man before God. They who have not this one God by one Mediator have no mediator at all. Christ's mediation affects the whole race, since there is but the one Mediator, designed as the representative Man for all men alike. His being man was necessary to His being a mediator, sympathising with us through experimental knowledge of our nature. Even in nature almost all blessings are conveyed to us from

God, not immediately, but through the mediation of various agents. The effectual intercession of Moses for Israel (Num. xiv.; Deut. ix.), of Abraham for Abimelech (Gen. xx. 7), of Job for his friends (Job xlii. 10)—the mediation being prescribed by God whilst declaring His purpose of forgiveness—all prefigure the grand mediation for all by the one Mediator. Man was the captive of sin. He was unable to ransom himself, because absolute obedience is due to God, and therefore no act of ours can satisfy for the least offence. The Son of God therefore became man in order that, being made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, as our elder brother He should redeem us by offering Himself as a ransom, a substituted or equivalent ransom. The oneness of the Mediator, involving the universality of redemption, which faith alone appropriates, was therefore the great subject of Christian testimony (1 Cor. i. 6, ii. 1; 2 Thess. i. 10) (*Fausset, Bengel, Alford*).

II. **Is authoritatively declared by a specially commissioned messenger.**—"Whereof I am ordained a preacher and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (ver. 7). None of the apostles obtained so clear an insight into the wide, far-reaching sweep of the doctrine of redemption as Paul, and no one has argued its universal application more ably than he. The breadth of the gospel as it expanded before his studious gaze effectually cured him of his Jewish prejudices and narrowness, and fitted him as the fearless champion of Gentile rights and privileges. The mixed and restricted gospel of the Judaisers was shrivelled up before the fire of his intensified zeal and the irresistible power of his logic. He refers to the universality of his calling as an evidence of the universality of Divine grace, and as a motive to pray for all men. The solemn protestation, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not," indicates the importance he attached to his mission as a teacher of the Gentiles, notwithstanding the misrepresentations of others.

III. **Is a reason for prayer everywhere.**—1. *Prayer should be reverential.* "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands" (ver. 8). The early Christians turned up their palms towards heaven as those craving help do. "Holy hands" are hands which have committed no impiety and observed every sacred duty. This, or at least the contrite desire to be so, is a needful qualification for effectual prayer. It is a feeling which nature has implanted within us, when we ask God, to look upwards. Even idolaters retain the custom of lifting up their hands to heaven. The attitude is in accordance with true godliness, provided it be attended by the corresponding truth represented by it (*Fausset, Calvin*). 2. *Prayer should be offered in a suitable spirit.* "Without wrath and doubting" (ver. 8). In peace and trust—putting away the spirit of anger and disputing, which is unfriendly to and destructive of the true spirit of prayer. Prayer does not consist in gifted expressions and volubility of speech, but in brokenness of heart. A hard heart cannot pray: a broken heart is made up of prayers. Prayer does not consist in elegance of phrase, but in the strength of the affection. Pray that you may pray.

Lessons.—1. *Redemption is provided for all.* 2. *It is a great honour to proclaim a gospel of universal blessing.* 3. *Prayer would be suppressed if all might not be saved.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 4. *Salvation for All.*

I. **God shows His desire for the salvation of men in providence.**

II. **In conscience.**

III. **By the Holy Spirit.**

IV. **In the gift of Christ.**—*Preacher's Magazine.*

God would have All Men to be saved.

I. The appellation given to the gospel—"the truth."

II. The knowledge of this truth is connected with salvation, as a means to an end, by no less an authority than the will of God.

III. The connection of the Divine will with the salvation of men.—1. *The object of this will is the salvation of man.* 2. *In the same sense God willeth all men to be saved.* 3. *He wills to save men according to the nature He has given them.—R. Watson.*

Ver. 5. *The Man Christ Jesus.*

I. He is the true man—really and thoroughly man—the common man.

II. He is very man—simply man—as to His human nature and experience neither more nor less nor other than man.

III. He is the one man—the only man in whom the manhood is unbroken and entire—the man unfallen, and therefore unfragmentary.

IV. He is the man to mediate between God and man.

V. He is the man to give Himself a ransom for all.

VI. He is the man to be testified in due time.—*R. S. Candlish.*

Ver. 8. *Conditions of Success in Prayer.*

I. A holy life.—"Lifting up holy hands."

II. A charitable, forgiving spirit.—"Without wrath."

III. Faith.—Without "doubting."—*Olin.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—15.

The Place of Woman in Church Life.

I. **To be modest in dress and moral deportment.**—"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety . . . with good works" (vers. 9, 10). The allusion is primarily to the behaviour of women in public worship, though generally applicable to the dress and conduct of "women professing godliness." A lady once asked the Rev. John Newton what was the best rule for female dress and behaviour. "Madam," said he, "so dress and so conduct yourself that persons who have been in your company shall not recollect what you had on." Modesty and simplicity are the adornment of Christian women. The caution against display in dress and ornaments was no doubt necessary in writing to Ephesus, where wealthy ladies dressed extravagantly. St. Paul might say: "You are Christian women, and the profession you have adopted is reverence towards God. This profession you have made known to the world. It is necessary therefore that those externals of which the world takes cognisance should not give the lie to your profession. And how is unseemly attire, paraded at the very time of public worship, compatible with the reverence which you have professed? Reverence God by reverencing yourselves, by guarding with jealous care the dignities of those bodies with which He has endowed you. Reverence God by coming before Him clothed both in body and soul in fitting attire. Let your bodies be free from meretricious decoration. Let your souls be adorned with abundance of good works" (*Plummer*).

II. **Not to be a public teacher, but a submissive learner.**—"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man" (vers. 11, 12). The prohibition refers to taking the lead in the public teaching of the sanctuary. There was a tendency among the women at Ephesus to put themselves forward more than was seemly. "Woman's sphere in the law of God, without doubt, is *home*; her noblest attraction, devotedness to those with whom she is thrown in daily intercourse. Some women there are who find not only duty, but pleasure there—not only love, but

safety. Others again, restless and discontented, fancy that they should be happier and better and more useful anywhere but where they are, and gladly seize the first pretence to turn aside. Woman's guide in general is feeling; she is a creature of impulse, ever likely, unless strongly yet tenderly restrained, to turn aside from the safer and less excitable path of daily duty, wherever the affections or the enthusiasm of the moment may lead. More especially is she likely to fall into this temptation when first awakened to the claims and beauty and comfort of religion. The simple duties of home then seem little worth compared to the service of heaven. She cannot realise that the unfatiguing, unexciting duties of domestic usefulness, infused with thoughts of God and of His word, is the path most acceptable to Him" (*Grace Aguilar, on "Women of Israel"*).

III. **Not to assume imperious authority over man.**—"Nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (ver. 12). 1. *Because man was first in the order of creation.* "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (ver. 13). It was God's law from the beginning that woman should be subject to the man, and it may be supposed that this authority suffered by the Fall, yet in the ruin that followed there remained so much of the Divine blessing as would make it seem improper that woman, by her own fault, should make her condition better than before. 2. *Because woman was first in the transgression.* "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (ver. 14). Being more easily deceived, she more easily deceives. Last in being, she was first in sin—indeed, she alone was deceived. The subtle serpent knew she was the weaker vessel. He therefore tempted her, not him. She yielded to the temptations of sense and the deceits of Satan; he to conjugal love. Hence in the order of God's judicial sentence the serpent, the prime offender, stands first; the woman who was deceived next; and the man, persuaded by his wife, last. Hence the woman's subjection is represented as the consequence of her being deceived (*Fausset*). 3. *Though the first in the transgression and suffering her part in its punishment, she shall be saved on the same terms as others.* "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they [the women] continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (ver. 15). The curse will be turned into a condition favourable to her salvation by her faithfully performing her part in doing and suffering what God has assigned her—child-bearing, rearing of children, and home duties—her sphere, as distinguished from public teaching, which is not hers, but man's. In this home sphere, not ordinarily in one of active duty for advancing the kingdom of God, which contradicts the position assigned to her by God, she will be saved on the same terms as all others—by faith, and bringing forth the fruits of faith in a holy and consistent life, in which godly women should excel, that they may differ from irreligious women. Many who have children are lost: many who are childless are saved. The woman is blessed as a mother when she cares for the good Christian nurture of her children.

Lessons.—1. *Woman should be a pattern of neatness and modesty.* 2. *The subjection of woman is not that of a servant, but of an equal.* 3. *The place of woman in the Church is one of great power and usefulness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *A Woman's True Adornment*—

I. **Is not in dress or costly trinkets.**

II. **But in modesty and self-restrained behaviour.**

III. **In works of charity.**

Vers. 11-15. *Womanly Modesty*—

I. **Shrinks from the display of imperious authority** (ver. 12).

II. **Does not aspire to be a public Church teacher** (ver. 12).

III. **Is often most eloquent in silent submission** (vers. 11, 12).

IV. **Remembers her part in the first transgression** (vers. 13, 14).

V. **Is becoming in one who suffers** (ver. 15).

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **This is a true saying.**—See note on i. 15. **If any man desire the office of a bishop.**—It is generally admitted that to the latest New Testament times the terms "bishop" and "presbyter" were applied to the same persons. Whether subsequent developments have any binding force for us may be left an open question. The R.V. indicates that there are two words in the original for "seeketh" and "desireth"—not one, as the A.V. might lead us to suppose. The former means "to stretch oneself out in order to grasp."

Ver. 2. **Blameless.**—R.V. "without reproach." Some think the term an agnostic one, signifying one who gives his adversary no hold upon him, applied here metaphorically to one who gives others no just cause to accuse him. Ellicott denies any but an ethical sense. **The husband of one wife.**—Full play is given to subjective interpretation on this passage. A bishop must have a wife, only one at a time, must not have a concubine, only a wife, and on the loss, even by death, of his wife must never have a second. Such are some of the interpretations. **Vigilant.**—R.V. better "temperate," in its usual and literal meaning. **Sober.**—R.V. "sober-minded." **Of good behaviour.**—R.V. "orderly."

Ver. 3. **Not given to wine.**—R.V. "no brawler." The A.V. margin indicates that it is not simply a liking for wine, but the quarrelsomeness of a man so addicted. **Not greedy of filthy lucre.**—Omitted in R.V. The idea comes in with the last word of the verse.

Ver. 4. **One that ruleth well.**—The management of his own household with dignity would be a recommendation to the oversight of a larger family.

Ver. 6. **Not a novice.**—Lit. "a neophyte"—one just born. **Lest being lifted up.**—"A beclouded and stupid state of mind must be associated with that of pride" (*Ellicott*). **The condemnation of the devil.**—Whose great sin was pride.

Ver. 7. **A good report of them which are without.**—How different this sounds from the Master's "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you!" And yet how often has the world borne witness to a life of spotless humility!

Ver. 8. **Deacons.**—Originally dispensers of the Church's bounty, they came to be regarded as the subordinates of the presbyters. **Not greedy.**—Like the first purser of the Church.

Ver. 10. **First be proved.**—In allusion to what is said of the bishop in ver. 6. Their qualifications for the office must be self-evident.

Ver. 11. **Even so must their wives.**—As "their" is entirely imported and the original does not distinguish them as wives, the R.V. gives "Women in like manner." More probably they were deaconesses.

Ver. 13. **Used the office of a deacon well.**—R.V. "served well as deacons." **Purchase to themselves a good degree.**—R.V. "gain to themselves a good standing"—not simply preferment; the gain is spiritual, as is intimated by the next phrase.

Ver. 15. **How thou oughtest to behave thyself.**—The language seems open to a double interpretation, as the R.V. shows—"how men ought to behave." Perhaps St. Paul meant that his letter should teach Timothy what men should be in office, as well as the officials themselves what manner of men they must be. **The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.**—"If the Church is here called 'the pillar and stay of the truth,' the expression is one of the least Pauline, the most difficult and the most modern in these epistles. On the other hand, all difficulties vanish if we refer the words to Timothy, who is here bidden to bear himself as an upholder and supporter of the truth" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 16. **And without controversy.**—Lit. "confessedly." **God was manifest.**—R.V. "He who was manifested." Ellicott thinks it not at all improbable that we have a quotation from some well-known hymn, or possibly from some familiar confession of faith. **Justified in the Spirit.**—As in 1 Pet. iii. 17, the Spirit seems to be contrasted with the flesh. **Preached unto the Gentiles.**—R.V. "among the nations." How inseparably St. Paul considered his own mission to be united to the purposes of God in giving His Son, this phrase makes evident. **Received up into glory.**—The reference is to the event recorded in Acts i. 9, the assumption of our Lord.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—7.

Qualifications of a New Testament Bishop.

1. **He must be a man of upright and irreproachable life** (vers. 1-3).—The office of bishop or presbyter is a good work in itself, has to do specially with good things, and gives a signal opportunity of doing good to others. Speaking to Bishop Crowther, the first coloured bishop in connection with the Church of England, a clergyman said: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, what saith the word of God that he desireth?—a large income?—a palace?—to be called my lord? No—he desireth a good work. Work for Christ is the true honour of the bishop." Such a man should possess both gifts and grace, and both in a high degree. The qualifications of a bishop are here given by the apostle in detail. "A bishop then must be blameless"—unexceptionable, giving no just handle for blame. "The husband of one wife." The feeling which prevailed among the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, of that age against a second marriage would, on the ground of expediency and conciliation in matters indifferent and not involving compromise of principle, account for Paul's prohibition here in the case of one in so prominent a sphere as a bishop or a deacon. "Vigilant, sober"—ever on the watch, as sober men alone can be—keenly alive, so as to foresee what ought to be done. "Of good behaviour"—orderly. "Sober" refers to the inward mind; orderly to the outward behaviour, tone, look, gait, dress. "Given to hospitality"—both to Christian brethren and to strangers. "Apt to teach." They who labour in word and doctrine are counted worthy of double honour. "Not given to wine"—not merely drunkenness, but any intemperance in wine-drinking. The word also includes not indulging in the brawling, violent conduct towards others which proceeds from being given to wine. "Not covetous"—not a lover of money, whether we have much or little.

II. **He must be a man showing the faculty of government in his own family.**—"One that ruleth well his own house . . . for how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (vers. 4, 5). Presiding over his own children and servants, as contrasted with the house of God, which he may be called on to preside over. The fact that he has children, who are in subjection to him in all gravity and modesty, is the recommendation in his favour as one likely to rule well the Church. If he cannot perform the lesser function, how can he perform the greater and more difficult one?

III. **He must be a man not raw and inexperienced in spiritual things.**—"Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (ver. 6). Not one just converted—a neophyte, a young plant, luxuriantly verdant—lest being lifted up with pride, being beclouded, darkened, befooled, inflated with self-conceit and exaggerated ideas of his own importance, he falls into the same condemnation as that in which Satan fell, who was condemned for his pride. The minister is emphatically the spiritual man, and should be deeply and experimentally acquainted with the mind of the Spirit and with spiritual things.

IV. **He must be a man of unquestionable reputation.**—"He must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (ver. 7). He should be blameless, not only in the eyes of the Church, but be esteemed for his moral worth and uprightness by the world. Not even the former life of a bishop should be open to reproach. The reproach continually surrounding him for former sins might lead him into the snare of becoming as bad as his reputation. Despair of recovering reputation might, in a weak moment, lead some into recklessness of living.

Lessons.—1. *The officers of the Church should be above reproach.* 2. *A bishop*

should be a competent leader of the Church. 3. Only the grace of God can make a true bishop.

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. "*Apt to teach.*" *The Pulpit a Light and Power.*

I. **To meet the claims of a good teacher one must be willing to learn.**

II. **We must have a lesson to impart.**

III. **One must be master of the lesson he would impart.**

IV. **A sacred enthusiasm is indispensable.**

V. **We must gather strength and success by prayer.**

VI. **Apt to teach has the element of faith.**—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Vers. 4, 5. *Family Government*—

I. **Must be carried on in a religious spirit.**

II. **Is necessary in the proper training of children.**

III. **Is a preparation for higher ministerial duties.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—13.

Qualifications of New Testament Deacons.

I. **They must be men of good character and behaviour** (ver. 8).—The deacons answer to the chazzan of the synagogue—the attendant ministers or subordinate coadjutors of the presbyter. Their duty was to read the Scriptures in the Church, to instruct the catechumens in Christian truths, to assist the presbyters at the sacraments, to receive oblations, and to preach and instruct. To the other qualifications belonging to the bishops, the deacons were required to be circumspect in speech. "Not double-tongued"—not saying one thing to this person and another to that person. The extensive personal intercourse that deacons would have with members of the Church might prove a temptation to such a fault. "Not given to much wine." He who would not merely aid poverty, but as far as possible heal it, must be himself a pattern of temperance. "Not greedy of filthy lucre." Any who was capable of this would soon appropriate dishonestly the gifts entrusted to him for the poor. All gain is base which is set before a man as a by-end in his work for God. The deacon's office of collecting and distributing alms would render this uncovetous spirit a necessary qualification.

II. **They must be men holding clear and conscientious views of Divine truth.**—"Holding the mystery of the faith in a good conscience" (ver. 9). The mystery of the faith is like a treasure in the actual possession of the deacons, and the coffer in which it is best preserved is a good conscience. Having a firm hold of the truth themselves and realising its power in their hearts, they must illustrate it in their lives and actions.

III. **They must be men whose fidelity has been tested.**—"And let these also first be proved" (ver. 10). Their character is to be carefully inquired into, and the investigation being favourable, they are then to be appointed deacons. In this way the unworthy were kept from office. The office required one of tried and well-ascertained fidelity.

IV. **They must be men whose married and family life is without reproach** (vers. 11, 12).—The character not only of the wives of the deacons, but also of deaconesses, is referred to here. The same qualifications are required in female deacons as in deacons, only with such modifications as the difference of sex suggested. "Not slanderers"—not devils, as they undoubtedly would be if guilty of lying and slander. "Sober"—answering to "not given to much

wine." "Faithful in all things"—in little as well as great. The deacons must be husbands of one wife—not marrying a second time; and must show competency for their duty in the Church by ruling their own households well. The domestic virtues of deacons must not be inferior to that of presbyters. Care of their own children was doubtless the best preparatory school for care of the poor and sick.

V. **Fidelity in their office will ensure their advancement and stability in the truth.**—"For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ" (ver. 13). Those who faithfully discharge the duties of the diaconate acquire for themselves a good standing-place, a well-founded hope of salvation against the day of judgment. A faithful fulfilment of our calling in the Church of Christ is the means blessed by Him to win here as in eternity a good degree of growth and of salvation (*Lange, Fausset*). It seems most agreeable to our conceptions of justice, and is consonant enough to the language of Scripture, to suppose that there are prepared for us rewards and punishments of all possible degrees, from the most exalted happiness to the extremest misery, so that our labour is never in vain: whatever our advancement in virtue, we procure a proportionable accession of future happiness (*Paley*).

Lessons.—1. *Church work affords spheres of special usefulness.* 2. *Work for God demands the highest moral qualifications.* 3. *Work done for the Church helps the growth of personal godliness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 8-13. *Church Officers—*

I. **Should be sedate in behaviour** (vers. 8, 11).

II. **Irreproachable in life** (vers. 8, 11).

III. **Conscientious in maintaining the faith** (ver. 9).

IV. **Should be submitted to preparatory tests** (ver. 10).

V. **Exemplary in home life** (ver. 12).

VI. **Are rewarded for their fidelity** (ver. 13).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14, 15.

The Dignity and Stability of the Church.

I. **The Church is the habitation of the living God.**—"The house of God, which is the Church of the living God" (ver. 15). The Church of God does not consist of massive buildings, however grandly designed or richly decorated, but is a congregation of immortal souls and of bodies, which are temples of the living God. How different from the lifeless idol Diana, in whose honour the Ephesians built a temple that was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world, and how different the worship and service! God's house must have rules and regulations to preserve it from unseemly disorder and irreverence. The congregation worshipping the living God must have a constitution and laws to preserve it from faction and anarchy. Officers of such a Church must have the highest qualifications, and their behaviour be above suspicion. To them is largely entrusted the moral culture and destiny of living souls. "As I was walking in the fields," writes M'Cheyne, "the thought came over me, with almost overwhelming power, that every one of my flock must soon be in heaven or hell. Oh, how I wished that I had a tongue like thunder, that I might make all hear; or that I had a frame like iron, that I might visit every one and say, 'Escape for thy life!' Ah! sinners, you little know how I fear that you will lay the blame of your damnation at my door!"

II. **The Church is the stay and defence of the truth.**—"The pillar and ground of the truth" (ver. 15). "To the Church has been assigned a post of great responsibility. Truth in itself is self-evident and self-sustained; it needs no external support or foundation. But truth as it is manifested to the world needs the best support and the firmest basis that can be found for it. And it is the duty and privilege of the Church to supply these. God's household is not only a community which in a solemn and special way belongs to the living God—it is also the pillar and ground of the truth." The Church is stable and enduring because it rests upon and is made up of unchanging truth: the truth it declares defends and preserves it. One of the red republicans of 1793 was telling a good peasant of La Vendée, "We are going to pull down your churches and your steeples—all that recalls the superstitions of past ages, and all that brings to your mind the idea of God." "Citizen," replied the good Vendéean, "pull down the stars then."

III. **The greatness of the Church needs special qualifications in its officers.**—"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (vers. 14, 15). As his hope of visiting Ephesus soon was not very confident, the apostle regards the work of governing the Church as of such vital importance that he provides for Timothy's lengthened superintendence by giving him the preceding rules to guide him. Thus he commends the weight and dignity of the pastoral office, because pastors are stewards to whom God has committed the charge of governing His house. If any person has the superintendence of a large house, he labours night and day with earnest solicitude that nothing may go wrong through his neglect or ignorance or carelessness. If only for men this is done, how much more should it be done for God! St. Francis, reflecting on a story he heard of a mountaineer in the Alps who had risked his life to save a sheep, says, "O God, if such was the earnestness of this shepherd in seeking for a mean animal which had probably been frozen on the glacier, how is it that I am so indifferent in seeking my sheep?"

Lessons.—1. *God is the life of His own Church.* 2. *The Church lives by being faithful to the truth.* 3. *No pains should be spared in acquiring efficiency in Church work.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. *The Christian in the Church.*

I. **The condition our subject supposes.**—1. *The Church comprises all the redeemed and sanctified people of God.* 2. *Frequently means a particular community or company of believers associated together for religious purposes.*

II. **The obligations we are under to enter this state.**—1. *Suitability.* 2. *Consolation.* 3. *Safety.* 4. *Usefulness.*

III. **The duties arising from the state.**—1. *Worship, in the use of the means of grace.* 2. *These duties in the use of the means regard the minister.* 3. *Your fellow-members.* 4. *The welfare and prosperity of the whole interest.*—*W. Jay.*

The Church the House of God.

I. **The Church of God**—1. *Is any number of Christians meeting together.* 2. *All the Churches in existence on earth at the same time.* 3. *All the people of God of all ages.*

II. **The Church of God is a house.**—1. *It has a foundation.* 2. *The materials of the house are men.* The materials differ from each other, and are prepared for the heavenly building before they go to it. 3. *The putting of the materials together is done by union and mutual dependence on each other.*

III. **The Church of God is the house of God.**—1. *He is the builder.* 2. *The owner.* 3. *The inhabitant.*—*C. Bradley.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 16.

An Epitome of the Gospel.

I. **The incarnate God a mystery, but a fact.**—"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The oldest manuscripts and versions read, "He who was manifest in the flesh." Paul speaks of the truth as the mystery of godliness, in order to express both the Divine and the human aspects of the Christian faith. On the Divine side the gospel is a mystery, a disclosed secret. It is a body of truth originally hidden from man's knowledge, to which man by his own unaided reason and abilities would never be able to find the way. The mystery of godliness has for its centre and basis the life of a Divine Person; and the great crisis in the long process by which the mystery was revealed was reached when this Divine Person was manifested in the flesh. "Mystery" in Christian theology implies something which once was concealed but has now been made known: "manifest" implies making known what had once been concealed. An historical appearance of One who had previously existed, but had been kept from the knowledge of the world, is what is meant by "who was manifest in the flesh." The famous statue of Christ in the gallery at Stuttgart, by Dannecker, was produced after reading the words "God manifest in the flesh," which led to the conversion of the sculptor. The subject he proposed to himself seemed too great; but as he reflected that others could preach and write on Christianity, which he could not do, he wrought out the statue as the expression of his faith.

II. **The incarnate God was vindicated as Divine in His own spirit.**—"Justified in the Spirit." His flesh was the sphere of His manifestation; His spirit was the sphere of His justification. It was in His spirit that Christ was affected when the presence of moral evil distressed Him. This spiritual part of His nature which was the sphere of His most intense suffering, was also the sphere of His most intense joy and satisfaction. As moral evil distressed His spirit, so moral innocence delighted it. In a way that none of us can measure, Jesus Christ knew the joy of a good conscience. His justification or vindication in respect to His spirit or higher being was effected by all that manifested that higher being—His words, works, His Father's testimony at His baptism and at the Transfiguration, and by His resurrection.

III. **The incarnate God is a suggestive revelation to the angelic intelligences.**—"Seen of angels." This manifestation of a perfectly righteous man was not confined to the human race. The angels also witnessed it, as well as His triumphant return to glory, and can bear testimony to the reality of both facts. Angels saw the Son of God with us, not having seen Him before. Not even they had seen His Divine nature, which is not visible to any creature, but they saw Him incarnate.

IV. **The incarnate God is the theme of the gospel and the object of faith.**—1. *As such He was declared to the nations.* "Preached unto the Gentiles." What angels came to know by seeing, the nations learned by preaching. He is a new message to the one class as well as to the other—to the angels so near to Him, and the Gentiles so far off. 2. *As such He was and is accepted by perishing men.* "Believed on in the world." Though many reject Him, many believe on Him. To reject Him is to perish; to believe on Him is to be saved.

V. **The incarnate God is now reigning in heavenly glory.**—"Received up into glory." At His ascension He was received up so as now to be in glory, carrying on His mediatorial work and ruling the universe, until all things shall be finally subdued unto Him. The revelation of the eternal Son, which imposes on those who accept it a holiness of which His sinlessness must be the model,

is something awful and profound. But He does not impose a pattern for imitation without at the same time granting the grace necessary for struggling towards it. The sinlessness of Christ is immeasurably beyond us here; and it may be that in eternity the loss caused by our sins in this life will never be entirely cancelled. But having followed Christ on earth, we shall follow Him still more in heaven (*Plummer, Fausset*).

Lessons.—1. *The gospel is the revelation of the incarnate God.* 2. *The fundamental facts of the gospel are well authenticated.* 3. *If we reject the gospel we shall be condemned by both earth and heaven.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 16. *Mysteriousness of Godliness.*

I. **Godliness as it exists in the soul and character of man is a mystery.**—1. *It is mysterious in its commencement.* 2. *Mysterious in its own proper nature or in that in which it consists.* 3. *Mysterious to those who are themselves possessed of it.* 4. *A mystery to the world.*

II. **Godliness as it exists in the form of Christian doctrine is a mystery.**—1. *Because of its own intrinsic nature.* 2. *Because of the remoteness and invisibility of the things of which it treats.* 3. *Because of the untriedness of the state it describes.* 4. *Because of the inscrutable nature of many of the subjects of which it treats.* 5. *Because of the manner in which it is revealed.* 6. *Because of the character and capacities of man.*—*Stewart.*

The Mystery of Godliness.

I. **The gospel a great mystery.**—1. *Because it could not have been known had it not been revealed.* 2. *Being revealed, it cannot be perfectly comprehended.* (1) Reason not to be the measure of faith. (2) Disquisition of truth to be within the bounds of sobriety. (3) Offence not to be taken at the difference of opinions among Christians.

II. **Christianity a mystery of godliness.**—1. *In regard of its general scope.* 2. *Of the special parts of it.* 3. *In the means of conserving it.* The best and surest means to preserve Christianity in its proper integrity and power is to season it well with grace, and be sure to keep the conscience upright.—*R. Sanderson.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Doctrines of devils.**—The term "devils" seems to give the spirit of the apostle's meaning more accurately than the more literal "demons" would.

Ver. 2. **Having their conscience seared with a hot iron.**—R.V. "branded in their own conscience." As a runaway or offending slave was sometimes punished by having the brand of his infamy stamped on his brow, so these men carry about with them their own condemnation.

Ver. 3. **Forbidding to marry.**—It does not appear whether they forbade all to marry or only the aspirants to peculiar sanctity. **To abstain from meats, which God created to be received.**—The strongest condemnation of ascetic practices, St. Paul seems to think, is that they contravene the good purpose of God. **With thanksgiving.**—The true attitude towards the gifts of God. "It was a maxim even of the heathen that the good gifts of the gods were not to be refused" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 5. **For it is sanctified.**—Not merely declared holy, but made holy.

Ver. 7. **But refuse profane and old wives' fables.**—Have nothing whatever to do with those irreligious and pitiable myths. What some reputed as wisdom St. Paul calls grandmotherly mumblings. **Exercise thyself rather unto godliness.**—He who had Himself fought the good fight would not have his well-beloved Timothy a credulous weakling, but strong through the gymnastic exercise of faith.

Ver. 8. **For bodily exercise profiteth little.**—The meaning which seems simplest may here be the correct one, as many able scholars think—bodily exercise, development of the body's powers, is profitable in some small way, and for a short time. **Godliness is profitable unto all things.**—"Thrift is blessing, if men steal it not"; but when the only godliness is the spirit of Shylock's thrift (as in chap. vi. 5), it is unblest enough.

Ver. 10. **We both labour and suffer reproach.**—R.V. "we labour and strive." Though the changed reading of the R.V. is highly attested, Ellicott thinks it suspicious and prefers the A.V. **Specially of those that believe.**—He is the Saviour of all in that He would have all men to be saved—the Saviour showed the consequence of opposing that universal and gracious purpose (Matt. xxiii. 38); but where the human will is one with the Divine, there is a specially effective salvation unto the uttermost.

Ver. 12. **Let no man despise thy youth.**—It is not upon any official position that St. Paul would demand respect, but on the worth of personal character. It is a poor thing when a distinction has to be made between the man as man and as official.

Ver. 13. **Give attendance to reading.**—Probably the apostle means to the public reading of the Old Testament Scriptures, though it would not be surprising if portions of our New Testament were so read at the late date when this epistle was written.

Ver. 14. **Neglect not the gift.**—In the second epistle this gift is represented as a living fire which must be cared for. **With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.**—In 2 Tim. i. 6 the imposition of hands is regarded as instrumental to the reception of the charisma: here it is a concomitant merely.

Ver. 15. **Meditate upon these things.**—R.V. "Be diligent in." The word for "neglect" in ver. 14 is the direct opposite of "meditate." **That thy profiting.**—R.V. "thy progress," like that of a boat whose oars beat the water and urge it forward.

Ver. 16. **Take heed to thyself.**—In ver. 13 the apostle had bidden Timothy give heed to the teaching: the "take heed" of this verse is perhaps slightly more emphatic. **Thou shalt save both thyself, and them that hear thee.**—It is possible that a man who plays an actor's part may utter a word that shall rouse the conscience or touch the heart, but the messenger of the gospel must himself know the truths he proclaims to others.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—5.

False Doctrine—

I. **Leads to apostasy.**—"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith" (ver. 1). Signs of apostasy were already discernible in the operation of the Gnostic heresy. Apollonius Tyanæus, a notorious heretic, came to Ephesus in the lifetime of Timothy. The defection was within the Church; and the active cause of the apostasy was the false teaching of the heresiarchs. It is perilous for members of the Church to give heed to the seductive voice of error.

II. **Is the suggestion of evil spirits.**—"Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (ver. 1). The spawn of devilish malice—the reckless sport or cunning designs of inveterate wickedness. The throne of Satan was shaken by the introduction of the gospel, and the opposition of evil spirits was the more fierce and malignant. In warning the Thessalonians the apostle connects the mystery of iniquity which was working such mischief with the activity of some wicked demon acting under the instigation of Satan.

III. **Is discoverable by unmistakable marks.**—1. *By the character of its teachers.* "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (ver. 2). They are hypocritical liars, self-branded with crime: not only speaking lies to others, but having their own consciences seared. Professing to lead others to holiness, their own consciences all the while defiled. A bad conscience always has recourse to deception. They are branded with the consciousness of sins committed against their better knowledge and conscience, like

so many scars burnt in by a branding-iron—an image taken from the branding of criminals. They are conscious of the brand within, yet with a hypocritical show of sanctity they strive to deceive others. Pollok called the hypocrite "the man that stole the livery of heaven to serve the devil in." 2. *By its enforcing a spurious outward sanctity.* "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" (ver. 3). Sensuality leads to false spiritualism. Their own inward impurity is reflected in their eyes in the world around them, and hence their asceticism. By a spurious spiritualism which made moral perfection consist in abstinence from outward things they pretended to attain to a higher perfection. Those who do not keep from ambition, covetousness, hatred, and cruelty endeavour to obtain righteousness by abstaining from those things which God has left at large. Not long after the death of the apostle arose Encratites, Tatianists, Catharists, Montanus with his sect, and at length Manichæans, who had extreme aversion to marriage and the eating of flesh, and condemned them as profane things. Such is the disposition of the world, always dreaming that God ought to be worshipped in a carnal manner, as if God were carnal.

IV. **Degrades the true use of the Divine gift of food.**—1. *All God's gifts are good.* "For every creature of God is good" (ver. 4). A refutation by anticipation of the Gnostic opposition to creation, the seeds of which were now lurking latently in the Church. Judaism was the starting-point of the error as to meats: Oriental gnosis added new elements. The old Gnostic heresy is now almost extinct, but it remains in the celibacy of the priesthood, and in Church fasts from animal meat, enjoined under the penalty of mortal sin. In and for itself no food is objectionable, yet on condition that it be used with thanksgiving to God. Creatures are not called good merely because they are the works of God, but because through His goodness they have been given to us. 2. *God's gifts are good to us only as we receive them in a devout and thankful spirit.* "And nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (vers. 4, 5). Just as in the Lord's Supper the thanksgiving prayer sanctifies the elements, separating them from their natural alien position in relation to the spiritual world, and transferring them to their true relation to the new life, so, in every use of the creature, thanksgiving prayer has the same effect, and ought always to be used. One of the most beautiful models of the primitive "Grace before meat," consisting almost wholly of Scripture, was this: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast fed me from my youth, who givest food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that, having always what sufficeth, we may abound unto all good works in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom be unto Thee honour, glory, and power, for ever and ever. Amen" (*Calvin, Fausset*).

Lessons.—1. *False teachers, deceived themselves, deceive others.* 2. *Error in doctrine leads to sins in practice.* 3. *Prayer and thanksgiving are safeguards against false doctrine.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. *A Seared Conscience.*—Note the successive stages which lead to a seared conscience.

I. **Dull conscience.**—Not quick and active, but slothful; like a storm-bell ringing in the storm, when it should be as a storm-signal run up in a blue sky.

II. **Uneasy conscience.**—Multiplied sins, small and trifling as each may appear, will lead to this, just as accumulated snow-flakes bend the strongest bough.

III. **Guilty conscience.**—Accusing the sinner of his sin and folly. This

may be either an awakened or a remorseful conscience.

IV. **Hardened conscience.** — The hardened need not be invulnerable; there may be a joint somewhere where the arrow of conviction may enter.

V. **A seared conscience.**—Cauterised. A nerve diseased or almost paralysed may possibly be healed; but when it has been subjected to the cauterising iron it is perished. What hope for a man whose conscience is cauterised?—*E. Conder, D.D.*

Vers. 4, 5. *The Gifts of God*—

I. **Though good, may be abused.**

II. **Should be enjoyed in a thankful spirit.**

III. **Should be hallowed by prayer in harmony with the word of God.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6, 7.

The True Minister of Christ—

I. **Is faithful in instructing others.**—"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ" (ver. 6). Light is given to the minister that he may shed it upon others. All his studies are not simply for his own mental enjoyment—to the minister often a most seductive pleasure—but should be used in storing up a magazine of truth to be imparted to his people. Everything he reads should be turned into sermon. It is a poor book that does not yield something useful for the pulpit, and it is a waste of time to read anything that does not add to his homiletic store. All true preaching is a setting forth of Christ, and the deepest learning and most varied knowledge should be coveted for that end. A minister being one week-day evening in London, asked a friend where he could hear a good sermon. Two places were mentioned. "Well," said he, "tell me the characters of the preachers, that I may choose." "Mr. D——," said his friend, "exhibits the orator, and is much admired for his pulpit eloquence." "And what is the other?" "Why, I hardly know what to say of Mr. C——; he always throws himself into the background, and you see his Master only." "That's the man for me then; let us go and hear him."

II. **Finds his own spiritual nourishment in the truth he is commissioned to preach.**—"Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" (ver. 6). The minister not only needs themes for the pulpit, but also food for his own soul. His Bible studies are therefore not simply critical and homiletical, but devotional. To teach others he must be instructed himself; to influence others he must himself be powerfully moved by the truth. Success in preaching will largely depend upon his own personal growth in piety. Spurgeon one day sitting at a window in Cologne noticed a man with a yoke and two buckets coming and going to a pump in the square for water, and at once thought to himself: "Ah, you do not fetch water to your own house, I am persuaded: you are a water-carrier; you fetch water for lots of people, and that is why you come oftener than anybody else. Now there was a meaning in that to my soul—that inasmuch as I had not only to go to Christ for myself, but had been made a water-carrier to carry the water of everlasting life to others, I must come a great deal oftener than anybody else."

III. **Ignores the profitless theories of the enemies of the truth.**—"But refuse profane and old wives' fables" (ver. 7). It would have been a waste of time to occupy the mind on the fables and foolish traditions of the Jewish deceivers; their folly and emptiness were apparent on the surface. The minister must be rigidly discriminative in his studies, and soon detects what is profitless and profane, leading away from piety and from the great vital themes of his ministry. Passing through the china works at Sèvres, we observed an artist drawing a

picture on a vase. We watched him for some minutes: other visitors came and went, glancing at the work and passing remarks; but the man took not the slightest heed of any, but was wholly absorbed in his work. A suggestive lesson. After this fashion should we devote our heart and soul to the ministry we have received. This one thing I do. To imprint the image of Jesus on a human soul demands whole-hearted devotion on the part of the most gifted minister.

IV. **Is ever striving after practical piety.**—"And exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (ver. 7). The fable-mongers enforced certain ascetic rules as to eating and drinking and the treatment of the body—practices both unnecessary and injurious. The apostle teaches a nobler discipline. As the gymnast trains his body to develop physical strength and alertness, so the minister should exercise all his mental and spiritual powers with a view of invigorating his own personal piety. Godliness is a moral state, and demands the most strenuous employment of moral energies and the constant use of moral agencies. Daily study and meditation must be directed to increase in personal godliness.

Lessons.—1. *The minister of the gospel should be apt to teach.* 2. *Should avoid profitless controversies.* 3. *Should diligently cultivate personal religion.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *A Good Minister of Jesus Christ.*

I. **His goodness as a minister of Christ is disclosed in the faithfulness of his subordination to the authority of Christ.**

II. **In the persistency of his adherence to the doctrine of Christ.**

III. **In the steadfastness of his imitation of the example of Christ.**

IV. **In the devoutness of his dependence on the grace of Christ.**—*Dr. Brock.*

Ver. 7. *Spiritual Growth.*

I. **Seasons of devout solitude are necessary to higher culture.**

II. **Spiritual communion with good men.**

III. **Close communion with Christ.**

IV. **Communion with and prayer to God.**—*Homiletic Monthly.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—11.

Athletics and Religion.

I. **Athletic exercise has some advantage.**—"For bodily exercise profiteth little" (ver. 8). The apostle is using terms employed in describing the gymnastic contests in the public games, and the training necessary for the athletes. Bodily exercise taken in moderation profiteth a little. It improves health, develops physique, strengthens us to labour for God and man. But athletics may be overdone. An abnormal development of muscle deteriorates the quality of the brain and impairs the general health. Plato says of the wrestlers of his day that they were a sluggish set and of dubious health, that they slept out their lives, and if they varied their regular diet in the least degree they became extensively and deeply diseased. The disciplining of the body by abstinence may also be some advantage in the suppression and control of the passions; but the advantage is limited. It is an attempt to reach the inward life by outward means, which is a reversal of the Christian method, which seeks to regulate the outward life from within.

II. **Religion has every advantage.**—1. *It is best for the present life.* "But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is" (ver. 8). It tends to health and longevity by teaching us the proper use of the

body, and shows that true happiness and prosperity are secured by promoting the welfare of both body and soul. 2. *It is best for the future life.* "And of that which is to come" (ver. 8). It ensures an eternity of blessedness. The condition of our bodily and mental powers attained by judicious exercise must have an important influence upon our spiritual state. The degree of moral excellence attained in this life will be the basis of development and enjoyment in the life to come.

III. **Religion involves fatigue and shame, but it means salvation to the believing.**—"For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God" (ver. 10). Religion is not obtained without effort: we must "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and we must labour to maintain our integrity, notwithstanding the opposition and reproach of the world; but trusting in the living God, we shall be able to endure and finally conquer. 1. *This is an undoubted and universal fact.* "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation" (ver. 9). It may seem to some that godly men suffer loss as to this life; but it is not so. The labour and reproach of the good man do not deprive him of the best blessings of the present life, which he enjoys in rich abundance, though with persecutions (Mark x. 30); and he has the assurance of yet greater blessings in the future life. 2. *As the living God is willing to save all, He will certainly save those who believe in Him.* "The living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (ver. 10). If God is the Saviour of all men, even of those who do not believe in Him, and is their benefactor and preserver, much more, and in a most blessed sense, is He the Saviour of those who fully trust in Him. He is the Saviour of all men potentially, as He has provided and offers salvation to all; but to those who believe in Him He is their Saviour experimentally and really—they become conscious of their salvation by their faith in Him.

IV. **The distinction between athletics and religion should be authoritatively insisted on.**—"These things command and teach" (ver. 11). In opposition to the false views of the Judaisers, Timothy must reiterate the truth concerning true godliness. "You can always show what a life of godliness really is,—that it is full of joyousness, and that its joys are neither fitful nor uncertain; that it is no foe to what is bright and beautiful, and is neither morose in itself nor apt to frown at light-heartedness in others; that it does not interfere with the most strenuous attention to business and the most capable despatch of it. Men refuse to listen to or to be moved by words; but they cannot help noticing and being influenced by facts which are all round them in their daily lives. So far as man can judge, the number of vicious, mean, and unworthy lives is far in excess of those which are pure and lofty. Each one of us can do something towards throwing the balance the other way. We can prove to all the world that godliness is not an unreality, that it enhances the brightness of all that is really beautiful in life, while it raises to a higher power all natural gifts and abilities" (*Plummer*).

Lessons.—1. *Bodily athletics may be carried to injurious excess.* 2. *The noblest athletics are spiritual, and seek to promote genuine godliness.* 3. *Religion is best for both worlds.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 8. *The Life that now is.*

I. **It is short.**

II. **Uncertain.**

III. **Chequered.**

IV. **Important.**—It has a relation to that which is to come.—*G. Brooks*

The Life which is to come.

I. **Mention some of the proofs that**

there is a life to come.—Proofs from reason—analogy, common consent, the desire of immortality, conscience. Proofs from revelation.

II. **Mention some of the characteristics of the life to come.**—1. *It will comprehend man's whole nature.* 2. *It will be purely and entirely retributive.* 3. *It will be unchangeable and eternal.*

III. **Mention some of our duties in reference to the life to come.**—1. *We should habitually contemplate it.* 2. *We should diligently prepare for it.* —*G. Brooks.*

The Profitableness of Godliness.

I. **The nature of godliness.**—1. *It comprehends the fear of God.* 2. *The saving knowledge of God.* 3. *Supreme love to God.* 4. *Intercourse with God.* 5. *The practice of righteousness.* 6. *Implies a humble and supreme regard to the honour and glory of God in all things.*

II. **The advantages of godliness.**—1. *It is profitable for the present life.* (1) Consider its influence on a man's external circumstances. (2) Is calculated to promote a man's worldly prosperity. (3) It elevates and expands the mind. (4) Gives real excellence and sterling worth to a man's character. (5) Has a tendency to prolong life. (6) Profitable to individual happiness. (7) To mankind in their social capacity and in all the diversified relations of life. (8) Is profitable during every stage of life—in the morning, noon, and eventide of life. 2. *Profitable for the life to come.* (1) If there were no positive certainty of a future life, godliness is profitable. (2) It is certain there is another life.

Lessons.—1. *We see the fallacy and impiety of those who say, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto Him?"* 2. *The inconsistency and folly of those who, while admitting the profit of godliness, make no practical efforts to realise its advantages.* 3. *We commend godliness on the principle of enlightened self-interest.*—*Dr. Robert Newton.*

Ver. 10.—*Christ the Saviour of All Men.*

I. As He is the embodiment of the truest and noblest manhood.

II. Therefore all men may be saved.

III. Therefore the gospel should be proclaimed to all.

IV. Men are truly saved only as they believe in Christ as the Saviour.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 12.

The Power of a Good Example—

I. **Commands respect in spite of youthfulness.**—"Let no man despise thy youth." Timothy was a mere youth—probably between twenty and twenty-five years of age—when Paul selected him as a missionary companion (Acts xvi. 1-3). Eleven years had elapsed since then to the time subsequent to Paul's first imprisonment. He was therefore still comparatively young, especially considered in relation to the elderly presbyters he was authorised to appoint and ordain, a work that seemed more fitting to the sedateness and gravity of age, and especially in relation to the aged Paul, who was evidently anxious to prepare Timothy to be in some sort his successor. Youthfulness is no disability in doing good. It is possible so to act as to win the esteem of all classes. Youth has great influence, and therefore great responsibility. "Tell me what is the character of the young," said an old statesman, "and I'll tell you the character of the next generation."

II. **Is based on consistency of religious life.**—1. *In speech.* "But be thou an example of the believers in word." The tendency of youth is to exaggerate in speech, and the danger is that what begins in mere playfulness may degenerate into wanton misrepresentation. Speech is an index of character. During the

war between Alexander the Great and Darius, king of Persia, a soldier in the army of the latter thought to ingratiate himself with Memnon, the Persian general, by uttering the fiercest invectives against Alexander. Memnon gently touched the fellow with his spear and said, "Friend, I pay you to fight against Alexander, not to revile him." 2. *In conduct.* "In conversation." The young minister should so behave in the Church, the family, and in intercourse with the world as to gain respect both for his office and his work. 3. *In spirit.* "In charity, in spirit, in faith." Faith and love are the spring and sustenance of a becoming Christian spirit. The spirit that animates us will make itself evident in word and action. 4. *In holiness.* "In purity." The minister should cultivate the deepest experiences of the spiritual life, and be holy in thought, in word, and in intention. Simplicity of holy motive should be followed out in consistency of holy action. The same Greek word signifies a fool and a child; and the Hebrew word for youth signifies blackness or darkness. Few Macarinses are to be found, who, for his gravity in youth, was surnamed "the old young man."

III. **Is a guide and inspiration to others.**—"Be thou an example to the believers." The young as well as the old may be an example for good, and so be an encouragement to young and old. It is a noble ambition to be not the first but the best among the good. A single example of valour and devotion is a stimulus to others. Whilst stationed in Scotland, Colonel Durnford happened to be between Berwick and Holy Island, where a small craft had stuck on the coast during a storm. Seeing the hesitation of the fishermen to go to the rescue, he jumped into a boat, calling out, "Will none of you come with me? If not, I shall go alone." A volunteer crew at once joined him and succeeded in rescuing those in peril.

Lessons.—1. *A good example is the product of genuine religion.* 2. *An example of youthful fidelity is an inspiration to many.* 3. *We should study not so much to be an example to others as to be good ourselves.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—16.

Ministerial Responsibilities—

I. **Involve the constant public reading and enforcement of the Holy Scriptures.**—"Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (ver. 13). The practice of reading the Scriptures in the Jewish synagogues was transferred to the Christian Church. The New Testament gospels and epistles, recognised as inspired productions by those who in the early Christian age had the gift of discerning spirits, were read in the churches along with the Old Testament books. This constant public reading of the Bible in the sanctuary has had a powerful influence in forming national character throughout Christendom. To read the word of God in public with due emphasis and efficiency is worthy of the most careful study. It should ever be regarded as an important part of public worship: it has often been made a blessing to the congregation. The Bible must also be diligently pondered by the minister for his own personal edification, and as the fountain of wisdom from which he must continually draw in instructing and exhorting his people. It is said of some of the mines of Cornwall that the deeper they are sunk the richer they prove; and though some lodes have been followed a thousand and even fifteen hundred feet, they have not come to an end. Such is the book of God. It is a mine of wealth which can never be exhausted. The deeper we sink into it the richer it becomes.

II. **Require the frequent stirring up of any special spiritual endowment.**—"Neglect not the gift that is in thee" (ver. 14). The gift referred to was, in general, his spiritual qualification for the ministry. It is represented as a

spark of the Spirit, likely to smoulder if neglected, and needing to be blown into flame by vigorous exercise The bestowment of the Spirit at his ordination was prophetic of the power that would be ever communicated to him in carrying on his work. The call to the ministry is also a qualification to discharge its duties.

III. **Demand earnest and progressive study of Divine things.**—"Meditate upon these things" (ver. 15). Spiritual endowment is no plea for mental laziness. The study of the word of God requires and involves constant reading, elaborate research, and intense thought. All our intellectual abilities and resources are taxed to the uttermost.

IV. **Impose continuous vigilance over both life and teaching in order to success.**—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine" (ver. 16). Personal piety must be sedulously cultivated. The people are quick to detect religious decadence and loss of spiritual power in the minister. The power of teaching depends upon a constantly vivid sense of the reality and solemnity of eternal verities. It is a fruitless moan of the husbandman, "Thou hast made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard I have not kept."

Lessons.—1. *The minister is responsible to God.* 2. *Responsibility involves watchfulness and constant effort.* 3. *Success, whether evident to us or not, is proportioned to fidelity.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *Ministerial Duties—*

I. Necessitate much reading and study.

II. Include frequent appeals to the feelings and will of the people in order to regulate the life.

III. Involve furnishing the understanding with substantial knowledge.

IV. Demand the exercise of the choicest spiritual gifts.

Ver. 15. *Meditation.*

I. Hindrances in forming the habit.—1. *The tendency to relapse into indifference concerning spiritual things.* 2. *The absorbing demands of business.* 3. *Excessive attention and labours in the external prosperity of the Church.*

II. **The duty of meditation.**—1. *The subject-matter of meditation.* "Those things" (ver. 15: compare ver. 13; 2 Tim. iii. 15). The Holy Scriptures, in their direct bearing on religious life and experience. 2. *The exercise of the duty*—(1) Includes reading. (2) Reflection. (3) Prayer. (4) Earnest exercise of all our powers.

III. **Advantages of the duty.** 1. *Personal.* "Thy profiting." 2. *Relative.* "May appear in all things."

Ver. 16. *Ordination Sermon.*

I. Ministers ought to take heed to their personal religion.

II. To their study.

III. To their preaching.

IV. To their parochial duties.—*E. D. Griffin.*

The Comparative Influence of Character and Doctrine.

I. Life tends very greatly to modify a man's own views of doctrine.

II. Affects his power of expressing or communicating truth to others.

III. Has in many respects an influence which direct teaching or doctrine cannot exert.—1. *Actions are more intelligible than words.* 2. *The language of the life is more convincing than the language of the lip.* 3. *The teaching of the life is available in many cases in which the teaching of the lip cannot or ought not to be attempted.*—*J. Caird.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Rebuke not an elder.**—*I.e.* do not sharply reprimand one advanced in years. The authority of St. Paul was never that of those who "lord it over God's heritage."

Ver. 2. **As sisters, with all purity.**—With severe chastity of thought and expression.

Ver. 4. **Children or nephews.**—R.V. "children or grandchildren." "Descendants, or more specially, as the context implies, grandchildren—nephews in the original but now antiquated sense of the word" (*Ellicott*). **Shew piety at home.**—Another example of St. Paul's natural religion. Filial piety is what he here enjoins.

Ver. 5. **She that is a widow indeed.**—Like old Anna who "departed not from the Temple"—left desolate for a long lifetime.

Ver. 6. **She that liveth in pleasure.**—R.V. "giveth herself to pleasure." The only other use of the word in the New Testament is Jas. v. 5.—an instructive parallel. **Dead while she liveth.**—As in the vivid thought of the East that which was certain was spoken of as actual, so St. Paul regards a wanton life as an actual death.

Ver. 8. **If any provide not.**—If he does not use his judgment to anticipate the needs. **For his own, and specially for those of his own house.**—This cuts at the root of the improvidence which might originate in the care of the Church, through the deacons, for those who were destitute. A man's household must be his concern rather than that of the Church or the board of guardians.

Ver. 9. **Let not a widow be taken into the number.**—R.V. "Let none be enrolled as a widow." It has been suggested that they were an order of widows who took the oversight of the younger women. Perhaps they acted as chaperons.

Ver. 10. **Brought up children.**—Whether her own children, or others left as orphans, it is not easy to decide. **Lodged strangers.**—R.V. "used hospitality to." Not only with the possibility of finding angels (Heb. xiii. 2) amongst them, but with the direct assurance that the Lord Himself, in His lowliest servant, was honoured.

Ver. 11. **The younger widows refuse.**—"They were not necessarily to be excluded from the alms of the Church, but were only to be held ineligible for the *collegium viduarum*" (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 13. **Tattlers also, and busy-bodies.**—Like Diotrephes—going about prating against St. John—these babblers give unrestrained licence to their tongues, and permit others no peace from their meddlesomeness.

Ver. 16. **If any man or woman that believeth have widows.**—How were the younger widows to be supported then? Let their relatives care for them rather than place them in a position to bring reproach on the community.

Ver. 17. **Counted worthy of double honour.**—If the honour is remuneration, this double honour, denoting competent reward as well as respect, is like Costard's "gardon, better than remuneration."

Ver. 19. **Receive not an accusation.**—Their position would render them liable to be accused, and they must be guarded from slander.

Ver. 21. **The elect angels.**—Who kept their own estate (Jude 6).

Ver. 22. **Lays hands suddenly on no man.**—The usual explanation, of the imposition of hands in ordination, is rejected by Ellicott in favour of the assumption that it was in absolution of penitents. It would seem better to leave the admonition more general, as a warning against precipitancy.

Ver. 23. **Drink no longer water.**—Timothy had evidently carried his abstemiousness beyond the limits of prudence.

Ver. 24. **Going before . . . follow after.**—In either case they come to judgment, as heralds and apparitors, or as an inevitable testimony crying after them.

Ver. 25. **The good works of some are manifest beforehand.**—R.V. "there are good works that are evident." As in the case of sins, so in the case of good works—they must eventually be manifest, perhaps to the astonishment of those by whom they were wrought.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

The Pastor's Treatment of Old and Young of Both Sexes.

I. Old and young are liable to err.—There are temptations and sins peculiar to all periods of life. The effervescence of youth is liable to degenerate into frivolity. The sedateness of age may breed moroseness or a dangerous self-

confidence. Young and old should learn to respect one another. The old should regard the young with hope, with sympathy, with affection, with thankfulness, and not with jealousy. And the young should treat the aged with respect, with reverence, and with cheerful submission to their wise and anxious counsel.

II. **Reproof should be administered with due regard to the age and relationship of the persons committing wrong** (vers. 1, 2).—Timothy's youthfulness and natural timidity might be a barrier to his undertaking the office of reprover, especially in dealing with those older than himself. Hence the apostle exhorts him to fidelity in this duty. Even in rebuking, the aged are to be treated as fathers and mothers, the young as brothers and sisters. We must not forget the reverence due to age, nor must we lose our sympathy with the tastes and hopes of the young; but we must not allow our personal predilections to interfere with dealing faithfully with the manifest errors and sins of all classes.

III. **Reproof is a necessary but difficult part of a pastor's duty.**—There is an unspeakable pleasure in study, in preaching, and in social and spiritual fellowship with Christian people; but to rebuke is a hard task, and requires both tact and courage. Everything depends on the method and spirit in which reproof is administered, and we must seek to be fair and just as well as faithful. To rebuke in a sharp and arrogant temper will do more harm than good, and to shirk the duty is a loss to ourselves and a wrong to the offender. There is no part of a minister's work that requires more caution and tenderness, and about which he needs to pray more earnestly, than in reproving evident sin with candour and fidelity.

Lessons.—1. *The minister's teaching must be adapted to both old and young.* 2. *He should cultivate a generous sympathy with young life.* 3. *He must know how to reprove as well as encourage.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—16.

Widows and the Early Christian Church.

I. **There was a distinction recognised between the different grades of widowhood.**—In this paragraph four classes of widows are mentioned. 1. *The widow indeed* (vers. 3, 5). She is desolate, quite alone in the world. She has not only lost her husband, but is without children or any other near relative to provide for her needs. The Church must be to her in place of husband and family, and seek to mitigate as much as possible the oppressive loneliness of her life. 2. *The widow with a family.* "Children and grandchildren" (ver. 4). It is the Christian duty of the members of the family to provide for the wants of the home (vers. 4, 8, 16). The Church must not burden itself with responsibilities that belong to others, and which they must be taught to discharge. 3. *The widow living in pleasure.* Gay, frivolous, and even worse (vers. 6, 11-15). Her young, passionate nature must be restrained, and be warned not to bring discredit and disgrace upon herself and the Church. 4. *The enrolled widow* (vers. 9, 10). She must be sixty years of age, have had only one husband, have had experience in the bringing up of children, and be well known as devoted to good works. She is a widow indeed, and something more. She has an office in the Church with definite functions to discharge, and the Church is responsible for her support.

II. **Discretion and tact were necessary in dealing with the different classes of widows.**—Timothy was young, and was exhorted so to behave himself that his moral integrity should command respect in spite of his youth. Respect must be shown towards age and moral worth (ver. 3), and discretion exercised in dealing with the young and wanton (vers. 6, 7). There is a shrewd insight into human

nature in one of the rules imposed by Wesley on his early preachers: "Converse sparingly with women, especially with young women." "Care must be taken not to encourage either a rigour not likely to be maintained, or opportunities of idleness certain to lead to mischief. Help is to be generously afforded to the destitute, but the resources of the Church must be jealously guarded. They must not be wasted on the unworthy, or on those who have other means of help. And, so far as possible, the independence of those who are relieved must be protected by employing them in the service of the Church" (vers. 3-16) (*Plummer*).

III. **The principle of self-help and independence in the Christian family is recognised and strongly enforced** (vers. 4, 8, 16).—The Church is not to be regarded as a permanent board of relief constituted for the administration of indiscriminate charity. It does not and should not free any of its members from responsibilities by undertaking for them in mistaken charity the duties they ought to discharge and are capable of discharging themselves. Christianity teaches the gospel of work, not as an end in itself, but as a means of securing support and independence, and of freely ministering to the good of others. No one should be encouraged to attach himself or herself to the Church for the sake of personal maintenance. The Church must keep her needy members, but all who can work should be stimulated to honest and diligent industry.

Lessons.—1. *The young minister must be circumspect in his behaviour towards women.* 2. *The Church should shelter and help its deserving widows.* 3. *The Church should encourage work and a spirit of independence.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4, 8, 16. *Family Responsibilities.*

I. **Parents and children should mutually contribute to the family support.**

II. **The help of children afforded to their parents is a just requital of parental toil and affection.**

III. **The neglect of self-evident family duties is utterly alien to the spirit and teaching of Christianity** (ver. 8).

Ver. 4. *The Christian Home—*

I. **Is the sphere for exercising practical religion.**—"Learn first to show piety at home."

II. **Recognises the righteous claims of the widowed mother to affection and support.**—"If any widow have children or grandchildren, let them . . . requite their parents."

III. **Enjoys the Divine approval.**—"For that is good and acceptable before God."

Piety at Home.

I. **The home must be safe.**

II. **Make it attractive.**

III. **Make it instructive.**

IV. **Make the home a preparation for life.**

V. **Make the home a preparation for heaven.**

VI. **Keep the home near heaven.**—*J. Hamilton.*

Ver. 8. *Consistency of Benevolence with providing for our own.*

I. **Whenever the conduct proposed is physically impossible, it cannot be our duty.**

II. **Wherever this conduct would frustrate the great end of benevolence by lessening human happiness, it cannot be our duty.**—1. *If the interests and duties of mankind were all thrown into a common stock, there would be little or no good done to any.* 2. *The division of human industry should be voluntary.* 3. *By the institution of families preparation is effectually made for the preservation, support, and education of children.* 4. *All the duties of man respect especially the objects he best knows, those to*

which he can most frequently and effectually extend his beneficence.—Dwight.

Vers. 11-15. *Young Widowhood—*

I. **Has its special perils.**—1. *In rebelling against the claims of Christ* (vers. 11, 12). 2. *In degenerating into habits of idleness and mischievous gossip* (ver. 13).

II. **Has its safeguards in the duties and responsibilities of domestic life.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—25.

Rules for Church Government

I. **The diligent and faithful minister should be highly esteemed and generously maintained** (vers. 17, 18).—It is in vain to expect spiritual profit from a minister we do not respect. As a public man he is exposed to much criticism—criticism that is often thoughtless, shallow, and unfair; and all such criticism tends to lower his influence with the indifferent and unspiritual. To get the highest good from the pastor the people must love and esteem him; and where this spirit obtains his maintenance will be just and generous, and cheerfully rendered. He devotes his life, his powers, his all, to his work, first for the love of his Master, and then for the spiritual salvation of his people. If he ministers faithfully in holy things, he is entitled to honour and becoming support in temporal things.

II. **The character and reputation of a minister should be jealously guarded** (ver. 19).—There are some people who gloat with undisguised satisfaction as they eagerly listen to the most flippant scurrilities disparaging a minister of the gospel. His very office is an offence to them, and his fidelity a constant rebuke to their inconsistencies and follies. A Church that runs down its minister degrades itself. If there is real cause for complaint, the accusation should be cautiously and tenderly made, and should be treated and sifted with the utmost gravity and justice. A minister's character is his shield: if that is lost, he is undone.

III. **Care should be scrupulously exercised in selecting men for the Christian ministry.**—"Lay hands suddenly [hastily] on no man" (ver. 22). A man is not fit for the Christian ministry because he thinks he is. He must possess not only grace—every Christian must do that—but also gifts that demonstrate his suitability for the office. Even then it should be evident by the fruits of his labours that he is Divinely called to the work. He must also have the opportunity of scholastic and spiritual training, and be severely tested by inquiry and repeated examinations. Few young men realise the difficulties and trials of the ministerial vocation. Dr. Raleigh, at the height of his popularity, speaking to one of his deacons on this subject, said: "They come here and see the place crowded; they hear me preach, and it all seems easy and natural; and straightway they get a desire to do the same. Ah! they little know what it has cost me to attain to this!"

IV. **Sin everywhere should be faithfully and fearlessly denounced.**—1. *As a warning to others.* "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (ver. 20). 2. *To avoid the suspicions of personal connivance.* "Neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep *thyself* pure" (ver 22). 3. *Sin and virtue will sooner or later be made evident* (vers. 24, 25).

V. **Zeal to serve the Church does not justify indifference to bodily health** (ver. 23).—Many practise this advice to Timothy who do not suffer from Timothy's complaint. The tendency of the young pastor was to asceticism, and his excessive abstinence, adopted from conscientious motives, was undermining his already delicate constitution. There were few by whom the advice to take

a little wine for medicinal purposes could be so safely followed as by Timothy. His high-toned temperance was his safeguard. There is no encouragement to the wine-bibber in this cautious advice. The health of the minister is an important factor in the effective discharge of his physically exacting duties. There was common sense in the reply of Robert Hall to the question as to what is the best preparation for preaching when he said, "A good night's rest." The success of the sermon depends upon the preacher's state of health. It is a sacred duty to cherish and strengthen the body, that it may be a more vigorous servant and instrument of the mind.

VI. **Rules for Church government should be applied with strict impartiality.** (ver. 21).—There should not be less care in maintaining Church order and discipline than in the methodical management of a large business, or in civic government, or in the administration of justice in courts of law. Church courts should be patterns of justice and equity. It is easier to observe than to enforce discipline.

Lessons.—1. *Church organisation is the outgrowth of Church life.* 2. *To govern well the minister must himself respect and obey the law.* 3. *Discipline and doctrine are essential in promoting vigorous Church life and progress.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 17-22. *Ministerial Life—*

I. **Should be relieved from pecuniary burdens** (vers. 17, 18).

II. **Should be guarded from vexatious charges, but its sins fearlessly rebuked** (vers. 19, 20).

III. **Should be distinguished by impartiality** (ver. 21).

IV. **Should not be entered upon without careful preparation** (ver. 22).

Vers. 24, 25. *Bad and Good Men.*

I. **Bad men and their actions.**—1. *The openly wicked.* Their character is patent to all observers. Their sins are gross and flagrant. 2. *The secretly wicked.* They have a false character, different at home and abroad, in their family and among their boon companions, in the Church and in the world. They are sometimes unmasked during their lives. They shall appear in their true colours before the judgment-seat.

II. **Good men and their actions.**—1. *The unmistakably good.* They are acknowledged as Christians by all who know them. Comparatively rare. High style of excellence. A boon to have been intimately acquainted with a single specimen. 2. *The questionably good.* Their excellence is concealed by their humble position, or their meagre attainments, or their constitutional diffidence and reserve. Gradually it becomes known in a larger or more limited circle here. They shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Lessons.—1. *Let us be cautious in our judgments of our fellow-men.* 2. *Let us act with habitual reference to the judgment-seat.* 3. *Let us be resolved not to leave behind us a doubtful reputation.*—*G. Brooks.*

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **That the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.**—Masters who had slaves professing to be Christians and yet supercilious would curse them and their new faith.

Ver. 2. **Let them not despise them.**—Two uses of this word by our Lord will be its best interpretation. In Matt. vi. 24 He too speaks of the servant who has two different masters, for one of whom he has dropped all estimation. In Matt. xviii. 10 Christ warns against thinking the little ones as unworthy of attention.

Ver. 3. **Teach otherwise.**—R.V. "teacheth a different doctrine." **Wholesome words.**—R.V. "sound [margin, Gr. healthful] words."

Ver. 4. **Doting about questions.**—R.V. margin, "sick"—in contrast to the healthful words of the Lord Jesus.

Ver. 5. **Perverse disputings.**—A.V. margin, "gallings one of another." R.V. "wranglings." **Supposing that gain is godliness.**—Men may choose mammon rather than God, but we can hardly suppose they mistake one for the other, as this translation says. R.V. corrects this—"supposing that godliness is a way of gain."

Ver. 7. **We brought nothing into this world.**—Compare Job i. 21. It is not safe to say St. Paul is quoting here. All times and peoples have such sayings.

Ver. 8. **Let us be therewith content.**—R.V. margin, "in these we shall have enough."

Ver. 9. **They that will be rich.**—The cry of the day is against those who are rich; the danger is equally great for those who would be if they could,—a somewhat comprehensive saying. **Which drown men.**—The word is found again in Luke v. 7 only, to describe the swamping of the fishing-boats on Galilee.

Ver. 10. **While some coveted after.**—The word is the same as in chap. iii. 1 is rendered "desire" or "seeketh." The R.V. "reaching after" is more accurate. **Many sorrows.**—Sharp griefs; lit. "gnawing pains of remorse" (*Blomfield*). Ellicott denies that the word is derived from the Greek for a tooth. Grimm thinks they may have a common root.

Ver. 11. **Flee these things; and follow after.**—We have a vivid view of the fear on the one side, and the eagerness of desire on the other.

Ver. 13. **God, who quickeneth all things.**—R.V. margin, "preserveth all things alive." It would almost seem as if St. Paul meant to say that, whatever perils gathered round the warrior for truth, an unseen shield should cover his head in the day of battle.

Ver. 15. **The blessed and only Potentate.**—All else derive their power from Him and hold it *Dei gratiâ*.

Ver. 16. **Who only hath immortality.**—"He in whom immortality essentially exists and who enjoys it neither derivatively nor by participation" (*Ellicott*). **Dwelling in light which no man can approach unto.**—All the fulsome eulogies of kings who "live for ever," and whose faces shine on their favourites, are but poor, broken lights as compared with the God who is light.

Ver. 17. **Nor trust in uncertain riches.**—R.V. "nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches." Perhaps they would say riches were not uncertain. But the moralists do not agree with the "Northern Farmer." **Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.**—On God's giving see St. James's words (i. 5.) But this marks the end of that giving for enjoyment.

Ver. 19. **Laying up in store for themselves.**—Lit. "Treasuring away for themselves." The similarity of this verse to Tobit iv. 9 is too close to allow us to say it was not in St. Paul's thoughts. **A good foundation against the time to come.**—Not simply against the decrepitude of old age, for which in some respects "money is a defence," but against that day when money and its owners shall fail (Luke xvi. 9).

Ver. 20. **Keep that which is committed to thy trust.**—Lit. "guard the deposit." As St. Paul was entrusted with "the care of all the Churches," so is Timothy with this particular one. **Avoiding profane and vain babblings.**—"Full of sound . . . signifying nothing." **Science falsely so called.**—Knowledge that deserved the name was no object of the apostle's contempt or indifference, but this pseudonymous gnosis excites his scorn.

Ver. 21. **Have erred.**—The same word as in chap. i. 6. There it is translated "swerved." **Grace be with thee.**—The most contracted form of the apostolic formula of benediction.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

Christianity and Servitude.

I. **Respect must be shown to unbelieving masters.**—1. *Though the service is humiliating and unjust.* "As many servants as are under the yoke count their

masters worthy of all honour" (ver. 1). The servant of those days was a slave. The Roman Empire was about equally divided by freemen and slaves. Slavery was an ancient and widely spread institution, and was closely bound up with the social life of the times. All this was to be changed, and has been changed. Christianity has effected the revolution, not by appealing to and stirring up political passions, but by implanting principles in the expansion of which it is impossible for slavery to live. The Christian, though a slave, was taught to show respect to his master; and the injunction was perhaps necessary, as the servant in his newly found moral freedom might be tempted to regard himself as superior to his unbelieving master, and to develop an arrogant and rebellious spirit. 2. *Respectful servitude will guard religion from reproach.* "That the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed" (ver. 1). The heathen master would be compelled to respect a religion that made his servant honest, industrious, obedient, respectful, and morally consistent. Many masters were won over to Christianity by the holy examples of their slaves.

II. **Nor should less respect be shown towards believing masters.**—1. *Because of the equality of servant and master in Christian brotherhood.* "Let them not despise them because they are brethren" (ver. 2). The servant might presume upon this equality and take unwarrantable liberties, and seek to justify even positive neglect and disobedience. Before God master and man are alike; before the world, and according to the contract existing between them, they are master and servant. In doing his duty conscientiously the servant is not only serving his earthly master, but also pleasing God. 2. *Equality in Christian brotherhood is rather a stronger reason for fidelity in servitude.* "But rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit" (ver. 2). The cultivation of the Christian spirit promotes a better understanding between master and servant. They learn to respect each other, and to discharge their mutual obligations with cordiality and justice.

III. **Christianity enforces the sacredness of duty in servitude.**—"These things teach and exhort." Religion must be carried into every department and relationship in life. However humble and trying our lot, it has its duties, and religion teaches us to find alleviation in every hardship by faithfully doing the duty of the moment. Duty can be satisfied with its doings, but love has never done enough. The dying Nelson said, "Thank God, I have done my duty." The dying saint can only say, "I am an unprofitable servant."

Lessons.—1. *Christian liberty has its legitimate restraints.* 2. *Christianity teaches the true dignity of labour.* 3. *Practical Christianity will inevitably rectify the unjust inequalities between master and servant.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES

Vers. 1, 2. *Duties of Servants.*

I. **Christian servants should prevent scandal to religion by showing respect to their masters as such** (ver. 1).

II. **Should not presume on the equal brotherhood which religion recognises between Christian masters and servants** (ver. 2).

III. **The participation in equal religious privileges should make the servant more conscientious and diligent** (ver. 2).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—5.

The Vagaries of False Teachers—

I. **Ignore the wholesome doctrines of the Divine Teacher** (ver. 3).—There is no possible folly that the unregenerate mind will not adopt and eagerly

champion as if it were the soberest truth. Christ is Himself the Truth in its highest and most complete embodiment, and His words are full of invigorating moral health. The teacher who has no regard for the teachings of Christ, but is carried away with the crude, unshapen fancies of his own brain, deceives others and is himself deceived. No wonder that the mind that cherishes unwholesome doctrines becomes itself diseased, and its high-flown theories are but the ravings of a fanatic.

II. **Are a compound of pride and ignorance.**—"He is proud, knowing nothing" (ver. 4). He is wrapt in smoke, darkened with the fumes of his inordinate self-conceit. The man who boasts of superior knowledge betrays his utter ignorance; and ignorance is the foster-parent of pride. True knowledge makes a man modest and humble. The wisest men feel that they know nothing compared with what they are capable of knowing. A man who was regarded as a marvel of learning once said: "I seem to myself like a basket in which are being carried away the fragments of a hotel—a bit of this, the fag-end of that, and all sorts of things jumbled up together. I do not know anything except little fragmentary parts of this, that, and the other."

III. **Are the occasion of meaningless controversy and quarrelsomeness.**—"Doting about questions and strifes of words . . . perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth" (vers. 4, 5). Controversy is valueless where there is a lack of knowledge and exact definition. Words are but wind, unless there is the clear recognition of substantial and unvarying truth. Reckless controversy raises more disputes than it settles, and generally intensifies the quarrel. A corrupt heart reappears in corrupt speech. A question of mere words creates endless confusion, envyings, and strife.

IV. **Are the prolific offspring of an utterly false conception of godliness.**—"Supposing that gain is godliness" (ver. 5). Godliness was espoused and advocated by the false teachers as a means of gain. There is nothing more despicable than to make money out of religion, or to be religious because of the gains it brings. The love of gain endangers righteous principles. An old Elector of Brandenburg once said to the Duke of Saxony, "How do you manage to coin so much money, you princes of Saxony?" "Oh," replied he, "we make money by it." And so they did, by the quantity of alloy they put into their coin. Godliness is gain; but gain is not godliness.

V. **Are to be deliberately shunned.**—"From such withdraw thyself" (ver. 5). To be associated with tricksters, whether in religion or commerce is to lose caste. We are to "avoid the appearance of evil," and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

Lessons.—1. *Error is a wicked caricature of truth.* 2. *Ignorance may be detected by its proud pretensions.* 3. *Godliness and false doctrine are antagonistic.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-5. *The Provision made in the Plan of Salvation by the Free Grace of God through Faith to secure the Interests of Morality and promote Holiness of Life.*

I. **The state of mind of any man and also his outward conduct are necessarily influenced by what he believes,** so far as it may be of a nature fitted to influence him, and all the doctrines revealed in Scripture are fitted by their nature to produce each its own specific effect on his heart and conduct; and if these doctrines were clearly understood, firmly believed, and at liberty to produce their full effects upon his soul, the result would be a character similar in all respects to the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. **In the plan of redemption pro-**

vision is made for enlisting the powerfully operative affections of love and gratitude on the side of holiness.

III. **The scheme of redemption unites us to Christ in several relations which contain in them the basis of certain combinations of affections and principles which are most operative in human affairs.**—1. *Christ's redeemed people stand related to Him as children to their parents, and thereby a foundation is laid for their being animated by the spirit of children.* 2. *Are united to Him on the footing on which a wife is united to her husband.* 3. *In the relation of soldiers to their general and sovereign.*—*Anonymous.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—8

Godliness the Highest Gain—

I. **Because it ensures the supply of absolute necessities.**—"Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (ver. 8). Our real wants are few. What do we need more than food and covering? They who fear the Lord have the promise of sustenance (Isa. xxxiii. 16; Ps. xxxvii. 3). The godly are under the special care of the Divine Universal Provider.

II. **Because it promotes a spirit of contentment.**—"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (ver. 6). Godliness is a great means of gain—not of that gain which breeds discontent in its covetous pursuit, but the present and eternal gain which piety brings to the soul. Godliness is gain when it is accompanied with the contentment it inspires. It not only feels no need of what it has not, but also has that which exalts it above what it has not. Godliness is its own sufficiency, and satisfies every want of the complex nature of man. Godliness, even with affliction, is great gain. A minister recovering from a dangerous illness confessed, "This six weeks' illness has taught me more divinity than all my past studies and all my ten years' ministry put together."

III. **Because the contentment accompanying true godliness is independent of worldly possessions** (ver. 7).—Godliness reminds us of the condition in which we entered the world, and in which we shall leave it. We brought nothing with us; we shall take nothing away. If we have little, we are taught to be content with that little; if we have much, we are taught how fragile is our hold upon our possessions—not to set our hearts upon them, but use them as stewards who must give an account to the Giver of all good. Richard Boyle, the great Earl of Cork, outlived most of those who had known the meanness of his beginning. He never forgot it himself, but took pains to preserve the memory of it to posterity in the motto he always used, and which he caused to be placed on his tomb: "God's providence is my inheritance."

Lessons.—1. *Our spiritual gains are our truest wealth.* 2. *Contentment is a special endowment of godliness.* 3. *The godly man makes the best of both worlds.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6-8. *The Cultivation of Christian Contentment.*

I. **Godliness is itself a gain.**—1. *Because it is a satisfying reality.* 2. *Because it gives us the highest pleasures of which we are capable.*

II. **Godliness with contentment is great gain.**—1. *Contentment is the outcome of godliness.* 2. *Reasons for cultivating Christian contentment.* (1) We have nothing (ver. 7). (2) We have need of nothing (ver. 8). (3) We are in danger of being entangled by striving after earthly things (vers. 9, 10). 3. *The advantages of cultivating Christian contentment.* (1) It will protect us from the temptation to become rich anyhow. (2) It will shield us from

avarice. (3) It will teach us to acquire spiritual riches. (4) It will gladden the brief space of our earthly probation. —*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 6. *Contentment.*

I. **The text presents us with a bride.** —"Godliness."

II. **A bridesmaid.**—"Contentment."

III. **Her great dowry.**—"Great gain."

IV. **The present payment.**—"Godliness with contentment *is* great gain."

1. *What the world counts gain is loss.*
2. *What the world counts loss is gain.*— *T. Fuller.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9, 10.

Insatiable Avarice—

I. **Has its root in the love of money.**—"The love of money is the root of all evil" (ver. 10). Not money, but the love of it, is the root of evil. Hence the warning, "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." Money has been the bait that has enticed many astray. They ran well for a time, till, as in the fable of Atalanta, a golden ball was cast in their path, and, stooping to pick it up, they lost the race. The love of money kills all other love. Men have sold their consciences, their friends, their family, for pelf. Avarice degrades our manhood.

II. **Weans the soul from the truth.**—"Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith" (ver. 10). Avarice is a master-passion which subdues and enthrals our better self. God is exchanged for gold, religion for money-getting. A relish for spiritual things cannot coexist with the love of lucre. Faith becomes dim in the presence of shining coins. An American millionaire was so enslaved with money-getting that he complained he was kept on the drive from morning to night. Wealth is a splendid opportunity for doing good, but to the best it is a dangerous temptation.

III. **Curses the soul with the pangs of discontent.**—"And pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (ver. 10). The miser is in perpetual dread of poverty. The more he has the more he wants. Avarice is insatiable. Money cannot give health or happiness, nor can it prolong life by a single day. Cardinal Beaufort, Chancellor of England in the reign of Henry VI., as he lay dying exclaimed: "Wherefore should I die, being so rich? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it or by riches to buy it. Fie! will not death be hired? Will money do nothing?" The miser is the most miserable of men, and of all men to be the most pitied.

IV. **Plunges the soul into a course of sin that ends in perdition.**—"Which drown men in destruction and perdition" (ver. 9). Wealth leads to luxury, self-indulgence, and a host of sins that defile and then damn the soul. Few men can resist the allurements of sudden fortune: they plunge into excesses that soon end them, or their money. The bane of the avaricious man is often the instrument of his punishment. About the time the apostle was denouncing the sin of covetousness in this epistle, Seneca was decrying the same evil and composed his ethics; but as if to show the impotence of his own precepts, he was accused of having amassed the most ample riches—a circumstance that was no doubt the cause of his finally falling a victim to the jealousy and avarice of Nero.

Lessons.—1. *Avarice grows on what it feeds.* 2. *The sin of avarice is the parent of many other sins.* 3. *Avarice unfits the soul to appreciate the truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 9. *The Danger of Riches.*

I. **Who are the rich?**—1. *They who desire more than food and covering.* 3. *They who endeavour after more than food and covering.* 3. *They who lay up treasures on earth.* 4. *They who possess more of this world's goods than they use according to the will of the donor.* 5. *They who delight in money.*

II. **Dangers of the rich.**—1. *They enter into temptation.* 2. *They fall into silly and hurtful desires.*

III. **Duties of the rich.**—1. *Gain all you can.* 2. *Save all you can.* 3. *Give all you can.* 4. *All that is laid out in this manner is really given to God.*—*Wesley.*

Ver. 10. *The Love of Money*—

I. **Tends to arrogate and narrow and impel the whole action and passion of the soul toward one exclusive object, and that an ignoble one.**

II. **Throws a mean character into the estimation of all things.**—They are all estimated according to a standard of money-value, and in reference to gain.

III. **Places a man in a very selfish relation to other men around him.**

IV. **Creates a settled hardness of character.**

V. **Operates with a slow but continual effect to pervert the judgment and conscience.**—*J. Foster.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 11, 12.

Pursuit of the True Riches.

I. **Pursuit of the true riches is alone worthy of the man of God.**—"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after" (ver. 11). God, and not worldly riches, is the sole object of the good man's desires. He has got a glimpse of the other side of earthly things. He sees their fleeting and evanescent character, and their incapacity to satisfy the soul. He soars after higher and Diviner things. He cannot rest in the material, but finds his pleasure in seeking those things that are above. His conception of God lifts him above everything that has limits. He sees another world shining with the lustre of unfading riches.

II. **The true riches are spiritual.**—"Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (ver. 11). No longer a man of the world, the good man finds his enjoyment and wealth in spiritual realities. He covets the grace which enables him to act righteously towards God and man, to possess the faith that brings the distant near and makes the unseen visible, a love that works in him a sublime patience in the midst of the greatest trials, and a courageous meekness that is the marvel and despair of his bitterest opponents. The true riches of a man are within him.

III. **Pursuit of the true riches involves an earnest conflict for the truth.**—1. *Conflict for the truth is demanded by the profession of it already made.* "And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (ver. 12). Having entered into the conflict, the Christian soldier must comport himself with resolute courage. Having won so many victories already, he is urged on to fresh conquests. The consciousness that he is engaged in a good fight nerves him with strength and determination. The least relapse into unwatchfulness and ease will be fatal to final victory. The highest prizes of the Christian life are not gained without strenuous and persevering effort. 2. *The final reward of the conflict is in the future.* "Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called" (ver. 12). The Christian soldier is battling not only for time, but eternity—not only for the present life, but for life eternal. The prize, though in the future, is not uncertain; it is not a phantom hanging in the air, but a substantial reality to be laid hold on and firmly grasped. Even now by faith

he has the substance of the thing hoped for, and after which he strives with increasing earnestness. By-and-by he will wear the victor's crown.

Lessons.—1. *Religion is a conflict.* 2. *It is a good fight in itself and its issues.* 3. *The victor will be enriched with eternal glory.*

GERMS NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 11. *Patience—*

I. **Secures the possession of our souls in every circumstance that tends to discompose our minds.**

II. **Prevents hasty and rash conclusions.**

III. **Will fortify against unlawful methods for accomplishing our deliverance.**

IV. **Disposes the soul to perseverance in the way of duty.**—*Pulpit Assistant.*

Ver. 12. *The Good Fight of Faith.*

I. **In what does the fight of faith consist?**—1. *Faith conflicts with the misgivings arising from the accusations of an enlightened conscience.* 2. *Has to contend against the depravity of our nature.* 3. *Has to contend with the world.* 4. *Has to combat with spiritual wickedness.*

II. **How is the faith of the Christian to be strengthened for this fight?**—1. *By entertaining worthy conceptions of God, on whose testimony it rests.* 2. *By cultivating an acquaintance with the truths it embraces.* 3. *By a consideration of the instances in which it has not been disappointed.* 4. *Seek an increase of faith by prayer.*

III. **What inducement have we to fight?**—1. *The command of God.* 2. *The weapons of the fight.* 3. *The enemies encountered in the fight.* 4. *The certainty of success in the fight.*—*Stewart.*

The Battle of Life.

I. **Faith believes in self-conquest.**

II. **In the victory of Jesus Christ over every foe hostile to righteousness.**

Eternal Life

I. **The object.**—"Eternal life." 1. *It is the highest form of life.* 2. *It consists in the perfect development of spiritual life.* 3. *It is to be enjoyed in heaven.*

II. **The exhortation.**—"Lay hold." 1. *By embracing the gospel in which it is revealed.* 2. *By union with Christ in whom it is centred.* 3. *By cherishing the principles in which it is embodied.* 4. *By vigorous use of all appointed means.*—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—16.

A Solemn call to Fidelity—

I. **Uttered as in the presence of the life-giving God and witnessing Christ** (ver. 13).—One cannot read this impressive verse without catching somewhat of the solemnity of tone in which it was uttered. As though conscious his own career was closing, the apostle seems to hand on his unfinished work to Timothy, and he urges him to faithfulness here by the present manifestation of God's power in quickening and preserving all things, and by reminding him of the deep significance of the testimony that Christ sealed with His death. The testimony that Christ bore was that He was King and that His kingdom was of the truth—a testimony that embraced the whole gospel. Timothy's confession was therefore to include the whole truth of Christianity. We see therefore the gravity of the charge committed to the young evangelist. Unborn generations were concerned in his fidelity.

II. **In maintaining and handing down the truth inviolate to the latest times** (ver. 14).—If we have a pure gospel to-day, we owe it to the faithful and

holy Timothys, who, living at the beginning of the gospel era, maintained the truth in its integrity, and passed it on unmixed and unimpaired to their immediate successors. It is not less our solemn duty to-day to preserve the truth inviolate, to faithfully and vigorously propagate it, and hand it down as a sacred deposit to the generation following. So shall the bright succession run till the glorious appearing of Him who is the living embodiment and transcendent theme of the highest truth.

III. **Enforced by a sublime description of the Deity.**—1. *As the absolute Ruler.* "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (ver. 15). Blessed in Himself, and the source of unspeakable blessedness to all who voluntarily submit to His loving and righteous rule. 2. *As inherently and independently immortal.* "Who only hath immortality" (ver. 16). Having incorruptible life in Himself, in His own essential Divine essence, and not merely derived as in all other immortal beings, the Lord of life and glory bestows eternal life on all who believe on Him. Incorruptible life is not inherent in the human soul; it is the gift of God. 3. *As dwelling in unapproachable splendour.* "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (ver. 16). If we cannot gaze at the sun because of its dazzling brightness, how much less can mortal man gaze upon the blinding and inexpressible glory of God! We must ourselves be clothed with the Divine splendour in order that we may bear the revelation of the beatific vision. 4. *To whom everlasting honour and power are ascribed.* "To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (ver. 16). This magnificent description of Jehovah would add solemnity and emphasis to the charge here given to Timothy. Our fidelity must be maintained as in the immediate presence of the all-seeing God, who is conscious of every defection of which we may be guilty, and who will not fail to help us in our struggles and reward our faithful devotion with unspeakable and lasting glory.

Lessons.—1. *The truth demands incorruptible fidelity.* 2. *God has committed the fortunes of His truth to His own commissioned messengers.* 3. *The progress of the truth is every moment watched by the all-seeing Eye.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *The Truth of the Gospel—*

I. **Was attested by Christ at a crucial moment** (ver. 13).

II. **Is to be kept inviolate** (ver. 14).

III. **The keeping of the truth is aided by the quickening and preservative power of God** (ver. 13).

IV. **Is to be kept every moment as in the presence of God** (ver. 13).

V. **Is to be kept to the end of the gospel dispensation** (ver. 14).

Vers. 15, 16. *The Glory of God—*

I. **Is revealed by Christ in all its beneficent and regal splendour** (ver. 15).

II. **Seen in His possessing and bestowing immortality** (ver. 16).

III. **Surpasses all human comprehension** (ver. 16).

IV. **Will elicit everlasting praise** (ver. 16).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—19.

The True Use of Riches—

I. **Is not to trust in them but in God the Giver of all things** (ver. 17).—Riches are given for use, not for storage. The moment we begin to selfishly store them, we begin to trust in them. Money is a circulating medium, and its true value is in its wise and judicious circulation. Our use of money is part

of our education in life, and needs as much care and thought as the business that produces it. God only, and not wealth, maintains the world: riches not properly used only make people proud and lazy. The Greeks spoke of Plutus, the god of riches, as a fickle divinity, representing him as blind, to intimate that he distributes his favours indiscriminately; as lame, to denote the slowness with which he approaches; and winged, to imply the velocity with which he flies away. Wealth is but one of God's gifts: to trust in it is to trust in the creature rather than the Creator. To trust in riches is committing ourselves to a great uncertainty.

II. **To distribute them with a liberal and cheerful benevolence** (ver. 18).—To lavish wealth on personal luxuries is to abuse it and ourselves. On the statue of Joseph Brotherton is the inscription, "A man's riches consist not in the amount of his wealth, but in the fewness of his wants." Zeno, the philosopher, remonstrating with certain of his pupils for their extravagance, they excused themselves by saying that they were rich enough to indulge in extravagance. "Would you," said he, "excuse a cook who should over-salt his meat because he had a superabundance of salt?" Wealth is kept sweet and sound by liberal distribution. The rich man is a steward of God's gifts, and will have to give an account of the use he has made of his wealth. The noblest use of money is to do good to others, and to help to extend the kingdom of Christ. It is better to be rich in good works than in good investments.

III. **Will be rewarded with eternal felicity** (ver. 19).—To spend life in getting and keeping money is to be poor indeed; to spend it in a liberal use of our means in the cause of God is to be enriched with eternal life—which is life indeed. There is truth and instruction in the inscription on an Italian tombstone, "What I gave away I saved; what I spent I used; what I kept I lost." Giving to the Lord, says one, is but transporting our goods to a higher floor. The Princess Eugenie, sister to the King of Sweden, once sold her diamonds to raise funds to complete a hospital. When the building was completed, she visited the hospital, and standing beside a suffering inmate who thanked her with tears of gratitude, she exclaimed, "Ah, now I see my diamonds again!"

Lessons.—1. *Riches are a great responsibility.* 2. *A liberal hand creates many a cheerful heart.* 3. *Earthly wealth may be transformed into heavenly riches.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 17. *Human Affections raised, not destroyed, by the Gospel.*

I. **The same affections which cling to the lowly earth are those which must struggle, under celestial guidance, to find their rest in God.**

II. **The glory of the eternal God is unveiled in all its majesty as the object which is to fix the affections of man.**

III. **In the treasuries of heaven are laid up all that you truly covet, even while you labour after their mockeries on earth.**

IV. **Every attribute of the eager candidate for earthly happiness and security is but the poor semblance of the very state the Christian already possesses or anticipates.**—*A. Butler.*

Vers. 18, 19. *Good Works.*

I. **Good works are not grounds of acceptance.**—1. *The true and only ground of a sinner's reconciliation with God is the atonement of Christ and God's free grace.* 2. *Good works are not preparations for our acceptance.*

II. **Good works are measures of reward.**—1. *God's own glory is promoted by them.* 2. *They are disciplinary, and constitute the most effective means of religious improvement.* 3. *They comprehend all the acts by which misery can be redressed, happiness increased, and souls saved.*—*Olin.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 20, 21.

The Gospel a Sacred Trust—

I. **To be preserved and handed on inviolate.**—"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust" (ver. 20). The apostle returns again, and for the last time before concluding his epistle, to the subject uppermost in his mind, and reiterates the solemn charge to fidelity. He makes a touching and impressive personal appeal, indicating his affection for Timothy, and his fears of approaching corruptions. "O Timothy, keep the truth; guard it from spiritual thieves, and from the subtle infusion of errors which its enemies are industriously generating. It is not thine but another's property with which thou hast been entrusted: diminish it not at all."

II. **Not to be degraded by profitless and ignorant controversies.**—"Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (ver. 20). The gospel is a Divine revelation, not to be criticised, but believed. To attempt to improve it is to spoil it. It is not the child of reason, but the guide and regulator of reason; it is not contrary to reason, though it is above it. If the gospel rested on human philosophy and a false science, it would be utterly unreliable, and its preaching a tissue of "vain babblings." The true science is the evolution of Christian faith; all else is counterfeit. The knowledge of the gospel, communicated by the Spirit, is superior to all human science and philosophy. The germ of the Gnostic heresy of the dual principles of good and evil was beginning to sprout, and soon after developed into "oppositions of science falsely so called."

III. **To mix human errors with the gospel is to mistake its spirit and drift.**—"Which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (ver. 21). *Vincentius Lirinensis*, in the first half of the fifth century, thus comments on these verses: "That which was entrusted to thee, not found by thee—which thou hast received, not invented; a matter not of genius but of teaching, not of private usurpation but of public tradition; a matter brought to thee, not put forth by thee, in which thou oughtest to be not an enlarger but a guardian, not an originator but a disciple, not leading but following. Keep the deposit; preserve intact and inviolate the talent of the catholic faith. What has been entrusted to thee, let that same remain with thee; let that same be handed down by thee. Gold thou hast received; gold return. I should be sorry thou shouldest substitute ought else. I do not want the mere appearance of gold, but its actual reality. Not that there is to be no progress in religion in Christ's Church. Let there be so by all means, and the greatest progress; but then let it be real progress, not a change of the faith. Let the intelligence of the whole Church and its individual members increase exceedingly, provided it be only in its own kind, the doctrine being still the same. Let the religion of the soul resemble the growth of the body, which, though it develops its several parts in the progress of years, yet remains the same as it was essentially."

IV. **The grace of God the best preservative from error.**—"Grace be with thee. Amen" (ver. 21). The grace of God reveals the truth, communicates the truth, suffuses every power and faculty of the soul which embraces the truth, and is the influence that keeps the truth pure and vitally operative in the Christian life. The grace that bestows the truth can alone keep it. The grace of God makes us what we are, and must make us what we ought to be.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel that saves us can save others.* 2. *We receive the gospel not only for ourselves, but in trust for others.* 3. *To depend on human reason for salvation is to be lost.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 20, 21. *Science in its Relation to the Christian Faith.*

I. Scientific study may be abused to mischievous results.

II. Has a tendency to bring the mind into collision with a number of religious difficulties.

III. May possibly tempt the mind to regard God as the law of the universe rather than as the one Divine Person from whom all law proceeds.

IV. The tone of mind fostered by such a study is a preservative against religious instability.

V. The true tendency of such a study is to lead men to Christ.

VI. Christ is the answer to questions which science cannot answer.—*Harvey Goodwin.*

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

INTRODUCTION.

Time of writing.—Single, but undismayed, and even glorying in the possibility of proclaiming Christ in the imperial court, St. Paul had made his first defence before the emperor during his second imprisonment at Rome; and in the short time that elapsed before he would have to appear a second time, he wrote asking his dear friend Timothy to pay him a last visit. This being so, the date of our epistle would be A.D. 67 or 68, towards the end of Nero's reign, although there is some amount of uncertainty about the tradition of the martyrdom. There is a slightly preponderant probability that Timothy was in Ephesus when this epistle came to hand, though the notices of places seem rather strange on that supposition.

Object of the epistle.—The apostle's main purpose, in keeping with the chief place which the kingdom of Christ ever had in his thought and conduct, was to instruct Timothy with regard to the heresies that were multiplying around and within the Church, and to encourage him in the midst of all the trials which would come upon him as a Christian and an official of the Church. The personal element in this epistle is strongly marked. "In no epistle does the true, loving, undaunted, and trustful heart of the great apostle speak in more consolatory yet more moving accents; in no portion of his writings is there a loftier tone of Christian courage than that which pervades these, so to speak, dying words—nowhere a holier rapture than that with which the reward and crown of faithful labour is contemplated as now exceeding nigh at hand" (*Ellicott*).

Outline of the epistle.

Ch. i. 3—5. Paul's desire to see Timothy, whom he always remembers.
6—8. Injunction to stir up the gift, to be brave, and suffer.
9—12. The grace of God manifested in Paul's example.
13—15. Charge to hold fast the doctrine and the sacred deposit.
16—18. Contrast of Phygellus and Hermogenes with Onesiphorus.

Ch. ii. 1—13. Caution in the choice of Church officers, and personal devotion to the Lord, after the type of Paul himself.

14—19. Against heresy, which corrupts many, but is powerless to hurt the "foundation of God"; sure, and doubly sealed.

20—26. The attitude Timothy is to maintain towards heretics.

Ch. iii. 1—17. Characteristics of the coming days, with inevitable persecutions for those not of the world. Value of the Scriptures.

Ch. iv. 1—5. Solemn charge to Timothy to official and personal diligence.

6—18. Personal retrospect, hope, and surroundings of St. Paul.

19—22. Greetings, urgent request for Timothy's arrival, and benediction.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **According to the promise.**—The purport of the promise.

Ver. 2. **My dearly beloved son.**—The translators perhaps thought the simple "beloved" too cold, and so put in the adverb.

Ver. 3. **I thank God.**—We have here the purely classical form, which means "to entertain and show thankfulness." **Whom I serve.**—The idea in the word is that of paid service, but St. Paul would not emphasise it, since he so often styles himself a bond-slave of the Lord. **From my forefathers.**—There does not seem much to choose between "in the manner handed down by my progenitors" and "with the feelings inherited from my ancestors." **With pure conscience.**—With the consciousness that there is no duplicity in what he does. The statement cost Paul ill-usage once (Acts xxiii. 1). **Night and day.**—St. Luke adopts this order; St. John says "day and night."

Ver. 4. **Greatly desiring.**—An intensive form of the word.

Ver. 5. **Which dwelt.**—Made its home. **In thy grandmother.**—Lois is not elsewhere mentioned.

Ver. 6. **Stir up the gift.**—As the soldier draws together the embers of his watch-fire, making the flame leap up, so St. Paul would have this good soldier of Jesus Christ attend to the charisma or gift within him. R.V. margin, "stir into flame."

Ver. 7. **Spirit of fear.**—Or cowardice. Alford thinks there is a touch of severity in this word for "fear," putting before Timothy his timidity in such a light as to shame him. If so, Timothy was not himself. **A sound mind.**—R.V. "discipline." Margin, "Gr. sobering."

Ver. 8. **Of me His prisoner.**—This might mean—(*a*) the prisoner belonging to Him; or (*b*) one who is a prisoner for His sake; or again (*c*) one whom He has bound: (*b*) seems best. **Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.**—R.V. "suffer hardship with the gospel." Alford, Huther, and Ellicott prefer "but suffer [with me] for the gospel." **According to the power of God.**—"In accordance with the power of God which is effectual in thee," or "which will not fail thee."

Ver. 9. **Not according to our works, but . . . His own purpose.**—"Purpose" here must not be interpreted quite as "foreordination."

Ver. 10. **By the appearing.**—Lit. "by the epiphany." This is the only use of the word to describe the advent of Christ in the flesh. It not only covers the act and moment of arrival, but indicates the resultant presence. In 2 Maccabees the word is used frequently of God's miraculous interposition on behalf of His people. **Who hath abolished.**—In the Septuagint this word means "to make to cease." In St. Paul's writings it always denotes a complete ceasing, an annihilation. Compare also Heb. ii. 14: "In order that He might destroy [R.V. bring to nought] . . . the devil."

Ver. 11. **A preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher.**—The first with reference to the work and the method of doing it; the second with reference to his commission and the authority behind him; the third with reference to the recipients of the message, who need continual instruction in it.

Ver. 12. **For I know whom I have believed.**—A.V. margin, "trusted." Note the distinction between knowledge and trust. Faith with Paul has to do with salvation as a present thing. **That which I have committed unto Him.**—The Greek is capable of two meanings, as the R.V. margin shows. "My deposit" may be that which I entrust to another, or that which another commits to my care. See ver. 14.

Ver. 13. **Hold fast the form of sound words.**—R.V. "Hold the pattern." The word for "form" or "pattern" occurs again only 1 Tim. i. 16. "Sound words" are healthy words. Sin is a diseased state of the nature; healthy words are the outcome of a sound heart (Matt. xii. 35).

Ver. 15. **Turned away from me.**—This does not mean that they had departed from the place where he was, but that they had turned away their faces from him.

Ver. 16. **The Lord give mercy.**—This expression is not found again in the New Testament. The supposition that Onesiphorus was dead, and that therefore we have here warrant for praying for the dead, seems to overlook that St. Paul does not ask God to show mercy to

Onesiphorus alone, but to his house. Surely all were not dead! **He oft refreshed me.**—The word properly means "to cool again." Like a breath of sweet cool air to a fever-ridden patient, or a draught of spring water to a dust-covered and hot traveller, so had the visits of Onesiphorus been to Paul in his confinement.

Ver. 17. **Very diligently.**—Alford translates the comparative form "with more diligence than could have been expected." R.V. says simply "diligently."

Ver. 18. **May find mercy.**—Apparently a play on words. "He found me; may he find mercy." The best key, perhaps, is to contrast iv. 16, where the apostle indulges the charitable hope that the fickle friends who deserted him at his sorest need may not have to answer for it. **Thou knowest very well.**—Lit. "thou knowest it better" (than there is any need to say it).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

Apostolic Greeting.

I. **Explains the source and purpose of his apostleship.**—1. *The source.* "An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (ver. 1). Bengel calls this epistle the last testament and swanlike death-song of Paul. To the last he is careful to remind the Church that his commission was not of men, nor was it self-assumed, as in the case of the false teachers he refuted, but that it came direct from God. It originated in the will of God, and that will was his supreme authority and guide. He traces his apostleship to the highest source. 2. *The purpose.* "According to the promise of life in Christ Jesus" (ver. 1). He was appointed an apostle to make known and carry into effect this promise of life. All other aims in life were subsidiary to this. His happiest moments were spent in publishing the gospel of hope for a perishing world; and his best abilities were tasked to the utmost in defending it. This cheerful view of the gospel as "the promise of life in Christ Jesus" would inspire fortitude in Timothy in the midst of tribulation, and give him courage to undertake the journey to Rome, which would be attended with much peril. The gospel is the only system that promises life and hope to humanity.

II. **Expresses affectionate appreciation.**—"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (ver. 2). The attachment existing between Paul and Timothy was of no ordinary type. Neither of them would have been the men they were but for this friendship: the one was the complement of the other. Their diversities of age, of abilities, of temperament, and of attainments welded them together in closer sympathy and love. The outburst of affectionateness in this address is the more pathetic in view of the apostle's approaching martyrdom.

III. **Invokes the bestowal of Divine blessing.**—"Grace, mercy, and peace, from God" (ver. 2). These words, though the usual formula in the apostle's greeting, are more than merely formal in their intrinsic meaning and desire. They constitute an intense prayer that the best blessings of heaven may be the rich and conscious dower of the person addressed. The trinity of blessings—"Grace, mercy, and peace"—include the best gifts of the Trinity of Divine Persons.

Lessons.—1. *Power to preach is a Divine gift.* 2. *True love is lavish and sincere in its greetings.* 3. *The choicest Divine blessings are enjoyed in answer to prayer.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—5.

Anxiety for the Spiritual Welfare of the Absent—

I. **Evidenced in unceasing prayer** (ver. 3).—While Paul thanked God for the faith already existing in Timothy, and because of the evidence he gave of growth in faith, he prays constantly and with the greater urgency for its increase. Prayer is the more joyous when offered on behalf of one already saved. Little headway is made in piety where there is not much earnest prayer. Our desire for the spiritual improvement of those we love will break out in

prayer; and the more we pray the more anxious we are that prayer should be answered on their behalf, and the greater interest we have in their highest good.

II. **Revealed in the intense longing for the joy of a personal interview** (ver. 4).—While we pray for the absent we are not altogether free from anxiety on their behalf. When Paul last parted from Timothy, he left the young, sensitive evangelist in tears (Acts xx. 37), and he remembered the times he had seen him weep under the strain of strong religious emotions. The aged apostle yearned to see Timothy once more, to converse with him, to impart yet more counsel, and to enjoy the fellowship of kindred spirits. A letter, however valued, is a cold medium through which to transmit the love of a warm heart. It is helpful to piety to enjoy congenial intercourse by speech and look and feeling.

III. **Shown in recalling the claims of traditional piety** (ver. 5).—Timothy had a religious training. His mother Eunice was a believing Jewess, though his father was a heathen. Paul also knew his grandmother Lois as a godly woman. So that Timothy was cradled in the midst of pious influences. Paul recognised faith in Timothy, not merely as a blessing transmitted to him from his progenitors, but as a personally enjoyed reality. Children cannot thank God sufficiently for a godly parentage. If they reject the gospel, the piety of their parents will witness against them, and aggravate their condemnation.

Lessons.—1. *The absent should be specially remembered in prayer.* 2. *Christian fellowship is a stimulus to growth in grace.* 3. *It is a joy to parents to see their children walking with them in the way to heaven.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3, 4. *A Sympathetic Friend—*

I. **Constantly prays for the absent.**

II. **Remembers the tears shed at parting.**

III. **Finds his joy in personal intercourse.**

Ver. 5. *How far Grace can be entailed.*

I. **Though grace be not entailed from parent to child, yet the children of godly parents have a great advantage in religion.**—1. *The advantage of the promise.* 2. *Of good precepts.* 3. *Of good precedents.* 4. *Of correction.* 5. *Of many a good prayer.*

II. **The persuasion of good in others.**—1. *There is the persuasion of infallibility, and this only God hath.* 2. *The persuasion of charity.* 3. *The persuasion of a well-and strong-grounded opinion.*

III. **The wisest of men easily may and sometimes are deceived in counting them good which are very counterfeit.**—1. *In close-natured men,* such as lie in at a close guard and offer no play, whose well is deep, and men generally want buckets to measure them. 2. *In various and inconstant men,* which like Proteus never appear twice in the same shape, but differ as much from themselves as from other men, and are only certain in uncertainty. 3. *In affected dissemblers.* Hypocrisy is as like piety as hemlock to parsley, and many hath been deceived therein.—*T. Fuller.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6, 7.

The Responsibility of Divine Gifts.

I. **Divine gifts are a moral equipment for the highest service.**—1. *A spirit of fearlessness.* "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power" (ver. 7). Not a spirit of cowardice, but of courage. (1) This courage enables us to confront and vanquish the enmity and reproach of the world. (2) To bear up under religious trials. (3) Is a Divinely inspired courage. 2. *A spirit of love* (ver. 7). The spirit of love is a necessary counterpoise to the spirit of

power, and prevents it from degenerating into bravado and presumptuous daring. (1) This love is disinterested. (2) Universal. (3) Inexhaustible. 3. *The spirit of a sound mind* (ver. 7). The spirit of self-discipline and self-government—(1) Has a keen perception and sober discrimination of the truth. (2) A love of the truth. (3) Love in the acquisition of the truth. (4) In the right use of the truth. What the ballast is to the balloon, the safety-valve to the steam-engine, the beam to the balance, the rudder to the ship, that the sound mind is to the Christian character.

II. **The possession of Divine gifts involves responsibility for their use.**—God bestows gifts not for display or adornment, but for use. Gifts unused will rust; it is only as they are exercised that they shine and illuminate ourselves and others. No man knows what he can do till he tries. God has left no man without a gift; there are latent possibilities in every man. The world is all the poorer to-day because of its unused talents. It is pitiable to see talent misdirected. Alexander the Great meeting with a man who, with much practice, could throw small peas through a needle's eye without once missing, ordered him a present suitable to his employment—a basket of peas. We accomplish our mission in life by faithfully and diligently using God's gifts.

III. **We need to be stimulated to renewed zeal in the use of Divine gifts.**—"Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (ver. 6). Away from the magnetic influence of Paul, Timothy might be tempted to be remiss. The apostle recognises the existence of the gift—the gift of grace and faith—of which Timothy gave evidence at his ordination, and urges him to keep it in active exercise. The best of men need reminding of past blessings, and to exert the power they already possess. Keble said on one occasion, he wished he could attend an ordination service every year of his life, that he might be reminded of first principles. We can never make the best of ourselves, or benefit others, without vigorous effort.

Lessons.—1. *No one man possesses every gift.* 2. *God has left no man without a gift.* 3. *We should use the gifts we have so as to honour God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *Our Gift and the Divine Claim.*

I. **There is the ethnic or rare gift.**

II. **There is the family, hereditary gift.**

III. **There is to each one a gift from God distinctly personal.**

IV. **We thus come to the Christian gift.**—A general capacity for service; a gift composed of many gifts.—*Raleigh.*

Ver. 7. *The Christian's prevailing Spirit of Mind.*

I. **To what it stands opposed.**—"A spirit of fear." Not the natural passion of fear, or a sense of danger; not the reverential fear of God; but a prevailing disposition of terror and timidity, a slavish dread of God as judge, or of man as an adversary, such a shrinking of the soul as destroys all holy confidence towards our heavenly Father and deprives us of all resolution in doing what is right.

II. **In what it consists.**—1. *A spirit of power.* It denotes such a powerful impression of Divine truth and heavenly blessings as inspires us with vigour and resolution of mind in all we are called to do, in order to form ourselves upon the precepts of the gospel and to maintain its influence in the world. It is a spirit of energy in all that concerns the work of God, in opposition to everything like indifference, unsteadfastness, unfruitfulness. 2. *A spirit of love.* The love of God—a devout adoration of His excellencies and a grateful sense of His benefits, powerfully constraining us to imitate those perfections we adore, and manifest towards others that love which

we acknowledge. 3. *The spirit of a sound mind.* The same thing as wisdom, prudence, a sober judgment, accompanied by composure and self-command; good sense, exalted and enlightened by heavenly wisdom, a mind free from the perturbations of passion and the extravagance of folly, capable of judging soundly and acting with sobriety.

III. **Its excellence and use in the Christian life.**—A spirit "God hath given us." All its principles are calculated to support each other and to form by their union a complete and consistent character. We see the spirit of power, without love, hardening into austerity, and, without soundness of mind, rushing into extravagance. We see the spirit of love, without power, sinking into a soft timidity, and, without soundness of mind, yielding the most sinful compliances. We see the spirit of a sound mind, without power, settling in sloth, and, without love, souring into selfishness. Without the spirit of power, all is feebleness; without the spirit of love, all is ferociousness; without the spirit of a sound mind, all is foolishness. The first is the acting hand, the second the feeling heart, the last the directing head. —*J. Brewster.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—12.

The Hardships of the Ministerial life—

I. **Are to be fearlessly endured.**—1. *In company with the bravest of God's servants.* "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel" (ver. 8). These words come with weight from the lips of a brave old warrior like Paul, and could not but inspirit the timid evangelist as they have inspired the courage of many sufferers for the truth since that day. Shame is the result of fear; but the love of Christ and His truth conquers fear and gives us boldness in witnessing and in suffering for Him. Some of the noblest men and women who have ever lived have endured inexpressible tortures for the gospel's sake. We may never be called to suffer as they did; but whatever may be our afflictions in the gospel, their heroism and fortitude will ever be an example to animate and sustain us. 2. *Being assured of Divine help.* "According to the power of God" (ver. 8). The early martyrs were strengthened in the midst of their sufferings not only by the truth in which they believed and which became so precious to them, but by the power of God directly imparted to their souls. He who originated the gospel and who has saved us will never fail to help us in whatever sufferings we may be involved for the sake of the gospel. "Think not," writes Chrysostom, "that thou hast to bear these afflictions by thine own power; nay, it is by the power of God. It was a greater exercise of power than His making the heaven, His persuading the world to embrace salvation." The help of God fills the soul with fearlessness, and enables us even to rejoice in tribulation.

II. **Are trifling compared with the substantial character of the gospel.** —1. *This gospel provides a plan of salvation Divinely prearranged* (ver. 9). The purpose to save was in the Divine mind before the world began, and was elaborated independent of any works of our own. Though we are sinners, God calls us with a holy calling; the call comes wholly from God and claims us wholly for God. The blessings offered to us in the gospel abundantly recompense us for whatever affliction we are called to endure. 2. *This gospel reveals an immortality of blessedness by the manifestation of Christ* (ver. 10). The epiphany of Christ has wonderfully changed the outlook for humanity. Death, the dread and bondage of universal men, is abolished by the gospel, and

the endless glories of another world are unveiled. In the Zend-Avesta we are told there is a tree, the king of trees, which is called the Death-Destroyer. It grows by the fountain of Ardecision—that is, by the water of life—and its sap confers immortality. It is but a tradition taken from the Bible. To come to Christ, to feed on Him by faith, as He is made known to us in the gospel, is to gain an immortality of bliss. 3. *The proclamation of this gospel is an honourable and important commission* (ver. 11). The apostle regarded it as the highest distinction of his life that he was appointed a preacher and apostle of the gospel and a teacher of this glad evangel to the Gentiles, who had till his day been shut off from the religious privileges that had been exclusively claimed by the Jews. The first Jewish Christian believers were slow to admit that the heathen had an equal right with themselves to all the blessings of the new covenant. The Jewish prejudices of Paul were destroyed by his miraculous conversion, and it was revealed to him that his great life-mission was to proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, in which they had an equal share with all nations. The Christian missionary is honoured with a world-wide commission.

III. **Are counterbalanced by the assurance of personal safety in the future** (ver. 12).—God had committed to Paul the gospel as a sacred deposit for the salvation of others; and he has committed himself—his body, soul, and spirit—as a holy deposit to the Divine care, to be kept to the day of eternal redemption. The same gospel which he declares to others is the only ground for the preacher's own salvation. The celebrated Philippe de Mornay, prime minister of Henry IV. of France, one of the greatest statesmen and the most exemplary Christians of his age, being asked a little before his death if he still retained the same assured hope of future bliss which he had enjoyed during his illness, replied, "I am as confident of it from the incontestable evidence of the Spirit of God, as I ever was of any mathematical truth from all the demonstrations of Euclid."

Lessons.—1. *Fidelity in ministerial work involves labour and suffering.* 2. *Whatever hardships the preaching of the gospel imposes should be cheerfully borne.* 3. *The more we suffer for the truth the greater will be our reward.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES

Ver. 8. *The Folly of Moral Cowardice.*

I. **Indolent indecision is an instrument of Satan for preserving the spirits of men in captivity to his will.**

II. **Shame—the fear of man's opinion—is another.**

III. **Are you ashamed of believing certain established truths such as the gospel comprises?**

IV. **Is it of the prudence of your course you are ashamed?**

V. **Is it of your superiority to common temptations, of hopes that place you above the pleasures of this world, and a serenity unaffected by its troubles?**

VI. **Are you indeed ashamed of communion with God?**—*A. Butler.*

Ver. 10. *Death defeated.*

I. **Let us inquire why, since Christ has abolished death, it is appointed to all men to die.**—1. *This is from no want of power.* 2. *From no want of merit in the work of human redemption.* 3. *But it is in order that the truth of God might be vindicated.* 4. *In order that it may remain as an example of the evil of sin.* 5. *In order that it may remain as a way of destroying sin.* 6. *In order to hint at the immortality beyond the grave.* 7. *In order to teach men the lesson of faith in God.* 8. *In order to enhance the glory of the ultimate conquest of the Redeemer.*

II. **Let us inquire in what sense Christ hath abolished death.**—1. *It is not a mark of God's vindictive dis-*

pleasure. 2. *The empire of death is not perpetual.—Homiletic Quarterly.*

The Christian in Heaven.

I. **The Scripture aids us in conceiving of the heavenly world.**—1. *It enables us to conceive of it negatively.* 2. *Figuratively.* 3. *Comparatively.* 4. *Positively.*

II. **The principal constituents of the heavenly state.**—1. *You may reckon upon pre-eminent knowledge.* 2. *Perfect purity.* 3. *Delightful associations.* 4. *On the presence and sight of the Saviour.* 5. *The most exquisite enjoyment.* 6. *The perpetuity of all this.*

III. **The Christian in his final destiny.**—1. *He is in heaven as a monument of Divine grace.* 2. *See the conduct of God towards him in this world explained and vindicated.* 3. *See the justification of his choice.* 4. *Inquire whether you will be a partaker of the same blessedness.—W. Jay.*

Immortality.

I. **Christ hath revealed the fact.**

II. **The gospel hath shed all the light we have on the nature of the life beyond, the mode or manner of immortality.**

III. **The gospel has not only brought immortality to light, but has revealed the means of reaching it.**—*J. Hamilton.*

Ver. 12. *Faith out of Danger*—

I. **Because of what we know of the character of the Saviour.**

II. **Because we know His ability.**

III. **Because of our persuasion of His fidelity.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13, 14.

Truth and the Soul.

I. **That truth to be efficacious must be clearly and vividly apprehended.**—"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard of me" (ver. 13). The "form" means a pattern plainly delineated and forcibly impressed on the mind by the sound words which fell from the lips or pen of the apostle. Clearness in the mental conception of the truth is necessary in order to grasp its meaning, see its beauty, and feel its power. Loose views of truth leave the soul more exposed to the ravages of error, and to become an easy victim to false teachers.

II. **That truth is efficacious when received in the exercise of faith and love.**—"In faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 13). Faith and love are "the element in which my sound words had place, and in which thou art to have the vivid impression of them as thy inwardly delineated pattern, moulding conformably thy outward profession" (*Fausset*). The truth is a revelation of Christ; and in order to a saving appropriation of Christ the soul must be not only profoundly convinced that He is the truth, but also cordially embrace Him with a loving faith—a faith that works by love.

III. **That truth is to be firmly held and jealously guarded.**—"Hold fast the form of sound words. . . . That good thing which was committed unto thee keep" (vers. 13, 14). Having once got the truth, never part with it. It is a goodly deposit, to be constantly fenced round with watchful care, and resolutely defended from all attacks of error. If we keep the truth, the truth will keep us. It is too precious to lose, and the pains it has cost us to acquire should teach us to value it the more. The struggle to maintain the truth may be fierce, but it is often only brief; and every triumph adds enormously to our spiritual strength. The more real truth becomes to the soul, the more firmly it is held and the more potent is its influence. Better to yield up our life than yield up the truth.

IV. **That truth can be safely kept only by the aid of the indwelling Spirit.**—"Keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (ver. 14). The Holy Ghost

is the Spirit of truth. It is He who reveals it to the soul, deposits it there as a sacred trust, makes it efficacious in renewing the whole man, uses it as a sanctifying instrument; and He only can effectually guard it from the robbers who are seeking to rifle the soul of its hallowed possession. The Spirit plays a prominent part in the ministration of the truth. This should be constantly remembered, and His Divine aid fervently invoked.

Lessons.—1. *Truth should be studiously and prayerfully sought.* 2. *Truth when found should be faithfully maintained.* 3. *The soul realises its highest happiness in the love of the truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 13. *The Form of Sound Words.*

I. **There exists an infinite Being, the great first Cause, whom we call God.**

II. **The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient and authorised rule of faith and practice.**

III. **The sufferings and death of Christ are a full atonement for the sins of mankind.**

IV. **Man must undergo a great moral change.**

V. **The soul of man is immortal.**

VI. **There will be the resurrection of the dead.**

VII. **God has appointed a day for judgment.**

VIII. **Do not exchange this form of sound words for the uncertainties and delusions of infidelity.**

IX. **Beware of error in your religious doctrines.**

X. **Beware of holding the truth in unrighteousness.**—*J. Bromley.*

Ver. 14. *Religion a Good Thing.*

I. **Committed to us as a sacred deposit.**

II. **Is the work of the indwelling Spirit.**

III. **Is to be jealously guarded.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15—18.

The Good Man in Trouble—

I. **Is pained by the desertion of former friends** (ver. 15).—Phygellus and Hermogenes and other Christians of Asia Minor had probably been asked to interest themselves in Paul's case, or to render some service to him; but they refused, and did not even show sympathy with him in his trouble. Some of the Asian brethren had escorted him on his way to Rome as far as Nicopolis; but when he was apprehended in that place, they turned away from him, not willing to risk the perils of being connected with Paul the prisoner. The desertion of a friend is all the more keenly felt when we are in difficulties, and when we recall his former kindnesses.

II. **Is cheered by one conspicuous example of proved fidelity** (vers. 16-18).—In contrast with the fickleness of others Paul mentions the devotion and generosity of Onesiphorus, who so far from being ashamed of the prisoner sought him out diligently, and ministered to the apostle's wants in Rome, as he had done before in Ephesus. One friend in adversity is an unspeakable comfort, and the distressed heart clings to him with the greater tenacity. There are times when we are completely thrown back upon the one Friend who is above all others, and who never fails us in our extremity.

III. **Breathes a fervent prayer for the man who ministered sympathy and help.**—"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus. . . . The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day" (vers. 16, 18). On the assumption that Onesiphorus was dead when this prayer was uttered, a fierce controversy has raged round these words in favour of prayers for the dead. If

we admit that Onesiphorus was dead, this prayer can mean nothing more than that God will have mercy at the day of judgment on those who have done good to us and others during their life on earth, which is a very different thing from the prayers for the dead which are advocated and practised by a certain school. But it cannot be satisfactorily proved that Onesiphorus was dead at the time these words were written. His household would not retain his name after the master was dead; and we have no example of Paul praying for the dead. God blesses not only the good man himself, but all his household; and it is a natural and appropriate prayer that God would show mercy to those who have shown mercy to us in our sufferings and need.

Lessons.—1. *The good are not exempt from trouble.* 2. *Trouble tests the reality of professed friendship.* 3. *In his greatest trouble the good man is not utterly forsaken.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 16. *Onesiphorus.*

I. **The conduct of Onesiphorus.**—1. *He visited the apostle in prison.*—2. *He refreshed him by his conversation.*—3. *He made common cause with him.*—4. *On other occasions he rendered him active service.*

II. **Requital of Paul.**—1. *Grateful remembrance of him in his own heart.*—2. *Fond mention of him to Timothy.*—3. *Earnest prayer for him to God.*—(1) Look more on the bright than on the dark side of the picture of your lot. (2) Christianity does not extinguish any of the innocent feelings of human nature, and improves those which are amiable. (3) Beneficence is a native proof of Christianity, and a leading test, specially in the affluent, of Christian character. (4) There is a Christian mode of expressing gratitude. (5) By kindness to Christians we acquire an interest in their prayers. (6) Deeds of charity are not meritorious in the sight of God.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 18. *St. Paul's Prayer for Onesiphorus.*

I. **The day the apostle speaks of.**—1. *His thoughts were often dwelling on that day.* 2. *It intimates that that day is a most important one.* Other days are important to some, but this will be important to all.

II. **His prayer.**—1. *Our final salvation in the great day of the Lord will be an act of mercy.* 2. *We all still need mercy.* 3. *We all must find mercy.*—*C. Bradley.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Be strong.**—R.V. "be strengthened," and continue so.

Ver. 2. **Among many witnesses.**—The instrumental form, lit. "by the mediation of," here is equal to "in presence of many witnesses," who were present to confirm the word. **Able to teach others.**—The others would not always be docile learners—others of a different quality or spirit, it is indicated.

Ver. 3. **Endure hardness.**—R.V. "Suffer hardship with me." Compare i. 8, where the same word occurs. It would seem more consistent to refer the fellowship in each case to St. Paul, in behalf of the gospel.

Ver. 4. **No man that warreth entangleth himself.**—R.V. "No soldier on service." The word for "entangleth himself" occurs again only 2 Pet. ii. 20. St. Paul had before him living illustrations of his saying. The Roman soldier carried his home on his back. **Who hath chosen him to be a soldier.**—R.V. "who enrolled him as a soldier." This phrase is represented by one word in the original. It is the term for the general who collects an army.

Ver. 5. **Strive for masteries.**—R.V. "contend in the games." In the best Attic Greek the word would mean to work, to endure. **Lawfully.**—1 Tim. i. 8. Conformably to law. Not merely of the contest itself, but also of the preparation and training for it.

Ver. 6. **The husbandman that laboureth.**—The notion of "laboureth" is that of the weariness and lassitude which follow the straining of his powers to the utmost. The lesson seems to be "No sweat, no sweet."

Ver. 7. **Understanding.**—Here means the power of putting things together. It is, as Bishop Lightfoot suggests, the critical application of wisdom to details.

Ver. 9. **I suffer trouble.**—R.V. "hardship." **As an evil-doer.**—He is treated as one would be whose whole aim was to do evil—a constant menace to society. **Unto bonds.**—"Up to the point of bonds." The indignity of the imprisonment was keenly felt by St. Paul, as well as bodily discomfort. **But the word of God is not bound.**—Chrysostom explains, "My hands are bound, but not my tongue." A better contrast is between the messenger and the message. They have bound the messenger, but the message runs on and defies bondage.

Ver. 10. **I endure all things.**—This does not denote suffering pure and simple, but the willing, steadfast endurance of it (*Huther*)—a brave bearing up rather than a passive endurance (*Ellicott*).

Ver. 11. **It is a faithful saying.**—*I.e.* what follows. "We cannot be certain whether the sentences following are strophes from a Christian hymn or not—probably they are" (*Huther*). **If we be dead.**—R.V. "if we died." Some have thought that St. Paul writes of the actual death of the body in martyrdom. The parallel thought in Rom. vi. 8 seems to be against this. Others say, "The definite event indicated by the form of the verb takes place in baptism."

Ver. 12. **If we deny Him.**—If by any possibility through fear of suffering we should deny any relationship to Him.

Ver. 13. **If we believe not.**—R.V. "if we are faithless." Meyer contends that the word always means to be unbelieving in the New Testament. Ellicott and Alford agree that it is not simply unfaithfulness but definitely unbelief that is meant here.

Ver. 14. **Charging them.**—Adjure them on their oath of fealty.

Ver. 15. **Study to shew thyself.**—R.V. "Give diligence to present thyself." The word expresses eager striving, and has a suggestion of making haste (cf. iv. 9, 21). **A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.**—One who has nothing to be ashamed of either in his methods of work or in the examination of his work. For the idea see 1 Cor. iii. 13. **Rightly dividing the word of truth.**—R.V. "handling aright," lit. "cutting straight." The idea of cutting was gradually lost as the word came to signify to manage rightly, to go about a thing in the best way. Same word in LXX. of Prov. iii. 6, "direct."

Ver. 16. **Profane.**—1 Tim. i. 9, iv. 7, vi. 20. That which is common to all—in a religious sense, of things not withdrawn by consecration from general use. The natural antagonism between profane and holy grew into a moral antagonism. **They will increase.**—They will beat forward. See the note on "profiting" in 1 Tim. iv. 15. Compare also 2 John ii. 9.

Ver. 17. **Will eat as doth a canker.**—R.V. "gangrene." An eating ulcer like a cancer, called in Galen "the cold burn." Hippocrates says it is "the state of a tumour between inflammation and entire mortification." Luke the physician was with St. Paul (iv. 11).

Ver. 18. **Saying that the resurrection is past already.**—As though they said, "The only resurrection you are ever likely to know has taken place already; for the flesh, once corrupted, never rises again."

Ver. 19. **The foundation of God standeth sure.**—R.V. "the firm foundation of God standeth." St. Paul's one foundation is Jesus Christ in His complete character and work. **Having this seal.**—Probably in allusion to the practice of engraving inscriptions over doors and on pillars and foundations.

Ver. 20. **Of earth.**—Of burnt clay. St. Paul says God's treasure is entrusted to earthen vessels (2 Cor. iv. 7).

Ver. 21. **Purge himself from these.**—The form of the word "purge" is intensive, as Chrysostom noted: "He said not cleanse, but cleanse out, that is cleanse absolutely." It is no indifferent reform that will please St. Paul, but reform altogether, like Hamlet's. **Meet for the master's use.**—Fit for using by the master of the house.

Ver. 22. **Youthful lusts.**—Pertaining to youth and characteristic of it. "Effeminate luxury, immoderate laughter [pleasure], empty honour, and suchlike things" (*Theodoret*). **Follow righteousness.**—As in 1 Tim. vi. 11, the apostle warns Timothy to flee from some things and follow others, so he does here. **With them that call on the Lord.**—The question here is whether Timothy is to follow righteousness, etc., with them, or whether he is to adopt a pacific course towards those who call, etc. With Heb. xii. 14 in view, perhaps the view of Ellicott and Huther that the latter is the meaning is the better.

Ver. 24. **And the servant of the Lord must not strive.**—The wrangling spirit that delights in strife should never be seen in the messenger of the gospel of peace and good-will. **But be gentle.**—The word occurs again in New Testament only at 1 Thess. ii. 7. "It is used

of an amiable conduct or disposition of a superior towards an inferior," or "an outward mildness and gentleness especially in bearing with others." **Apt to teach.**—He must be didactic—not only having the ability but the willingness to teach. Though the public address in the congregation was permitted to every one with a charisma, still the bishop in particular had to know how to handle doctrine. **Patient.**—Able to endure evil, as it is directed against himself. On the necessity of a high priest being compassionate to the erring see Heb. v. 2.

Ver. 25. **Those that oppose themselves.**—When a man imagines those who are bent on his welfare are his worst enemies, he sets himself with very determined opposition.

Ver. 26. **That they may recover themselves.**—A.V. margin, "awake." R.V. margin, "Gr. return to soberness." The preposition in the compound word may express motion from beneath, and so the word would mean that they may come up out of the stupefaction which holds them down, but the classical meaning is, to become sober again. Heretical teaching, like intoxication, clouds men's wits. **Who are taken captive by him at his will.**—R.V. "having been taken captive by the Lord's servant unto the will of God." The sense conveyed by the A.V. (which is the interpretation given by most modern commentators) is singularly flat and insipid, says Bishop Ellicott. The R.V., which gives the interpretation of Wetstein, Bengel, and others, is equally objectionable, says the same authority, who adopts with but little hesitation the interpretation of Beza. This connects "that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" with "unto His will," *i.e.* unto *God's* will. So we get the translation, "And that they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil, though holden captive by him to do his will." See R.V. marginal note.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

The Permanence of Christian Doctrine.

I. **That Christian doctrine becomes more vivid as the soul is strengthened by Divine grace.**—"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 1). In contrast to the weak conduct of those who had forsaken him, and in imitation of the devotion of a man like Onesiphorus and of his own resolute attitude, the apostle exhorts Timothy to seek increased spiritual strength. In our own strength we can do nothing; but in the grace supplied by Christ to all who believe in Him and ask Him, we find all we need for strengthening our own Christian character, and for imparting instruction to others. Our power to do good will depend upon the degree in which the truth influences our own souls. In the meeting of Elijah and Ahab at the plot of Naboth we have an illustration of the contrast between strength and weakness: the righteous man is strong, the wicked man weak and vacillating.

II. **That the reality of Christian doctrine is attested by reliable witnesses.**—"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses" (ver. 2)—by means of many witnesses. Every true believer is a witness of the truth. In other words, the truth is its own witness, exemplified in the changed lives and righteous conduct of those who have embraced it. The public teacher is called by his office to be a faithful and true witness, and the soundness of his doctrine is attested by the manifold witnesses of its transforming power.

III. **That the permanence of Christian doctrine is secured by careful transmission to faithful and competent teachers.**—"The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (ver. 2). There is only one gospel, and this has been authenticated by its own intrinsic value and by the testimony of incorruptible witnesses, and every care must be taken to preserve this gospel inviolate and transmit it in its purity and strength to future generations. Care must also be taken that the human vehicle of the truth be duly fitted and prepared to convey it to others. Here we have the earliest indication of the formation of a theological school, which shall not only train men to instruct the ignorant, but to defend and maintain the truth in its integrity. The teachers of Christian doctrine must be not only able to teach, but be men of unblemished character and undoubted fidelity. Truth will be rendered permanent not simply

by human creeds and ecclesiastical traditions, but by living witnesses of its converting power.

Lessons.—1. *Christian doctrine and practice must go together.* 2. *We can only witness for the truth as we know it.* 3. *Experimental religion is the best guarantee of the permanence of truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Custody of the Gospel.*

I. **The truth of the gospel has been verified by reliable witnesses** (ver. 2).

II. **Is to be handed on to the custody of faithful and competent teachers** (ver. 2).

III. **Personal growth in the grace of Christ is essential to the safe custody of the gospel.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—7.

Phases of the Christian Life.

I. **The Christian life is a military service.**—1. *The power of endurance is acquired by continuous drill.* "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (ver. 3). "Military service involves self-sacrifice, endurance, discipline, vigilance, obedience, ready co-operation with others, sympathy, enthusiasm, loyalty" (*Plummer*). Tertullian writes: "Even in peace soldiers learn betimes to suffer warfare by toil and discomforts, by marching in arms, running over the drill-ground, working at trench-making, constructing the tortoise, till the sweat runs again. In like manner do ye, O blessed ones, account whatever is hard in your lot as discipline of the powers of your mind and body. Ye are about to enter for the good fight, in which the living God gives the prizes, and the Holy Spirit prepares the combatants, and the crown is the eternal prize of an angel's nature, citizenship in heaven, glory for ever and ever. Therefore your trainer Jesus Christ has seen good to separate you from a state of freedom for rougher treatment, that power may be made strong in you." 2. *The efficiency of service must not be impaired by being excessively engrossed with other occupations* (ver. 4). The soldier is wholly devoted to his profession, and his term of service is spent either in warfare or in preparation for it. He abandons all other occupations: they would interfere with his efficiency and with his prospects of promotion. So the Christian soldier, if he is to render good service, must not be entangled with worldly affairs: not that he can ignore them or neglect them; but he must guard against their interfering with the obedience he owes to His heavenly Commander.

II. **The Christian life is an athletic contest.**—1. *Victory is gained only by great effort.* "And if a man also strive for masteries" (ver. 5). Tertullian, continuing his address to martyrs, passes by an easy transition from training for military service to training for athletic contest. "For the athletes also are set apart for stricter discipline that they may have time to build up their strength. They are kept from luxury, from daintier meats, from too pleasant drink; they are driven, tormented, distressed. The harder their labours in training the greater their hopes of victory. Virtue is built up by hardness, but by softness is overthrown." 2. *Reward is given only to those who faithfully observe the rules of the contest.* "Yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (ver. 5). The athlete, though gaining the victory, is not crowned unless he has observed all the conditions of the contest, and the preparation for it as to self-denying diet, exercise, self-restraint, chastity, and decorum. So in the Christian course the prize is given to him who has obeyed all the rules. To share the

glory of Christ we must share His suffering: if we shrink from the cross, we miss the crown.

III. **The Christian life is moral husbandry.**—1. *Implying diligent toil.* "The husbandman that laboureth" (ver. 6). The husbandman knows that according to the labour put into the soil will be its fruitfulness. Christianity not only inculcates work, but ennobles it. Work is necessary for sustenance, and is the condition of all growth. Mental and moral excellence are attained only by great labour. 2. *The diligent worker is entitled to reward.* "Must be first partaker of the fruits" (ver. 6). The first to enjoy the results of work should be he who has been most diligent. "In all labour there is profit." Work is the pathway to success and honour.

IV. **The manifold phases of the Christian life require earnest thought.**—"Consider what I say" (ver. 7). Christianity must be studied in its many-sided aspects; and it will always be suggestive to regard it as a military service, an athletic contest, and as moral husbandry. But much as we reflect and ponder, it is the Lord only who can give us true understanding in all things. "Timothy is not the only Christian or the only minister who is in danger of being disgusted, disheartened, and dismayed by the coldness and apathy of professing friends, and by the hostility and contempt of secret or open enemies. We are at times inclined to murmur because the rest for which we so often yearn is not given us here—rest from toil, from temptation, from sin. Such a Sabbath rest is the prize in store for us; but we cannot have it here. And if we desire to have it hereafter, we must keep the rules of the arena—self-control, self-sacrifice, work" (*Plummer*).

Lessons.—1. *Religion is adapted to all conditions of life.* 2. *Obedience is the pathway of safety and success.* 3. *The highest prizes of religion are not secured without self-denying effort.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3, 4. *The Military Discipline*—

I. **Requires the putting off or excision of the world as an interruptive and disqualifying power.**

II. **Raises spirit and high impulse by a training under authority exact and absolute.**

III. **We find in military discipline how to put a more genial look on our crosses and required self-denials.**

IV. **The military discipline has as little direct concern to beget happiness as it has to compel self-abnegation.**

V. **Whatever we get we must somehow fight for it.**—*Bushnell.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8—13.

The Apostolic Gospel—

I. **Had for its leading theme the resurrection of Christ from the dead.**—"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel" (ver. 8). The apostles gave special prominence to the resurrection of Christ. It was the most astounding event of the time, and was an unanswerable evidence of the Divine power of Jesus. The Jews could not deny the fact, for they or their friends were witnesses of it: all their plots against Jesus were baffled; their rage was impotent. The gospel to-day preaches not a dead but a living Christ—Christ incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ regnant and triumphant.

II. **Entailed suffering in its proclamation.**—"Wherein I suffer trouble. . . . I endure all things for the elect's sakes" (vers. 9, 10). The enemies of the gospel could not destroy its facts or answer its arguments: they took their revenge

on its propagators, whose only fault was that they spoke the truth. They testified of what they had seen and felt—they could not do otherwise; and for this they suffered. It is hard to suffer for telling the truth; but it would be harder still for the true preacher to tell a lie. Suffering for the gospel's sake has helped its spread. The most savage persecutors have been convinced and conquered.

III. **Revealed the greatness of man's salvation.**—"That they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory" (ver. 10). The apostles not only announced the resurrection of Christ as an undeniable fact, but showed how that fact brought hope and salvation to perishing men. The world had never before heard such news; it seemed almost too good to be true. The grandeur of the blessings offered, staggered them. Salvation is not only rescue from present and future misery, but is the affluent bestowment of unutterable and eternal glory; it is an ever-expanding benediction.

IV. **Affirmed certain important and suggestive truths** (vers. 11-13).—The symmetrical form of "the faithful saying," and the rhythmical balance of the parallel clauses in these verses, make it probable that they formed part of an ancient Church hymn. The apostolic gospel is here compressed into a short, intelligible, and suggestive formula. To die with Christ is to live with Him; to suffer with Him is to reign with Him; to deny Him is to be denied: if we believe Him not, his faithfulness remains intact. The phrases constitute an epitome of the gospel as to its reception and results. If man changes, Christ cannot change—another argument to remain steadfast in the faith.

Lessons.—1. *The leading theme of the gospel is Christ.* 2. *The gospel cannot be silenced by persecution.* 3. *The glory of the gospel is its saving effects.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *Salvation with Eternal Glory.*

I. **The necessity of salvation.**—1. *Sin is the cause of danger and ruin.* 2. *Salvation cannot be procured by human arts or inventions.*

II. **The source of salvation.**—"In Christ Jesus." 1. *By designation and promise.* 2. *By qualification.* 3. *Salvation is dispensed by Him.*

III. **Salvation on earth is succeeded by eternal glory in heaven.**—1. *Freedom from sin and its consequences.* 2. *Introduction into heaven.* 3. *The everlasting vision of Deity.—Helps for the Pulpit.*

Vers. 12, 13. *Denial of Christ.*

I. **We may take the part of His enemies, or ignore His supreme claim to allegiance.**

II. **We may transform Him into a myth, a fairy tale, a subjective principle.**

III. **Find a substitute in our own life for His grace.**

IV. **Assume that He is not the ground of our reconciliation, nor the Giver of salvation, nor the sole Head of His Church.**—*Local Preacher's Treasury.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—18.

Solemn Exhortations on Vital Themes.

I. **To avoid unnecessary controversy.**—1. *Controversy assumes a very different spirit when conducted as in the presence of God.* "Charging them before the Lord" (ver. 14). The efforts of the controversialist are usually directed more to gaining a victory over his opponent than to secure the triumph of the truth: the contest is apt to degenerate into personalities, and the truth is clouded with the mists of human passions. The true champion of the truth must be willing to efface himself, and to remember the cause is not his but God's. He must

conduct his case as in the presence of God, and be assured that God will triumphantly defend His own cause. Nothing is gained if the truth suffers in the least degree. 2. *Verbal controversy is profitless.* "That they strive not about words to no profit" (ver. 14). "We have two ears and one tongue," said Zeno, "that we may hear much and talk little." A remarkable modern writer asserts that empty talk is on the increase in the world. The superabundance is alarming; a new deluge is threatened; the spirit is lost in hollow words. Invention in all spheres is on the increase, the invention of pretences remarkably so. One feels inclined to call out with Hamlet despairingly, "Words, words, words!" Words are the dominant power nowadays in so-called intellectual pursuits: it is not the informing spirit, but the phrase, which is puffed and offered for sale. 3. *Verbal controversy tends to unsettle.* "To the subverting of the hearers" (ver. 14). Much talking does not build up, but pulls down. Idle controversies have wrought widespread mischief. The metaphysical contest between the Jesuits and Jansenists on the sufficiency and efficacy of the grace of God in salvation thickened into a confusion of words, till the Jesuits introduced into this logomachy papal bulls, royal edicts, and a regiment of dragoons.

II. **To aim at becoming a worker in the truth Divinely approved.**—1. *This is attained only by diligent study.* "Study"—be earnest, diligent—"to shew thyself approved unto God" (ver. 15). It is presumption to expect the help of the Spirit without earnest study and prayer. Patient and sustained investigation will lead to rare discoveries of truth. In all our studies we should seek not our own intellectual gratification, but the Divine approval. The loftiest inquiries after truth terminate in God. 2. *This gives courage in declaring and defending the truth.* "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (ver. 15). Dividing the word is a metaphor taken from a father or steward cutting and distributing bread among his children. We must have the confidence and courage to cut a straight line for the truth in which we can walk straightforward, turning neither to the right nor the left. When we confuse the truth, we become ourselves confused and exposed to shame.

III. **To be superior to the profanity that wraps up error in the garb of truth.**—1. *Profanity in speech engenders sin* (ver. 16). Sin in speech soon becomes sin in act. A profane coachman, pointing to one of the horses he was driving, said to a pious traveller, "That horse, sir, knows when I swear at him." "Yes," said the traveller, "and so does One above." Shun profane and vain babblings; stand above, separate from, be superior to them. 2. *Error is a deadly disease.* "Their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus" (ver. 17). The consuming progress of mortification is the image. They pretend to give rich spiritual pasture to their disciples: the only pasture is that of a spiritual cancer, or gangrene, feeding on their vitals (*Fausset*). 3. *Error on one fundamental truth is disastrous to faith* (ver. 18). To teach that the Resurrection is past is to take away one important feature of our hope as to future bliss. We must not confuse the future resurrection of the body with the spiritual resurrection of the soul from the death of sin. The truths of the gospel are homogeneous: to reject one is to impair our faith in all.

Lessons.—1. *Truth is rarely helped by controversy.* 2. *Progress in truth is pleasing to God.* 3. *Error is the foe of practical godliness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. *The Important Function of the Gospel Ministry.*

I. **Rightly to divide the word of truth is clearly and accurately to distinguish truth from error.**

II. **To mark the proper distinctions between the law and the gospel.**

III. **To point out the proper connection and harmony which subsist among the doctrines of the gospel.**

IV. **To treat the various branches of Divine revelation according to their just importance and influence.**

V. **To unfold the truths of God seasonably and in a suitableness to the calls of Providence and the circumstances of mankind.**—*P. Hutchison.*

Vers. 16-18. *Useless Talk*—

I. **Tends to augment impiety** (ver. 16).

II. **Corrupts and destroys the life of godliness** (ver. 17).

III. **Is fruitful in spreading pernicious errors** (ver. 18).

IV. **Unsettles the faith of young converts.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—22.

The Security and Purity of the Church.

I. **The Church is Divinely founded.**—"The foundation of God standeth sure" (ver. 19). Or, according to R.V., "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth." The Church is secure because it rests on God: no other foundation could bear the magnificent superstructure which is being built upon it. There is a story told of Julian the Apostate that, in his youth, he tried to raise a memorial shrine to the holy Mamas; but as he built, the earth at the foundation crumbled—God and the holy martyr refusing to accept the labour and offering of his hands. It is a significant allegory of men who toil and build on rotten and insecure foundations.

II. **The Church has a Divine and a human aspect.**—1. *The Divine aspect.* This is indicated in the inscription, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (ver. 19). The members of the Church live in different ages, in different climes, among different nationalities, and in varying conditions; but the Lord knows them all, and each one has his place in the grand Divine commonwealth. The omniscient God is the strength and comfort of His Church. 2. *The human aspect.* "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (ver. 19). The Lord recognises as His only those who are holy. Some seventy years after Pentecost the veil is lifted by the hand of a Roman statesman from the comparative obscurity of the Christian Church, and discloses an army of soldiers of the cross whose bond of union is still stamped conspicuously with the apostolic seal, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." At the commencement of the second century Pliny reports to Trajan, as the result of what he could extort from the Christians in his province, "that this was the sum of their fault or error, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before sunrise and sing a hymn to Christ as God, and bind themselves by a sacramentum that they would not commit theft or robbery or adultery, that they would not break faith nor repudiate a trust." A memorable record! honourable to the Roman to whose impartial accuracy it is due, as well as to the Church whose clear and simple character it reflects, and more precious, alike in its historical and in its practical instruction, than many a famous volume (*Wace*).

III. **The grade of membership in the Church depends on moral character** (ver. 20).—As in a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, and wood and earth—their use being according to their quality—so in the Church every member has his place and use. "The ark of Noah is a type of the Church: as in the former there were together the leopard and the kid, the wolf and the lamb, so in the latter the righteous and sinners, vessels of gold and silver, with vessels of wood and earth" (*Jerome*). The distinguishing feature in the Church is not wealth, ability, or social distinction, but holiness.

IV. **High moral character qualifies for exalted service in the Church**

(ver. 21).—Paul was himself a vessel of honour: once among those of wood and of earth, he afterwards became by grace one of gold. Full out-and-out consecration to God is the qualification for noblest work. God entrusts His loftiest missions to His holiest servants.

V. **The Church demands purity in all its members** (ver. 22).—Especially are youthful lusts to be shunned. There are some temptations which are best conquered by flight. The graces of righteousness, faith, charity, must be followed in "peace with all that call upon God out of a pure heart." The Church is the centre of peace and purity.

Lessons.—1. *The Church is dear to God.* 2. *The Church is a witness for God.* 3. *The Church is powerful only as it is pure.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 19. *Christians must forsake Evil.*

I. **Those described.**—"Every one that nameth the name of Christ."—1. *To name the name of Christ is to accept Him.* 2. *To profess Him openly.* 3. *To be identified with Him.*

II. **The command.**—"Depart from iniquity." 1. *Because a departure from iniquity is involved in accepting Christ.* 2. *Because otherwise we must be involved in the deepest guilt.* 3. *Because we must be acting a part characterised by the vilest hypocrisy.* 4. *Because in Christ there is grace and strength to obey this command.—Stewart.*

The Foundation of God.

I. **The Lord knoweth them that are His.**—1. *As redeemed by Him.* 2. *By the Spirit's work in them.* 3. *By the need they have of Him.* 4. *By the love they bear Him.* 5. *By the work they do for Him.* 6. *By their suffering for and with Him.* 7. *As waiting for Him.*

II. **Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.**—1. *Naming the name of Christ comes before departing from iniquity.* 2. *Is to be followed by departing from iniquity.* 3. *Naming the name of Christ and departing from iniquity thus go together.—R. S. Candlish.*

Ver. 21. *Fit for the Master's Service.*

I. **There are some in the Church the Master cannot use because they are not fit for service.**—1. *Because they hold false doctrines.* 2. *Because they are given to vain babblings.*

II. **What constitutes fitness for Christ's service?**—1. *Uprightness of character.* 2. *Fidelity to duty.* 3. *Love.* 4. *Peace.—Lay Preacher.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23—26.

The Duty of the Gospel Teacher.

I. **To remember that he is the servant of the Lord** (ver. 24).—The minister of the gospel is not the servant of man, or of a clique or party, nor is he the servant of the Church excepting so far as in serving the Church he is serving the Lord. His high distinction is to be the servant of the Lord; from Him he receives his commission and authority, and to Him he is accountable. The servant should seek to imitate the spirit and example of his Master.

II. **To be careful to avoid themes provocative of useless contention** (ver. 23).—A spark will raise a conflagration; a single word may light the lurid torch of war. "You may tame the wild beast; the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and the dry wood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word you uttered carelessly yesterday or this morning" (*Robertson*). Of all men the minister of the gospel should be cautious and circumspect in speech. An indiscreet word may lead to endless contention.

III. **To mingle gentleness and patience with sound and faithful instruction**

(vers. 24, 25).—The successful teacher must have not only intelligence and ability, but the aptitude that comes from patient study and the gentleness which is the fruit of stern self-discipline. He is to be gentle that he may not be the cause of wrong, and patient so as to endure wrong. To gain influence with others we must practise much self-suppression. The simplest statement of truth will sometimes raise opposition. It should be our aim to allay or disarm opposition, so that the taught may receive with meekness the engrafted word. Truth is most effective in the mind prepared for its reception. The judicious teacher will know when and how to speak.

IV. **To aim at the moral rescue of those ensnared in error** (vers. 25, 26).—The gospel teacher has to contend not only with subtle phases of error, but with the devil, the great master-spirit of all error. To rescue man from sin is to snatch him from the clutches of the evil one. Everything depends on the manner and spirit in which the truth is presented, and every possible means should be used to ensure success. Anthony Blane, one of Felix Neff's earlier converts, was very earnest in winning souls for Christ. The enemies of the gospel were angry at his success, and treated him with scoffs and threats. One night he was followed by a man in a rage, who struck him a violent blow on the head. "May God forgive and bless you!" was Anthony's quiet and Christian rejoinder. A few days after the same man met him in a narrow road, and stretching out his hand beseechingly, cried in a tremulous voice, "Mr. Blane, forgive me, and let all be over!" Thus did this disciple of Christ, by gentle and peaceful words, make a friend of an enemy.

Lessons.—1. *The best teacher is always anxious to learn.* 2. *To teach others to profit we must be masters of ourselves.* 3. *The highest end of teaching is the salvation of others.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 23-26. *The Model Preacher*—

I. Avoids occasions of strife.

II. Understands the use and power of gentleness.

III. Is thoroughly master of his theme.

IV. Aims at the immediate rescue of men from the thraldom of sin and Satan.

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **In the last days.**—In the time just before the Lord's appearing, in which wickedness will come to a head—a head that will be crushed. **Perilous times shall come.**—"Grievous seasons will ensue."

Ver. 2. **Lovers of their own selves.**—"No man ever yet hated his own flesh," says St. Paul. The men here spoken of are they who make undue provision for softness and ease, the self-indulgent. **Covetous.**—Obliterates the similarity of sound. As we might say, "lovers of selves" and "lovers of silver" as it ministers to self. **Boasters.**—"The word originally designated the vagabond mountebanks, conjurors, etc., and from them was transferred to any braggart or boaster vaunting himself in possession of that which was not his" (*Trench*). **Proud.**—R.V. "haughty." Such as out of a swollen estimate of their own importance look down on others. Quoting Prov. iii. 34, St. James and St. Peter remind us that "God resisteth"—sets Himself in battle-array against—"the proud." **Unthankful.**—The graceless. The only other use in the New Testament describes those who take good from the hand of the all-bountiful Father without grace (Luke vi. 35).

Ver. 3. **Without natural affection.**—Especially that between parents and children. **Truce-**

breakers.—R.V. "implacable." "The absolutely irreconcilable" (*Trench*). **False accusers.**—R.V. "slanderers." Gr. διάβολοι (whence "devils"). **Despisers of those that are good.**—Gr. "no friends of the good."

Ver. 4. **Traitors.**—The word is used of Judas (Luke vi. 16) and the Jewish authorities (Acts vi. 52). It means men among whom there is no fidelity. **Heady.**—R.V. "headstrong"—lit. "falling forward"—the reckless, impetuous. **Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.**—R.V. "rather than lovers of God." If the love of pleasure, coarse or refined, is paramount, it will be at the cost of the love of God.

Ver. 5. **Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.**—It is a new heathendom under a Christian name which St. Paul here describes.

Ver. 6. **Silly women.**—The diminutive term ("little women") is not found again in New Testament. The contemptuous epithet indicates their weakness and proneness to temptation.

Ver. 7. **Never able.**—In the nature of things whilst such conditions lasted. **To come to the knowledge.**—*I.e.* the complete knowledge.

Ver. 8. **Jannes and Jambres.**—According to Jewish tradition, sons of Balaam, at first teachers, then opponents, of Moses. They perished with the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

Ver. 9. **Shall be manifest.**—"Thoroughly exposed." **As theirs also was.**—R.V. "came to be." The pronoun points to these men far removed as monitory specimens of those who oppose truth.

Ver. 10. **But thou hast fully known.**—R.V. "didst follow." The mental process of investigation and the moral process of imitating the good seem to blend in this expression, as the words following indicate.

Ver. 11. **What persecutions I endured.**—The old man lives over again the life of hardship and glorifies his Deliverer.

Ver. 13. **Seducers.**—R.V. "impostors." There is "a reference to incantation by howling, and then to the practice of magic generally, and thence to deception and imposture generally" (*Ellicott*). **Shall wax worse and worse.**—"Shall make advance toward the worse." In ver. 9 the apostle says they shall not advance further without exposure; here he seems to say that after exposure they do not mind to what lengths they go. The Nemesis of deception is self-deception.

Ver. 14. **Knowing of whom.**—R.V. margin, "Gr. what persons." The apostle does not take the sole credit of the discipleship of Timothy, whose "faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Ver. 15. **From a child.**—R.V. "a babe," from earliest infancy. **The Holy Scriptures.**—R.V. "the sacred writings." A comprehensive term including, like our Lord's threefold division in Luke xxiv. 44, all the Jewish canonical Scriptures.

Ver. 16. **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.**—R.V. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable." Note that the "scripture" of this verse is not the same as the "sacred writings" of ver. 15. Here it is simply "every writing inspired of God." The inbreathing of the Holy Ghost is the condition of its being profitable. **For correction.**—Setting upright again something that was out of the perpendicular. **For instruction.**—Fatherly discipline or process of education, often by chastisement or severe methods. The word of God does not always speak smooth things to us.

Ver. 17. **Throughly furnished.**—Completely fitted out, as a soldier with full accoutrements, or a workman with tools.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—5.

The End of the Christian Dispensation.

I. **It will be a period of great moral danger.**—"In the last days perilous times shall come" (ver. 1)—difficult and grievous times, when it will be difficult to know what is to be done, what to believe, who to believe, how to act. There will be indifference to revealed truth, nay, to all truth; making light of error, and not reproving it; holding that all religions are so far right and acceptable, and that there are a thousand ways to heaven, if there be a heaven or a hell at all. Laxity of opinion and laxity of morals will prevail. Immorality will overflow in every form, and not be condemned. A loose faith, a loose practice, an easy law, an easy gospel, all the worst forms of a benumbing latitudinarianism will prevail.

II. **It will be a period in which all kinds of vice will abound** (vers. 2-4).—The catalogue of sins enumerated in these verses indicate a relapse of the professing Christian Church into the worst vices of the rankest heathenism. Even the young will be infected with the degeneracy of the times. The leading

characteristic of the sinners of that age is described in the phrase, "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

III. **It will be a period in which true godliness will be falsified.**—"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (ver. 5). Vice is only aggravated when it is practised under the garb of religion; its assumed guise renders it not less but more detestable: it is a daring attempt to drag God down to the level of our sins. Samuel Rutherford has said that there is a spice of hypocrisy in us all. This may be so; but it is another thing when we consciously and deliberately act the hypocrite. The hypocrite maps out the road to heaven, knows it well, has sounded with plummet the depths of the promises, and can talk about them. But he has accepted a two-parts Christ. There is a little pet sin snugly tucked up in a warm corner of his heart that he is unwilling to part with. Christ is his priest, his prophet, but he will not have Him as his king; he will not have this Man to reign over and in him.

IV. **It will be a period in which there will be little hope of reclaiming the apostates.**—"From such turn away" (ver. 5). Their case is hopeless; all efforts to benefit them are unavailing; they must be left to the just recompense of their evil ways. It is the acme of obstinate wickedness when all hope of recovery has to be abandoned. If the gospel is persistently rejected, there is no possibility of salvation. It is a sad reflection that there may be those now in our midst who are as desperately vile as any in the last days can be.

Lessons.—1. *The last days will be conspicuous for abounding iniquity.* 2. *The last days will be a severe trial of faith.* 3. *The last days will witness the signal punishment of the unbelieving.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *Self-love.*

I. **Self-love pursuing what is upon the whole absolutely best for us is innocent and good.**

II. **There can be no culpable self-love but in respect of temporal things.**—Even in this respect there may be degree of self-love, not only innocent but praiseworthy.

III. **A vicious self-love.**—1. *Manifested in pride.* 2. *Sensuality.* 3. *Avarice or self-interestedness.*

Lessons.—1. *Self-lovers are not greater enemies to others in intention than they are in effect to themselves.* 2. *There can be no such thing as true happiness separate from the love of God and our neighbours.*—*Waterland.*

Ver. 5. *A Form of Godliness without the Power.*

I. **A form of godliness.**—1. *An outward profession of religion.* 2. *An affectation of godly discourse.* 3. *Affecting certain modes and fashionable gestures of godliness.* 4. *A reliance on outward duties of religion.*

II. **A man may have a form of godliness when yet he is very far from the power—the truth and reality of it.**—Formalists are described in vers. 2-4.—*Bishop Bull.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—9.

Characteristics of False Teachers.

I. **They furtively insinuate themselves into the midst of domestic life.**—"For of this sort are they which creep into houses" (ver. 6). As a serpent crawls towards its prey, or as a wolf stealthily attacks the sheepfold. The peace of many a home has been destroyed by the cunning of unprincipled men.

II. **They practise their wiles on weak women.**—1. *Women whose sinful lives make them a prey to conflicting passions.* "And lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (ver. 6). The most abandoned woman

has her moments of remorse, when her conscience is roused and her soul bowed down under the load of conscious sin. It is then that the false teacher, who promises ease of conscience, is eagerly listened to, especially if too much restriction is not placed on the indulgence of unholy desire. 2. *Women who crave for novelty rather than the knowledge of the truth.* "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (ver. 7). They quickly disparage what they already know by the restless desire and curiosity to gain something new. It is not a paradox but a truth to say that their constant craving for knowledge leaves them utterly ignorant, for nothing can be known that is forgotten as soon as it is learned. The Gnostic teachers, like more recent heretics, laid hold of the female sex and encouraged them to use all their seductive arts in popularising their theories.

III. **They have their prototypes in past ages.**—1. *In men who audaciously opposed the truth.* "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth" (ver. 8). These were the traditional names of the Egyptian magicians who sought by their conjuring tricks to discredit the authority of Moses. It is the ambition of false teachers to-day to imitate and if possible outrival the preacher of the gospel. 2. *In men whose degraded minds rendered them incapable of appreciating the truth.* "Men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (ver. 8). Their own vitiated tastes and misused powers incapacitated them from testing the truth. They were bewitched and misled by their own foolish errors, and infatuated by their own sins.

IV. **The inevitable exposure of their wicked and insensate folly limits their power for mischief.**—"But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest" (ver. 9). Wise as they may seem, their folly shall be exposed. In all wickedness there is an element of weakness which limits its power to do evil. They who seek to deceive others end in being most deceived themselves.

Lessons.—1. *False teachers are not particular as to the instruments they employ.* 2. *Error hopelessly degrades its victims.* 3. *False teachers expose themselves.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 8, 9. *Opposition to the Truth—*

I. **Is the offspring of ignorance and obstinate wickedness.**

II. **Is limited in its power.**

III. **The folly of such an attitude will be exposed and the opponents signally punished.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—13.

Characteristics of a Genuine Teacher.

I. **The genuine teacher is known by the character of his doctrine and the integrity of his life** (ver. 10).—In contrast with the false teachers the apostle appeals to his own teaching and manner of life. Both were well known and had been tested in trying circumstances. The genuine teacher is not actuated by selfish motives, but by a desire to spread the truth and promote the glory of Christ, and the purity of his aim is evident in the Christian spirit with which he treats his opponents and vilifiers.

II. **The genuine teacher is known by his sufferings for the truth.**—1. *Suffering for the truth is the lot of the faithful* (vers. 11, 12). Christianity condemns all other religions and claims to be the only religion; it enjoins precepts directly contrary to the instincts of the natural man, and it predicts

that persecutions are sure to overtake its most ardent followers. But it promises help in suffering and a future reward of unspeakable glory. A man must be truly in earnest who embraces Christianity with all its conditions and consequences. 2. *From all suffering for the truth God graciously delivers.* "But out of them all the Lord delivered me" (ver. 11). If Paul was delivered from trials, unparalleled in their number and severity, the most oppressed servant of Christ need not despair. With this example before us we need not fear whatever persecution and suffering may be entailed in a faithful propagation of the truth.

III. **The genuine teacher is known by contrast with the wicked and deceptive charlatanry of false teachers.**—"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (ver. 13). Magical arts were practised at Ephesus; but these were abandoned by all who embraced Christ. The false teachers did not hesitate to use the tricks of the conjuror to deceive the unwary; and as they became more reckless in their methods and more wicked in their lives, they ended by being themselves deceived. As Bengel remarks, "He who has once begun to deceive others is the less easily able to recover himself from error, and the more easily embraces in turn the errors of others." There is the widest contrast between the showy and tricky charlatanry of false teachers, and the sedate straightforwardness and calmly fervent zeal of the gospel preacher.

Lessons.—1. *The truth forms the character of its advocate.* 2. *Christianity teaches us how to endure and conquer suffering.* 3. *The genuine teacher is a living witness for the truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 10, 11. *Personal Integrity*—

I. **Is founded on belief in the truth** (ver. 10).

II. **Is manifested in the life** (ver. 10).

III. **Is seen in the carrying out of a definite purpose** (ver. 10).

IV. **Is exemplified in the virtues of the Christian character** (ver. 10).

V. **Is tested and strengthened by suffering** (ver. 11).

VI. **Recognises the special help of God in affliction** (ver. 11).

Ver. 12. *The Persecution of Goodness.*

I. **The text characterises the morality of believers.**—They "live godly." 1. *The believer complies with the will of God.* 2. *Presents his services as an offering to God.* 3. *Aims at the glory of God.* 4. *Seeks the enjoyment of God.*

II. **The text declares the origin of the morality of the believer.**—"In Christ Jesus." 1. *Implies union with Christ.* 2. *Christ frees from condemnation and punishment.* 3. *Christ furnishes motives to obedience.*

III. **The text declares the consequence of the morality of the believer.**—"Shall suffer persecution." 1. *The world hates godliness.* 2. *The world is reproved by godliness.*—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—17.

The Use of the Bible in the Christian Life.

I. **Instruction in the Bible from earliest youth imposes fidelity to its teachings** (vers. 14, 15).—Timothy had been taught the Scriptures from his childhood. The reverence of his Jewish mother for the word of God was transferred to her child, and his early life was impregnated with the spirit and teaching of the Old Testament. In the study thus early begun, and still further developed as the years sped on, Timothy is urged to continue. Childhood is the most impressionable age, and instructions then received are never forgotten. Nothing makes so lasting an impression on the young mind as the word of God.

II. **The most accurate knowledge of the Bible will not save the soul apart from faith in Christ.**—"Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (ver. 15). It is a good thing to drill the young mind in a knowledge of the word of God and to store it with memory texts, but care should be taken to show how all scripture reveals Christ and leads to Christ. The knowledge of the Bible makes us wise in knowing Christ as our Saviour. He who has not faith has not the true wisdom. The Jews knew the Bible well, but they remained ignorant because they rejected Christ.

III. **The Bible is a collection of Divinely inspired writings.**—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (ver. 16). R.V. "*Every scripture inspired of God.*" As most of the New Testament books were written when Paul wrote this his latest epistle, they are included in the clause. Knapp defines inspiration as, "An extraordinary Divine agency upon teachers whilst giving instruction, oral or written, by which they were taught how and what they should speak or write." The Bible is true because it is God-inspired. The same cannot be said of any other book. A learned infidel who examined the Bible for himself, and came to the irresistible conclusion of its Divine authorship, said, "It would have been as easy for a mole to have written Sir Isaac Newton's treatise on optics as for uninspired men to have written the Bible."

IV. **The prime use of the Bible is to teach authoritative truth and mould the Christian life.**—1. *The study of Divine truth disciplines the mind and heart.* "Is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (ver. 16). Doctrine and reproof embrace the speculative parts of divinity, correction and instruction the practical. The devout and diligent study of the Bible is a mental and moral discipline. Every man is definitely the better for close and thoughtful contact with the word of God. Queen Elizabeth said, "I walk many times in the pleasant fields of the Holy Scriptures, where I pick up the goodliest herbs of sentences by pruning, eat them by reading, digest them by musing, and lay them up at length in the high seat of memory by gathering them together, so that, having tasted their sweetness, I may less perceive the bitterness of life." 2. *The study of Divine truth is a moral equipment for the highest service.* "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (ver. 17). The man of God loves the book of God; by its study he is more fully perfected in his moral character, and out of its treasury he is accoutred for all the requirements of his work. The best work is done by the man who knows his Bible best.

Lessons.—1. *The Bible is the God-inspired book.* 2. *The young should be taught to know and love the Bible.* 3. *The Bible supplies the best armour and weapons for the Christian warrior.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. *The Importance of Early Instruction in the Bible.*

I. **The advantage of a knowledge of the Scriptures.**—1. *They communicate truths of immense value.* 2. *These truths cannot be obtained but by Divine revelation.* 3. *Their knowledge is the noblest improvement of the mind.*

II. **The Holy Scriptures are made effectual to salvation.**—1. *They discover the method of salvation.* 2. *They make men wise unto salvation through faith.* —*P. Hutchison.*

Vers. 16, 17. *The Inspiration and Utility of the Scriptures.*

I. **The inspiration of the Scriptures.** —1. *What is inspiration?* The infallible record of an infallible revelation. 2. *The object of inspiration.* To give certainty to that written under its guidance.

II. **The utility of the Scriptures.**—1. *As an unvarying standard of doctrine.* 2. *Useful in the confutation of all religious error.* 3. *Useful as an infallible standard of right and wrong.* 4. *Useful for instruction in righteousness.*—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Inspiration

I. **The breath of God is in the Holy Scriptures, but only the man of God can have fellowship with it.**

II. **By this fellowship with God the man of God becomes complete.**

III. **By this fellowship with God the man of God gains complete fitness for every good work.**—*Preacher's Magazine.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **I charge thee before God.**—As in ii. 14. The word of itself does not mean to swear, but only as connected with "in the presence of God."

Ver. 2. **Preach the word.**—*I.e.* herald the word of reconciliation. **Be instant in season, out of season.**—Stand over them opportunely and inopportunely, on the bare chance of doing good. **Reprove.**—Includes the blame of everything blameworthy and the conviction of it. In juristic language confute. **Rebuke.**—Blame, with a decided manifestation of dislike.

Ver. 3. **Sound doctrine.**—R.V. margin, "healthful teaching." As in i. 13, ii. 17, we are reminded, by the terminology, of St. Luke's presence. **Having itching ears.**—This tickling is usually taken to mean a pleasant sensation.

Ver. 5. **But watch thou.**—R.V. "But be thou sober." The reference is to the clearness and wakefulness of attention which attends on sobriety. **Endure afflictions.**—Before, the old apostle had said "with me," now he says "suffer hardship," as though Timothy would have to meet it when Paul no longer shared it. See next verse.

Ver. 6. **For I am now ready to be offered.**—R.V. "I am already being offered." R.V. margin, "poured out as a drink-offering." When the gaoler took the cup of hemlock to Socrates, the philosopher asked, "Is it allowable to make a drink-offering of it?" Paul's spirit was the libation. Note the emphatic *I* in contrast to "thou" (emphatic too) in ver. 5. **The time of my departure is at hand.**—R.V. "is come." In Phil. i. 23 the desire for this weighing anchor is expressed. Now the hour has arrived. Socrates, again, prayed to the gods that they would bless the voyage and render it happy.

Ver. 7. **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.**—"All three propositions denote the same thing. The second gives prominence to one particular form of contest, while the third clearly expresses how entirely Paul had done with life" (*Hofmann*).

Ver. 8. **Henceforth.**—Lit. "As concerns the rest.' At the end of his life there remains nothing more than to receive the reward. **A crown of righteousness.**—The just award of the impartial Umpire.

Ver. 9. **Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.**—Make all possible speed to arrive, or on earth we shall not meet again. Perhaps, however, it was the loneliness of the apostle that made him yearn for Timothy. Compare vers. 10, 11, with ver. 21.

Ver. 10. **Demas hath forsaken me.**—The word means to leave in the lurch, or in evil circumstances. The atmosphere of the prison and close association with Paul in his present circumstances could only be endured by true love and brave devotion.

Ver. 11. **Mark.**—He had left the apostle at Perga, and afterwards the desire of Barnabas to take him along with Paul and himself led to a rupture between the apostles. It is pleasant to see that the old man nearing his end has forgiven Mark and admits his serviceableness.

Ver. 13. **The cloke that I left at Troas.**—The word for "cloke" signifies a cloak with a hood, such as travellers and soldiers used, and which often formed their only shelter from the weather.

Ver. 14. **The Lord reward him according to his works.**—R.V. "the Lord will render," etc. What the Jew Alexander would have said to the Ephesian mob we cannot now know, but he must have been one of the leaders of the Jewish element in the mob, and therefore we conclude it was he to whom St. Paul here refers (cf. Acts xix. 33, and margin R.V.).

Ver. 16. **At my first answer.**—R.V. "defence" (Gr. ἀπολογίᾳ). On his first appearance in

the emperor's court. **No one stood with me.**—R.V. "took my part," *i.e.* as advocate. **All men forsook me.**—St. Paul was in the lion's mouth (ver. 17), and men fled from the stroke of the paw.

Ver. 17. **The Lord stood with me.**—In sharp contrast to those who fled, leaving the apostle in his evil hour. **That all the Gentiles might hear.**—"God gave us not the spirit of cowardice," St. Paul had already written. He might say with Cæsar:—

> "Cowards die many times before their deaths;
> The valiant never taste of death but once."

It seems to have been of vastly more consequence to St. Paul that the story of the Crucified should be told in the court of Nero, than that it might cost him his head to tell it. **And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.**—The lion was in all probability Nero. When Marsyas announced to Agrippa the death of Tiberius, he did so in the words, "The lion is dead."

Ver. 18. **And the Lord shall deliver me.**—Not a poor mangled fragment of me, "As a shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear" (Amos iii. 12).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—5.

The Sublime Mission of the Preacher.—

I. **Is to be fulfilled as in the presence of the Divine Judge to whom alone he is ultimately accountable** (ver. 1).—The apostle speaks as one who will himself soon be in the immediate presence of God, and as if he already felt the overwhelming awe of that presence. Before that sacred presence every preacher must sooner or later stand, and give an account of his stewardship. All his work should be done with reference to the day of the Lord's appearing. "Christ's kingdom is real now, but not visible. It shall then be both real and visible. Now He reigns in the midst of His enemies, expecting till they shall be overthrown. Then He shall reign with His adversaries prostrate."

II. **Necessitates the mastery of every method in order to attain efficiency** (ver. 2).—He must learn to be urgent in proclaiming the word in all seasons. As Chrysostom says, "Just as the fountains, though none may draw from them, still flow on, and the rivers, though none drink of them, still run, so must we do all on our part in speaking, though none give heed to us." He must study how to reprove and confute the gainsayers, as well as how to instruct the willing hearers; be patient and forbearing with the one class, and unceasingly diligent with the other. Every effort should be made to gain the best qualifications for making known the gospel and winning souls.

III. **Should be faithfully prosecuted in times of defection and error** (vers. 3, 4).—"He who despises sound teaching," says Bengel, "leaves sound teachers; they seek instructors like themselves." Teaching that aims simply to please can never instruct. Love of novelty and change is inimicable to progress in Divine things. "Itch in the ears is as bad as in any other part of the body, and perhaps worse." When so many are turning away from the truth, it is the more incumbent on the true preacher to be in earnest in faithfully declaring the truth. Error must be confuted by the clear and emphatic enunciation of sound doctrine.

IV. **Demands constant vigilance and courageous devotion to duty** (ver. 5).—Paul, feeling that he must soon be removed from the scene of conflict, calls on Timothy to take his place and acquit himself with vigilance and courage. A time comes when our trusty friend and adviser is removed, and we must depend more upon ourselves—"swim without the corks." All our previous experience has been a preparation for this. We must not shrink from the task, but brace ourselves up to our work, and fall back more completely on God.

Lessons.—1. *Faithful preaching is an antidote to error.* 2. *The preacher should strive to excel in the best method of putting truth.* 3. *The preacher should have eternity always in view.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 4. *The Deficient and Dangerous Nature of the Infidel Scheme.*

I. **It does not teach man as a sinner how to worship God.**

II. **It is an insufficient rule of moral duty.**

III. **The light of reason cannot fix and ascertain the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments.**

IV. **Is insufficient to investigate the origin of moral evil, or to show how it can be remedied.**

V. **Sinners cannot be saved by any obedience they can yield to the dictates of reason and conscience.**

VI. **The light of reason cannot show that God will extend His pardoning mercy to sinners.**—*P. Hutchison.*

Ver. 5. *A Champion for the Truth—*

I. **Must exercise ceaseless vigilance.**—"Watch thou in all things."

II. **Must be patient in suffering.**—"Endure afflictions."

III. **Must be active in aggressive mission work.**—"Do the work of an evangelist."

IV. **Must leave nothing undone that will advance the truth.**—"Make full proof of thy ministry."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—8.

The Faithful Minister in the Presence of Death—

I. **Undismayed by the terrors of approaching martyrdom.**—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (ver. 6). Whatever hopes Paul might have had of his probable release are now dismissed. Without a murmur, without seeking revenge upon his adversaries, he is ready to be poured out as a libation, to shed his own blood in the cause he loved more than his own life. Death has no terror; it is but a peaceful departure. The anchor's weighed, the moorings are loosed, and he is starting on the last voyage.

II. **Sustained by the consciousness of a well-spent life.**—1. *The Christian life is a conflict.* "I have fought a good fight" (ver. 7). 2. *The Christian life is a race.* "I have finished my course" (ver. 7). 3. *The Christian life is a stewardship.* "I have kept the faith" (ver. 7).

III. **Exulting in the certainty of adequate future reward** (ver. 8).—The "henceforth" marks the decisive moment. He looks to his state in a threefold aspect. 1. *The present.* "I have fought." 2. *The immediate future.* "There is laid up for me a crown." 3. *The future.* "The Lord will give in that day." A crown, or garland, used to be bestowed at the Greek national games on the successful competitor. The crown is in recognition of righteousness wrought in Paul by God's Spirit: the crown is prepared for the righteous; but it is a crown which consists in righteousness. Righteousness will be its own reward. A man is justified gratuitously by the merits of Christ through faith; and when he is so justified, God accepts his works and honours them with a reward which is not their due, but is given of grace (*Fausset*). Even at this solemn crisis the large-heartedness of the doomed apostle is apparent. He thinks not only of his own reward, but of the reward also of all believing souls who love and are longing for the appearing of their Lord.

Lessons.—1. *We truly live only as we live unto God.* 2. *We should ever be more concerned about living than about dying.* 3. *Death admits the faithful into a larger life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6-8. *The Christian's Course, Conflict, and Crown.*

I. **The view in which the apostle represents his decease.**—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." 1. *He expresses neither terror nor reluctance, but speaks of death calmly as a sacrifice and offering to God.* 2. *He regards death as the transferring of our life from the service of God on earth to the presence of God in heaven.*

II. **The reflections with which the apostle looks back upon his life on earth.**—1. *He likens it to a good fight* —a conflict which occasioned no remorse, in which he struggled to save and not to destroy—good in its object, in all its means, in its effect upon all employed in its labours, upon all interested in its success. 2. *He likens it to a race.* "I have finished my course." 3. *He is conscious of fidelity.* "I have kept the faith." He had not only run the Christian race, but had duly observed the rules of the contest.

III. **The hope by which the dying apostle is cheered in his view of an eternal world.**—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." He looks forward with joyful assurance to a more than sufficient recompense of all his toils and perils—not as payment of a claim he had earned or deserved, but as a glorious and bounteous gift. Not a mere honorary crown or empty ornament like those bestowed on successful victors and warriors, but a crown connected with a kingdom—a kingdom of righteousness.—*J. Brewster.*

Ver. 7. "*I have kept the faith.*"

I. **A phenomenon is to be accounted for—the origin of this remarkable language.**—1. *The deep-seated sentiments of natural religion will not account for it.* 2. *Still less the ancient natural theology.* 3. *It is accounted for only in Christ the life.*

II. **The world with the gospel is a new world.**—1. *The text reminds us that the Christian is charged with a sacred trust.* "The faith." 2. *The discharge of this trust involves constant vigilance and effort.* 3. *A time may arrive in the prosecution of the Christian course, as it did with the apostle, when the mind turns from the past and gives itself up to the expectation of the future.* 4. *How can we sufficiently admire that gospel which, in turning our mind from earth to heaven, enables us to omit the mention of death, or to speak of it only in terms of disparagement!* 5. *A modest self-estimate of Christian fidelity is perfectly compatible with a sense of entire dependence on the grace of God.* —*Dr. J. Harris.*

Ver. 8. *Love, the Preparation for Christ's Coming.*

I. **If any one would love that day he must have a clear and deep perception of the hatefulness of sin.**

II. **We cannot love the day of Christ except we be dead to this world.**

III. **This love of His appearing is the direct and natural effect of love to Christ Himself.**—The love of His unseen presence now is the true and all-comprehending discipline to prepare us for the coming of our Lord.—*H. E. Manning.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 9—13.

Suffering for the Truth—

I. **Has often to be endured with a loneliness that craves for society.**—"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me" (ver. 9). There is a beautiful pathos in these words, indicating the apostle's sense of loneliness. "My end is drawing near; some have forsaken me: I yearn for the comfort and refreshment of a

congenial spirit: my beloved Timothy, use all speed in coming to me." Loneliness is sometimes more difficult to endure than pain.

II. **The loneliness of suffering is intensified by the desertion of the timid.**—"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (ver. 10). Demas was once an active fellow-labourer (Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24). For some time the apostle must have observed the slackening of his zeal, his love of ease and comfort, his growing dislike to the hardships of pioneer work, his shrinking from the peril of being in Rome as a Christian and an associate of Paul; and the climax of his declension was reached when he deserted Paul at a time when he most needed help and companionship. The desertion of a friend always happens at the wrong time.

III. **Suffering for the truth does not quench the zeal for its active propagation.**—"Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia" (ver. 10). "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus" (ver. 12). From his Roman prison Paul is the director-general of a world-wide mission, and he is interested in every movement of its messengers. Their engagement in the great work also explained their absence at this critical period. Paul had also seized every opportunity during his imprisonment to preach the gospel. The work of God was always uppermost with him.

IV. **Suffering for the truth appreciates the friendship of the faithful.**—"Only Luke is with me" (ver. 11). It was a comfort to the noble sufferer to have with him one friend on whom he could rely. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Friendship is more valuable when it is tested, and when it bears the strain. It is in the power of one friend to render valuable service; and a noble nature does not fail to appreciate it.

V. **Suffering for the truth recognises the valuable services of the man whose former vacillation had occasioned anxiety and strife.**—"Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (ver. 11). Mark had been under a cloud for forsaking the work, and was the cause of a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv. 37-40, xiii. 5, 13). But Mark had repented, and was now another man, chastened and stimulated by the lesson of his brief relapse. Paul's sharp censure is wiped out by high praise—another example of the generous nature of the apostle, which even suffering did not sour.

VI. **Suffering for the truth does not render us indifferent to the needs of body and mind.**—"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee" (ver. 13). The cloak had no doubt been worn by the apostle as a warm wrap in many a cold, exposed journey, and would be known to his friends as an old, familiar article of his clothing. He needed it again, for winter was near (ver. 21). "And the books, but especially the parchments" (ver. 13). The books he needed to carry on his work of translation for the benefit of the Church; and the parchments perhaps contained translations already done, and some of his own inspired epistles. Brief as his life might be, the mind must be fed, and work must not stop. Tyndale, imprisoned in the Castle of Vilvorden, asked for warmer clothing, and above all for his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary.

Lessons.—1. *True greatness is conspicuous in suffering.* 2. *The sufferer appreciates genuine sympathy.* 3. *Suffering for the truth helps to spread it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *The Defection of Demas.*

I. **His offence.**—1. *He forsook the apostle.* When he needed sympathy, comfort, co-operation. 2. *He forsook the Christian cause.* Fled from the post of duty because it was the post of

danger. 3. *He forsook the Saviour.* Either for a season or permanently. Either as a backslider or as an apostate.

II. **The principle by which he was actuated.**—1. *It might be the love of ease.* 2. *It might be the love of honour.* 3. *It might be the love of wealth.* 4. *It might be the love of life.*

Demas.

I. **Demas an apostate after having done and endured much in the cause of Christ.**—His profession of Christianity must have exposed him to hardship and danger. There must have been in him tokens of genuine conversion, seeing they could bear the test of hardship incurred in defence of the truth. He had given proof of sincerity in bringing others to Christ. What hardship could not do, what peril could not do, was effected by the allurements of a world whose god is the prince of the power of the air; and the man who had been ready to undergo martyrdom, who would not have flinched from the apparatus of torture, failed in withstanding the blandishments of pleasure, and was conquered by lust after defying persecution.

II. **Demas an apostate though he had to quit St. Paul when that apostle was on the point of sealing his confession with his blood.**—Demas was for a long time steadfast. He had St. Paul to instruct him, to reprove, exhort, and encourage him; and perhaps he thought, because he felt his bosom glow as this man insisted on noble truths and delivered sublime and noble messages, he was necessarily impregnated with the very spirit of Christianity, and bound too firmly to the cause of the Redeemer to be induced to forsake it by any common temptation. But the world gained an opportunity of plying Demas with its seductions—an opportunity of which we may suppose it to have been partially deprived whilst he was in the dungeons of St. Paul—and thus was it seen what a mere thing of sand is religion which depends upon a preacher for its warmth and strength. St. Paul was most rich in Christian experience when closest in his intercourse with heaven; and when he appealed with his grey hairs to every sensibility, one would have thought desertion impossible. Oh the degrading, deadening tendency of an attachment to time and sense!—*H. Melvill.*

Ver. 11. "*Only Luke is with me.*" *Christian Loneliness.*

I. **That there are times when the people of God are forsaken and left mainly to themselves.**

II. **That the good man is never left altogether alone.**

III. **That Divine helpfulness is afforded to compensate for the lack of human sympathy.**

Lessons.—1. *We have here a picture of noble Christian endurance.* 2. *Of submission.* 3. *Of fidelity.*

Ver. 13. *Human Means useful to Inspired Persons.*

I. **The poverty of the first preachers of the gospel.**—A cloak and a few books.

II. **Even Divinely inspired men did not so wholly depend upon Divine inspiration, but made use of ordinary helps and means.**—*Bishop Bull.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14, 15.

Opposition to the Truth—

I. **Is often violently persistent.**—"For he hath greatly withstood our words" (ver. 15). Probably the Alexander at Ephesus, put forward by the Jews during the riot there (1 Tim. i. 20). He was then excommunicated, but afterwards restored, and by his able and determined opposition was a thorn in Paul's side. A renegade is all the more troublesome because of the acquaintance

with the side he once espoused and now attacks, using his knowledge of both sides with subtle and malicious dexterity.

II. **Is fraught with much mischief.**—"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (ver. 14). Though again restored to the Church and to the confidence of the apostle, he never forgot the indignity of his expulsion, and vented his spleen on the man who had shown him kindness, accusing Paul before the Roman judges either of incendiarism or of introducing a new religion. He misrepresented facts, as suchlike men usually do, and was perhaps a chief agent in procuring the martyrdom of Paul. It is in the power of a restless, discontented, and malicious opponent to do mischief he can never repair.

III. **Should put the faithful teacher on his guard.**—"Of whom be thou ware also" (ver. 15). An unprincipled opponent is difficult to manage. All kindly and courteous advances he construes into fear; and even our silence he counts as submission and claims as a victory. Knowing the unfair use he will make of our words, we should be cautious not to give him the least advantage.

IV. **Will not escape Divine punishment.**—"The Lord reward him according to his works" (ver. 14). Baffled in all our efforts to silence or to restore a refractory opponent, we can leave him to God. The Christian teacher should be above the indulgence of personal revenge. The obstinate sinner will be certainly punished according to his deeds; and the punishment will be both just and adequate.

Lessons.—1. *Truth is hated because it reproves our conscious sins.* 2. *A vindictive spirit is utterly impotent.* 3. *God will reckon with the enemies of His truth.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—18.

A Brave Defender of the Faith—

I. **Is often deserted by those from whom he expected help.**—"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (ver. 16). At his first public examination in the Roman court Paul had to defend himself alone. Those who might have spoken for him absented themselves. Their fears of being charged with complicity with the prisoner daunted their courage, and they fled. It is a bitter disappointment to be forsaken at a crucial moment; but the brave heart, sustained by the truth, will not flinch.

II. **Charitably recognises the special difficulties of his timid friends.**—"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (ver. 16). The emphasis is on *their*. "They were intimidated: their drawing back from me was not from bad disposition so much as from fear; it is sure to be laid to the charge of those who intimidated them." Paul, like Stephen, would have offered the same prayer for his persecutors (Acts vii. 60) (*Fausset*). Another side-light on the character of Paul; his large-heartedness excused the weakness of his friends, and he prays for their exculpation.

III. **Is sustained at a critical moment by Divine power.**—1. *He is strengthened by the conscious presence of the Lord.* "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (ver. 17). That was sufficient: the enemies might do their worst; Paul—and the Lord—were more than a match against their most malignant cruelty. When friends forsake us, God draws nearer, and His almighty strength turns suffering into joyous triumph. 2. *He is enabled fearlessly to declare the truth under circumstances that give it special publicity.* "That by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (ver. 17). Rome was the capital of the empire, of the Gentile world, and was the centre to which all news and commerce came, and from it was again distributed to the remotest provinces. The trial of Paul, conducted

in a public manner, became notorious. His defence was a sermon in which he was careful to put the leading truths of the gospel; and his well-known mission as the apostle of the Gentiles would give his teaching favour in the eyes of the Romans, and would be likely to be rehearsed throughout the empire. The earnest preacher seizes every opportunity of publishing the gospel. 3. *He is delivered from immediate peril.* "And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (ver. 17). He was acquitted from his first charge, or, what amounted to the same thing, there was an indefinite adjournment of the case. "The mouth of the lion" need not mean the lion of the amphitheatre, or Nero, or Satan. It is perfectly intelligible to regard it as describing a terrible danger, the peril of death. From this he was for the time being delivered. 4. *He is assured of final deliverance and everlasting safety.* "And the Lord shall deliver me . . . and preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (ver. 18). The impending danger is past; but all danger is not past. The enemies of Paul will still be busy, and may at last succeed—as they did succeed—in securing a sentence of condemnation. But all this did not alter the apostle's faith in the Divine deliverance. The evil work of his enemies would turn out for his good. The Lord will make their work of death the means of translation into His heavenly kingdom. Richard Cameron, lying mortally wounded on the battle-field of Airdsmoss, said: "I am dying happy—happy; and if I had a thousand lives I would willingly lay them all down one after another for Christ. Oh! He is near me: I think I see Him. I am just coming, Lord Jesus." 5. *He ascribes unceasing praise to his Divine Deliverer.* "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (ver. 18). "The very hope," says Bengel, "produces a doxology. How much greater will be the doxology which the actual enjoyment shall produce!" With a heart full of thankfulness to the Master who has strengthened him in his sufferings and whose bliss he is about to share, the brave defender of the faith leaves us with a doxology of praise to Christ on his dying lips.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel makes the noblest heroes.* 2. *God never deserts His servants in extremity.* 3. *The truth we defend will be our salvation and glory.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 16, 17. *A Gospel Hero—*

I. **Fighting for the truth single-handed.**—"At my first answer no man stood with me" (ver. 16).

II. **Though deserted by friends, not vindictive.**—"All men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (ver. 16).

III. **Divinely sustained.**—"Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (ver. 17).

IV. **Using his defence as an opportunity for declaring the truth.**—"That by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (ver. 17).

V **Rescued from threatened peril.**—"I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (ver. 17).

Ver. 18. *Divine Deliverance—*

I. **Often signally displayed.**

II. **Is a salvation from all evil.**

III. **Is the guarantee of future blessedness.**

IV. **Should call forth exalted praise.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—22.

A Martyr's Last Words—

I. **Breathe the spirit of love towards tried and faithful friends.**—"Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus" (ver. 19). How tenderly this salutation would be prized when the friends received intelligence of the apostle's fate! Love is precious the more it is tested and tried. The

heart is impoverished indeed that cannot find room for its best friends. Love reveals itself in words and deeds.

II. **Indicate unabated interest in the movements and condition of former fellow-labourers.**—"Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" (ver. 20). Erastus was a frequent companion of Paul (Acts xix. 22), possibly the same as referred to in Rom. xvi. 23, and was the chamberlain or city steward and treasurer of Corinth. As he left Trophimus in sickness at Miletus, we learn that his power of healing the sick was limited and exercised only on special occasions and for a special purpose. To the last Paul kept in touch with his fellow-workers, and retained his anxious concern for the spread of the gospel.

III. **Reveal a yearning for sympathetic companionship in the prospect of approaching doom.**—"Do thy diligence to come before winter" (ver. 21). Before the winter storms begin, when navigation would be impossible, or it may be too late. And Paul would need his cloak to protect him from winter cold. A companion like Timothy was what the apostle especially desired; but we have no record that the longed-for interview ever took place. How many of our yearnings are never satisfied! And yet they are not altogether useless. The highest cravings of the soul are gratified only in Christ.

IV. **Do not neglect the grace of Christian courtesy.**—"Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren" (ver. 21). Pudens and Claudia afterwards married—she a Roman knight, he a Briton surnamed Rufina. Linus afterwards became a bishop. Eubulus is identified with Aristobulus, who, with his converts, is said to have been among the first evangelists of Britain. Paul himself, says Clement, "visited the farthest West—perhaps Britain, certainly Spain—and was martyred under the rulers of Rome, who were Nero's vicegerents in his absence from the city." Paul was not so absorbed with his own troubles as to neglect to send the joint commendations of the saints in Rome. Christianity is the essence of true courtesy.

V. **Concludes with the invocation of Divine blessing.**—"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen" (ver. 22). Grace is invoked for Timothy and the members of the Ephesian and neighbouring Churches to whom this epistle would be read. We need no more to make us happy and inspire us to Christian work than the presence of Christ and the enriching favour of God.

Lessons.—1. *The uncertainty of life should intensify our interest in God's work.* 2. *Courtesy is a grace of the Christian spirit.* 3. *We cannot die better than with a prayer for others on our lips.*

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS.

INTRODUCTION.

Titus.—Of all the companions who surrounded Paul, Titus seems to have been the most respected for his practical vigour and efficiency, though Luke and Timothy may have been more personally beloved. All that we know of him is that he was a Gentile convert who accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem from Antioch, and made apparently a voluntary offer to become a Jew. This, and what we learn from allusions in the epistles, is all the information we have of him. Since Titus was made of sterner stuff than Timothy, St. Paul had on one occasion countermanded a mission of the latter to Corinth and had sent Titus in his place. Indeed, on three separate occasions Titus had been sent to introduce order and submission into that turbulent Church. Towards the close of St. Paul's life he was despatched to Dalmatia. After this he disappears from history (*Farrar*).

Outline of the epistle.

Ch. i.	1—4.	Greeting, containing an epitome of the gospel.
	5—9.	Character of the elders to be appointed.
	10—16.	The dangerous character of the Cretans, especially when united with Judaic Gnosticism.
Ch. ii.	1—5.	The teaching of Titus regarding the aged men and aged women, and what they in turn are to teach the younger women.
	6—8.	The conduct of young men, to whom Titus is to be an example in works and doctrine.
	9—10.	The conduct of slaves, for the gospel's sake.
	11—15.	All these precepts are rooted in the gospel.
Ch. iii.	1, 2.	Attitude of Christians to authorities and all men.
	3—7.	Based on the change effected by the gospel.
	8—11.	By positive statement of truth Titus must counteract error —not by profitless argument or speculation.
	12—15.	Personal messages and conclusion.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Paul, a servant of God.**—R.V. margin, "Gr. bond-servant." This designation, which indicates generally the official position, is not usually found in the inscriptions of the Pauline epistles. In Romans and Philippians we have "servant of Jesus Christ." **According to the faith.**—A somewhat difficult expression, but meaning apparently "with reference to the faith."

Ver. 2. **God, that cannot lie.**—Since we have no negative term that says what the adjective says in the original, we must so translate. The apostle wants to bring out God's eternal antipathy to falsity.

Ver. 3. **In due times.**—R.V. "in his own seasons"—a contrast to the words "before the world began" (A.V.) or "before times eternal" (R.V.) in ver. 2.

Ver. 4. **Titus, mine own son.**—R.V. "my true child." The same title of honour is given to Timothy (1 Tim. i. 2). **After the common faith.**—The faith in which Paul and Titus alike are sharers. How the inclusion of all Christians with them would be too general does not appear.

Ver. 5. **That thou shouldest set in order.**—St. Paul means that Titus should completely set right, upon a thorough basis, all the affairs of the Cretan Church. It is the important work of organisation and consolidation that is entrusted to him.

Ver. 6. **Blameless.**—Not liable to be arraigned by having been found in a fault. **Not accused of riot.**—Lit. "not in the category of extravagance." It is a wasteful squandering of means, from which follows a dissolute, debauched manner of living (*Trench*).

Ver. 7. **For a bishop must be blameless.**—He whose office it is to watch over other souls must himself be beyond reproach or suspicion. As God's steward in the house he must not be accused of wasting (Luke xvi. 1, 2). **Not self-willed.**—Properly, one who is so pleased with his own ideas and will that nothing pleases him besides: "Qui nisi quod ipse facit nihil rectum putat" (*Terence*, quoted by Trench). **Not soon angry.**—"Not irascible." Is this a note of difference between Timothy and Titus? The former does not need this word in his shrinking gentleness: the capacity for sharp rebuke lies in Titus (i. 13); perhaps it was necessary to guard against the outburst of the latent fire in his nature.

Ver. 9. **By sound doctrine.**—Hygienic, wholesome teaching.

Ver. 10. **Vain talkers.**—Men of aimless speech, which is devoid of any good result. Men whose speech tendeth to poverty. **Deceivers.**—The word, which is peculiar to St. Paul, and perhaps coined by him (see Gal. vi. 3), brings out the idea of subjective fancies (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 11. **Whose mouths must be stopped.**—The verb means "something must be put on their mouths"—they must be muzzled; but it afterwards came to mean, "to check speech."

Ver. 12. **A prophet of their own.**—Epimenides, the poet alluded to, was a contemporary of the seven wise men, and by some was reckoned as one of them. He was born in the sixth century B.C. The saying quoted by St. Paul is from a lost work. **The Cretians are alway liars.**—Chrysostom refers the words chiefly to the pretence that Jupiter lay buried amongst the Cretans; but in ancient times they were notorious for falsehood, so that "to Cretise" was equivalent to, "to lie and deceive."

Ver. 13. **This witness is true.**—Not only does a competent person attest it, but it agrees with fact. **Rebuke them sharply.**—With a sharply cut style, curtly, with thorough-going sternness (*Meyer*).

Ver. 15. **Unto the pure all things are pure.**—This saying concentrates all the opposition to fictitious holiness and purity which made the apostle the object of the cordial hatred of Judaism. A greater than Paul had paid His life for similar teaching. **Unto them that are defiled . . . nothing is pure.**—The best food in vessels all foul will only be an object of loathing. **Their mind.**—Their practical reason. **And conscience.**—The human consciousness connected with action, and expressing itself regarding the moral value of it.

Ver. 16. **They profess.**—"They declare, affirm." This seems best in view of the "deny" which follows. Compare John i. 20: "He confessed, and denied not." "Their confession is a

true one so far, that they have the knowledge, and belie it" (*Alford*). **Being abominable.**—A strong word, meaning "to emit a stench." For the idea of offensiveness to God compare Isa. lxv. 5, and contrast 2 Cor. ii. 15; Eph. v. 2.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

An Apostolic Salutation—

I. **Sets forth the authority and scope of the apostolic office.**—1. *Its authority is Divine.* "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (ver. 1). "Which is committed unto me" (ver. 3). In confronting the false teachers, Paul is always careful to insist upon his Divine call to the apostleship, in contrast with their self-constituted authority. There are times of doubt and trial when the minister of the gospel has to fall back upon the assurance of the Divine call: about this he has no doubt; here the anchor holds. 2. *Its scope is the preaching of the gospel of hope.* (1) The hope of eternal life. "In hope of eternal life" (ver. 2). On this hope the apostle rested his desire and aim to advance the faith of God's people and their fuller knowledge of the truth. (2) A gospel long promised and at length revealed. "Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching" (vers. 2, 3). The gospel was in the Divine mind before the ages began, was then promised to the world in the earliest history of man, was dimly and gradually unfolded to suit the stages of human development, and finally was fully revealed by preaching. (3) A gospel intended to promote godliness through faith. "According to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (ver. 1). Faith is a faculty susceptible of growth. Faith apprehends the meaning of the gospel, and then appropriates its power to live a godly life.

II. **Addressed to one who is highly esteemed.**—"To Titus, mine own son after the common faith" (ver. 4). Paul regards Titus as his genuine child, as he was the instrument of his conversion to the faith which is common to all the people of God, comprising believers in all nations into a common brotherhood, Gentiles as well as Jews, and therefore including Titus, who was himself a Gentile. The preacher regards his converts with unusual affection, and is deeply interested in their progress in grace and usefulness.

III. **Invokes the impartation of richest blessings.**—"Grace, mercy, and peace" (ver. 4). "Mercy" is omitted in some of the oldest manuscripts; but one of the best and oldest manuscripts supports it. Mercy and peace spring out of grace, the fountain of all blessings. If we have God's favour, we have every blessing the soul can need or that Christ can bestow.

Lessons.—1. *The Christian teacher should have a firm grasp of truth.* 2. *The veteran minister is full of wise and loving counsels to the young.* 3. *Good wishes to others is genuine Christian courtesy.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. "*The truth which is after godliness.*"

The Gospel of Truth.

I. **The gospel is simply a truth.**

II. **It is an operative truth.**

III. **It operates to the best effect.**—It produces godliness. 1. *Giving a right notion of God.* 2. *A right notion of what concerns the duty of man.*

Lessons.—1. *The nature and prime design of religion is to be an instrument of good life.* 2. *That so much knowledge as is sufficient to engage men in the practice of godliness serves the necessary ends of religion.* 3. *That whatever undermines the motives of a good life is contrary to and destructive of religion.*—*South.*

Ver. 2. *The Gospel Revelation.*
I. **A glorious prospect.**—"Eternal life."
II. **A truth-speaking God.**
III. **An old-standing promise.**—"Before the world began."

Ver. 3. *The Preaching of the Word.*
I. **A timely revelation.**
II. **A sacred trust.**
III. **A Divine commission.**

Ver. 4. *A Christian Greeting.*
I. **Recognising a spiritual relationship.**
II. **Invoking a threefold blessing.**
III. **Describing the source and medium of the blessing.**—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—9.

Qualifications of a Christian Bishop.

I. **His domestic life must be irreproachable** (vers. 5, 6).—Titus was left in Crete to establish Church order, and to ordain presbyters, or bishops, over congregations in the different cities. There were many Christians in the island, but Church organisation was very imperfect. The bishop, occupying so prominent a position as overseer, must be blameless in life, and a pattern of consistency and authority in his own family, having his children under thorough Christian control. His governmental power must be evident in his own household.

II. **He must possess a high moral character** (vers. 7, 8).—The Church is God's house, over which the minister is steward. He is to be, not imperious, but temperate, not making his office a means of gain, to be hospitable—a necessary virtue in those early days—to be a lover of all that is good, self-denying, just towards men, and holy towards God.

III. **He must be a competent preacher.**—1. *Having himself a firm grasp of truth.* "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught" (ver. 9). Whoever may be on the quicksands of doubt and error, the minister must know and keep his ground. Hesitation in the pulpit means confusion in the pew. 2. *Able to present the truth with convincing power.* "That he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers" (ver. 9). Not only has the Church to be edified and encouraged, but unbelievers must be reproved, convinced of the error of their ways and brought to Christ. The great function of preaching is to persuade men, and to do this effectively the preacher must himself be sound in doctrine, and fully persuaded of the supreme claims of the truth.

Lessons.—1. *Church government is an important duty.* 2. *Governors of the Church should possess both grace and gifts.* 3. *Preaching occupies a prominent place in building up and extending the Church.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 5. *Church Order.*
I. **Ministers have special work as well as general.**
II. **The work of the best men needs revision by others.**
III. **Every Church should have a leader or overseer.**

Ver. 6. *Church Officers.*
I. **Character is the primary qualification for office in the Church.**
II. **Domestic and social relationships are helps rather than hindrances to Christian service.**
III. **Good family government is a guarantee for efficient Church government.**

Ver. 7. *The Negative Side of a Good Man's Character.*
I. **He must be without reproach.**
II. **Must not seek his own pleasure.**

III. **Must control his temper.**
IV. **Must be abstinent.**
V. **Must not be covetous.**

Ver. 8. *The Positive Side of a Good Man's Character.*

I. **He must be willing to share the bounties of God's providence with others.**
II. **Must be a lover of all that is good.**
III. **Must be prudent.**
IV. **Devout.**
V. **Must hold all his passions under control.**

Lessons. — 1. *We see the twofold nature of goodness.* 2. *The unselfishness of goodness.* 3. *The dependence of a good life on a right spirit.*

Ver. 9. *Characteristics of a Successful Preacher.*

I. **Personal conviction of the truth.**
II. **Aptness to teach others.**
III. **Power of persuasion and conviction.**—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—14.

The Mischief of Reckless Speech.

I. **Reckless speech occasions great disorder.**—"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers . . . who subvert whole houses" (vers. 10, 11). Excessive speech is always foolish, and is the index to a mind too full of conceit to have any room for wisdom. Churches and families are led into quarrels and divisions by reckless talkers. They indulge in unkind and calumnious words, perverse meanings are given to the sayings of those they dislike, bitter and provoking things are said of our neighbours' characters, and, above all, they utter those evil, corrupt words that do the devil's work, enticing others on to sin. Such vain talkers exult in the confusion and uproar they themselves create.

II. **Reckless speech is morally degrading.**—1. *Has no regard for the true gospel.* "Specially they of the circumcision" (ver. 10). "Giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (ver. 14). Josephus tells us there were many Jews in Crete. The Jewish leaven remained in them after conversion, and they would become an easy prey to the advocates of a corrupted Judaism and an emasculated Christianity. The voluble Jewish talkers made sad havoc of the gospel. 2. *Will say anything for gain.* "Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (ver. 11). They talked for a living, and were utterly unscrupulous as to what they said, so long as they got the money. Their chief object was gain, not profitable instruction. 3. *Degenerates into lying and sensuality.* "The Cretians are always liars. . . . This witness is true" (vers. 12, 13). The quotation is from the Cretan writer Epimenides. He was sent for to purify Athens from its pollutions occasioned by Cylon, and was regarded as a diviner and prophet. "To Cretanise" was proverbial for "to lie," as "to Corinthianise" was for "to be dissolute." Lying and sensuality go together. Some people lie for the love of lying, and become almost incapable of speaking the truth. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin" (Prov. x. 19).

III. **Reckless speech should be emphatically condemned.**—"Whose mouths must be stopped" (ver. 11). "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (ver. 13). The inveterate talker is not easily cured. Gentle methods are of no avail in dealing with him: his perversity must be boldly attacked and sharply rebuked. If he is not silenced, others he has led astray may be reclaimed.

"Words are mighty, words are living,
Serpents with their venomous stings;
Or bright angels crowding round us,
With heaven's light upon their wings.

"Every word has its own spirit,
True or false, that never dies;
Every word man's lips have uttered
Echoes in God's skies."

Lessons.—*Reckless speech*—1. *Is a sign of pitiable ignorance.* 2. *Is mischievous both to speaker and listener.* 3. *Will meet with its just punishment.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 10-12. *The Vice of Aimless Talk.*

I. **The chief hindrances to religion are often in the Church itself.**

II. **Hindrances in the Church must be removed.**—1. *Discipline must be exercised in love.* 2. *The prosperity of the Church must be considered before that of individuals.* 3. *Every age has its own obstructions to the truth.*

III. **Communities are affected by the conduct of individuals.**—Aimless talk leads to—1. *Untruthfulness.* 2. *Sensuality.* 3. *Sloth.*

Ver. 13. *Christian Reproof*—

I. **Should always be based on a certain conviction.**

II. **Should be thorough and effective.**

III. **Should be for the sinner's good.**

Ver. 14. *The Perverting Power of Trivialities.*

I. **By distracting attention from the essentials of religion.**

II. **By dissipating the strength of the mind.**

III. **By attributing to the human an authority belonging only to the Divine.**—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15, 16.

Moral Defilement—

I. **Arises from unbelief.**—"Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure" (ver. 15). Faith gives spiritual insight, and enables us to distinguish the moral qualities of things. Purity, like the forgiveness of sin, is attained through faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23). Unbelief is itself defiling, and leads to increased defilement. If men really believed in virtue they would never commit the wickedness they do.

II. **Affects the whole man.**—"Even their mind and conscience is defiled" (ver. 15). The mind is the mental sense and intelligence. Conscience is the moral consciousness of the conformity or discrepancy between our motives and acts on the one hand, and God's law on the other. A conscience and a mind defiled are represented as the source of the errors opposed in the Pastoral epistles (*Fausset*). When the conscience is defiled, the whole soul is defiled. "Trust that man in nothing," said Sterne, "who has not a conscience in everything." When the compass loses its proper polarity at sea, the whole course of the vessel might be altered by it; and when the conscience loses its right direction, its responsibility to God, its deference and inclination to His law by its continued violation of the higher duties, the heart is filled with fears, and the dispensations of Providence are suspected to be judgments when they may be real and satisfying mercies.

III. **Is evident in the outward life** (ver. 16).—The profession of godliness is a lie, and there is no abomination with which the conduct may not be polluted, though expressing abhorrence of things indifferent. Disobedience to God and lack of faith in goodness produce a spirit of inveterate wickedness which will issue in final rejection. A sinful life when tested will be found utterly worthless, and will be eternally reprobated.

IV. **Purity is not in outward things, but in a right state of the heart.**—

"Unto the pure all things are pure" (ver. 15). Material things have no moral quality. They are pure or impure according to the disposition and moral state of him who uses them. In the first ages of the Church a traveller exhausted with his journey called on Spiridion, Bishop of Cyprus, on a day which the Church had set apart for fasting. Spiridion instantly ordered refreshments, and invited him by his own example to eat. "No, I must not eat," said the stranger, "because I am a Christian." "And because you are a Christian," replied the bishop, "you may eat without scruple, agreeably to the decision of an apostle—'Unto the pure all things are pure.'"

Lessons.—1. *Unbelief is more a moral than a mental obliquity.* 2. *Sin is at the root of false doctrine.* 3. *The heart is purified by faith in the truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. *Purity.*

I. To the pure all things and all persons are pure, because their purity makes all seem pure.

II. To the pure all things not only seem pure, but are really so, because they are made such.

III. All situations are pure to the pure.

Lessons.—1. *We learn to understand the Fall.* 2. *We learn to understand the Millennium. These things are not to be for ever.—F. W. Robertson.*

Purity of Heart leading to Purity of Life.

I. The heart is the source of life.

II. Defilement has a tendency to spread.

Ver. 16. *The Judgment of Hypocrisy.*

I. Hypocrisy the occasion of atheism.

II. Is offensive even to the ungodly.

III. Is practical disobedience.

IV. Is universally condemned.—*F. W.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 2. **That the aged men be sober.**—As in 1 Tim. iii. 2-11, the bishops and deacons. Properly the word "sober" here means not addicted to much wine; then it comes to be applied to the spirit which is not inflamed with passion. **Grave.**—"The English word which we want, to translate the original, is one in which the sense of gravity and dignity, and of these as inviting reverence, is combined—a word for which, I fear, we may look long without finding" (*Trench*).

Ver. 3. **In behaviour as becometh holiness.**—R.V. "reverent in demeanour." That they deport themselves fittingly with the reputation they bear for being consecrated characters. Such behaviour will beget reverence and awe. **Not given to much wine.**—R.V. "enslaved to." St. Paul evidently did not think much of the *veritas in vino*. If it loosened the tongue, it was to slander. **Teachers of good things.**—One word in the Greek—"teachers-of-the-beautiful." It is interesting to note that in the Pastorals, whose design was to call the attention of Christians to the beauty and nobility of perseverance in holiness, this word for the beauty of goodness is often employed.

Ver. 4. **That they may teach.**—R.V. "may train." The word almost suggests that there was a certain amount of levity amongst the younger wives inconsistent with a profession of Christianity.

Ver. 5. **Keepers at home.**—R.V. "workers at home." The term in the R.V. comprehends and adds to that in the A.V.

Ver. 7. **Shewing thyself a pattern.**—Titus was not to be like the scribes and Pharisees of whom our Lord spoke, who say what others should do and do not themselves observe it. **In doctrine . . . uncorruptness.**—As befits the doctrine of God our Saviour. There must be no admixture of error. **Gravity.**—See the adjective corresponding in ver. 2 and note.

Ver. 8. **May be ashamed.**—"That possibly he may come to feel shame."

Ver. 9. **To please them well.**—"To give satisfaction." "Our own servants' phrase," says Alford.

Ver. 10. **Not purloining.**—Putting anything apart for themselves (*Wiesinger*). The word is used of the act of Ananias' keeping back. It was an act of embezzlement of God's property. **May adorn.**—Like the wise virgins who trimmed their lamps, these Cretan slaves are to let the light of the teaching shine in them.

Ver. 11. **Hath appeared.**—In an epiphany. The Sun of Righteousness with health in His beams had chased away the "hidden things of darkness." Like the sun's light, the blessings of grace were to all men.

Ver. 12. **Denying ungodliness.**—Repudiating any kind of connection with a life of irreligion. **And worldly lusts.**—Desires that, like carrion-vultures, fatten on the corrupting things of this world. **Soberly, righteously, and godly.**—The grace of God disciplines us in relation to ourselves, our fellow-men, and our God. If it had free scope, we should be self-respecting, respected, and Divinely blessed.

Ver. 13. **That blessed hope.**—The object of hope. **And the glorious appearing.**—R.V. "the appearing of the glory." The epiphany of grace was noticed in ver. 11; now the apostle comes to speak of another shining upon the world in glory. **Of the great God and our Saviour.**—The great question here is: "Are there two subjects, or one only?" For two subjects, the one being God, and the other our Lord Jesus Christ, it is argued: (*a*) that we never find the phrase "Jesus Christ our God"; (*b*) that we do find God and our Lord Jesus as two subjects; (*c*) that the addition "great" indicates God as an independent subject. For one, "the great God, even our Lord," it is argued: (*a*) that epiphany is always applied to the Son; (*b*) that the immediate context refers to the Son; (*c*) that the following abasement explains the unusual term "great God"; (*d*) that "great," if used of the Father, would be superfluous. The R.V. rendering would put the matter beyond question if we were shut up to it.

Ver. 14. **Who gave Himself.**—"The forcible Himself, His whole self, the greatest gift ever given, must not be overlooked" (*Ellicott*). **For us.**—Not in our stead here, but on our behalf. **From all iniquity.**—Which is regarded as having had us in thrall. **A peculiar people.**—R.V. "a people for His own possession." They were to be regarded as God's property.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

Christianity and Old Age.

I. **Christianity teaches what should be the special virtues of aged men** (vers. 1, 2).—Aged men should not refuse to receive instruction from another because he is young, if his teaching is sound and wholesome. Experience teaches the necessity of vigilance; and to be vigilant the aged must be sober. Dignified gravity is becoming in old age. The three graces—faith, hope, charity—are the beauty and glory of old men. Patient endurance is supported by hope; and it is a grace befitting the aged, being the result of a ripened experience gained by victory over many trials. The chief attractions of age are in the future. "Winter," says Richter, "which strips the leaves from around us, makes us see the distant regions they formerly concealed; so does old age rob us of our enjoyments only to enlarge the prospect of eternity before us."

II. **Christianity teaches what should be the special virtues of aged women** (ver. 3).—Purity is the precious jewel of woman, whether old or young. The deportment of aged women should be in harmony with holiness, as becometh women consecrated to God, and as Christian priestesses. Slander, the besetting sin of some elderly women, and intemperance, the besetting sin of the Cretans and of other women nearer home, should be strictly avoided. A woman enslaved to wine is a she-demon. Aged women should be an example to younger women in the teaching and practice of all that is pure and good. It is impossible to exaggerate the value of the influence of one good woman. Samuel Morley's mother was a woman of rare piety, and the great philanthropist often confessed, "I am much what my mother has made me."

III. **This teaching should be appropriately enforced.**—"Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (ver. 1). Sound doctrine is suited to all

ages and classes, and should be faithfully inculcated, irrespective of the disparity of years between the teacher and the taught.

Lessons.—1. *Christianity has duties suited to every period and relation of life.* 2. *Christianity is the comfort and ornament of old age.* 3. *The aged Christian should be an example and encouragement to the young.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *The Preacher's Directory.*

I. **He should be a preacher.**

II. **He should be himself.**

III. **He should be a student.**

IV. **He should be practical.**

Ver. 2. *The Temptations and Duties of old Men.*

I. **Three sins to be avoided.**—1. *Indulgence in wine.* 2. *Irreverence.* 3. *Folly.*

II. **Three virtues to be cherished.**—1. *Stability.* 2. *Love.* 3. *Patience.*

Ver. 3. *The Dangers and Duties of Women.*

I. **Women have dangers peculiar to their age.**

II. **Women have duties according to their age.**

Lessons.—1. *True religion is the foundation of home happiness.* 2. *The secret of domestic prosperity.* 3. *True religion at home can alone ensure the esteem of those abroad.*—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—8.

Christianity and the Young.

I. **Christianity has a message to young married women** (vers. 4, 5).—They are to be discreet and self-restrained in their behaviour; to love their husbands and children, the foundation of all domestic peace and happiness; to be keepers at home, the guardians of the house, and to find their sphere of highest usefulness in the duties of the home circle: whilst thrifty as housewives, they are to be good and kind, not churlish and niggardly; to show love to their own husbands by a dutiful submission; and thus guard the gospel from the reproach which their inconsistencies would occasion. "Unless we are virtuous, blasphemy will come through us to the faith." To fail in any duty is to discredit the religion we profess.

II. **Christianity has a message to young men** (ver. 6).—The burden of that message is to be sober-minded, self-restrained. Youth is tempted to excess, and it is no easy task to repress its wild impulses and passions. The youth-time that is spent in pleasure and folly will lay the foundation of a premature and suffering old age. Beza, the Swiss reformer, in his last will and testament thanks God that he was brought to know Him at the age of sixteen, and thus, by having the fear of God before him, escaped the pollutions of the world. We talk about a man beginning life at twenty one, but in nine cases out of ten all the questions of eternity are decided before that. The first twenty years of a man's life, as a rule, mould what his eternity will be.

III. **Christianity has a message to young ministers** (vers. 7, 8).—They are to be patterns of good works—lively, diligent, zealous. Their purity and sincerity of motive and aim must be apparent in their teaching; and their speech in public and private must be pervaded by a dignified seriousness, that the adversary of the truth may be put to confusion by the power of the word and the evident sincerity and enthusiasm of the preacher. All the freshness, charm, and romance of youth, its poetry, high-spiritedness, and unlimited capacity for work, should be put into every ministerial duty. Youth is a golden opportunity with which we

can buy a rich inheritance of future blessedness and joy. The young minister will never again have the vigour and possibilities of work he possesses to-day.

Lessons.—1. *Religion does not destroy but augments the pleasures of youth.* 2. *Religion is the guide and guardian of youth.* 3. *We are never too young to love and serve God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *Sober-mindedness.*

I. **Sober-mindedness is a just judgment of things, and this judgment exercised in real effective authority.**

II. **Must be consciously held as under the sanction and as having the authority of the Supreme Power.**

III. **Cannot be attained without the person's forming a sound judgment of his own mind.**

IV. **Must maintain a systematic strong restraint on the passions, fancy, tempers, appetites.**

V. **Is quite necessary for the subordinate schemes and purposes of life.**—*J. Foster.*

Vers. 7, 8. *The Power of Truth.*

I. **The power of truth in the preacher.**—1. *His teaching will be living and real.* 2. *Will so preach the truth as to convince others of his sincerity.*

II. **The power of truth on others.**—1. *Will silence criticism.* 2. *Put opposition to shame and confusion.*—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9, 10.

Christianity and Slavery.

I. **Christianity enjoins respectful obedience to the master** (ver. 9).—The apostles and their successors taught neither to the slaves that they ought to resist a dominion which was immoral both in effect and in origin, nor to the masters that as Christians they were bound to set their servants free. Christianity did indeed labour for the abolition of slavery, but by quite other methods. It taught masters and slaves alike that all men have a common Divine parentage and a common Divine redemption, and consequently are equally bound to show brotherly love, and equally endowed with spiritual freedom. It showed that the slave and his master are alike children of God, and as such free; and alike servants of Jesus Christ, and as such bondmen—bondmen in that service which is the only true freedom. And thus very slowly but surely Christianity disintegrated and dispersed those unwholesome conditions and false ideas which made slavery possible (*Plummer*). The servant is exhorted to render to his master a ready and cheerful obedience, to strive to gain the good-will of the master by showing an interest in all the work committed to him, and to avoid a contradictious and sullen disposition.

II. **Christianity requires honesty and faithfulness in service.**—"Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity" (ver. 10). Stealing was a common vice of slaves, and their abject and helpless condition nourished the practice. But the Christian servant is taught that to appropriate what belongs to another is a grievous sin in the sight of God and man. He is not simply to appear honest, but to be honest. Plato illustrates what is a truly honest man by the story of Gyges' ring which made the wearer invisible. He that would be honest when he could be dishonest without being found out was a truly honest man. The honest servant will show all possible fidelity in every act.

III. **The genuine religion of a slave is a recommendation of Christianity.**—"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (ver. 10). The love of God in becoming our Saviour is a powerful motive to adorn His

doctrine in our lives. Adornment makes that which is adorned more conspicuous and better known, and enhances the merit of that which it adorns. Even slaves should not think their example a matter of indifference: their religion exalts and beautifies them. Man does not ennoble religion, but religion ennobles him. The pearl in the oyster sheds a beauty over the whole shell. "The heathen," said Chrysostom, "do not judge of the Christian's doctrines from the doctrine, but from his actions and life."

Lessons.—1. *Christianity did not violently interfere in the early age with the institution of domestic slavery.* 2. *But introduced principles which, legitimately developed, made slavery impossible.* 3. *Christianity elevates man in all conditions of life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *The Duties of Servants.*

I. **Obedience.**

II. **Acceptableness of service.**

III. **Respectfulness of manner.**

IV. **Honesty.**

V. **Fidelity.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—14.

The Gospel of Grace—

I. **Reveals salvation for all** (ver. 11).—R.V. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The purpose of God to save the race was slowly unfolded to the world. The brightest and fullest manifestation of that purpose was the coming of Christ the Saviour; and yet the world has been slow to believe that He came to save all men. The revelation of the gospel has been a revelation of the character of God and of His boundless grace, embodied and illustrated in His incarnate Son.

II. **Demands a life of self-denial and moral consistency** (ver. 12).—The gospel insists upon the inseparable connection between creed and character, doctrine and life. It is a discipline, enforcing self-restraint in a world where sin is the normal state of things, and enabling us to live soberly, righteously, and godly, as a constant reproof to the world's sin, and as an example and stimulus to all who are striving to conquer the world-spirit. The gospel of grace is a world-renewing power.

III. **Furnishes the hope of unparalleled blessedness.**—1. *A blessedness enhanced by the second advent of Christ in glory* (ver. 13).—The hope created by the first advent grows in blessedness with the prospect of the glory of the second coming, when the great God and Saviour will be revealed in all the splendour of His mediatorial majesty. In that glory all who look and long for His appearing shall share, and their hope shall then have its fullest realisation. 2. *A blessedness involved in the provisions of redemption* (ver. 14). The aim of redemption was not only to release us from the bondage and penalty of sin, but from all its power and pollution. For this purpose Christ gave His whole self, the greatest gift ever bestowed by heaven or received by earth. The final result of redemption is to prepare, by the moral discipline of the gospel, a holy people who shall be zealous in doing and promoting all good works. These verses contain a suggestive summary of the apostle's teaching, and an enlarged conception of the gospel of grace.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel is a manifestation of God's grace to man.* 2. *The gospel gives power to live a holy and useful life.* 3. *The gospel reveals a future of glorious blessedness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 11-14. *What God expects from us, and what He does for us.*

I. **What God expects from us.**—1. *Aversion to ungodliness and worldly lusts.* 2. *The practice of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness.* 3. *To cherish the hope of the second advent of our Lord.*

II. **What God does for us.**—"He gave Himself for us." The object of Christ's self-sacrifice was: 1. *For our redemption*—"from all iniquity." 2. *Possession of Christ in a state of separation and purity.* "Purify unto Himself a peculiar [purchased] people." 3. *Fruitfulness.* "Zealous of good works."—*J. C. Trotter.*

Ver. 11. *The Universal Offer of Salvation*—

I. **Irrespective of our varying moral conditions.**

II. **Because all men need it.**

III. **Because God loves all.**

IV. **Because Christ died for all.**

Ver. 14. *The Consecrating Saviour and the Consecrated People.*

I. **The consecrating Saviour.**—1. *He gave Himself.* 2. *He gave Himself a ransom.* 3. *The object of this was to purify men.*

II. **The consecrated people.**—1. *Freed from the power of sin.* 2. *Brought under the Divine rule.* 3. *Specially devoted to good.* 4. *Ardent.* 5. *Diligent.*—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 15.

The Christian Teacher—

I. **Should be master of all methods of effective instruction.**—"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke." The minister's task is a constant and endless one. He must know how to instruct, exhort, persuade, and reprove. All the resources of learning, eloquence, and spiritual power are needed to do our work efficiently. The great aim of all preaching is to bring sinners directly to Christ. On Egypt's far-off soil, as the morning beams lit up the eastern sky, an officer lay dying. With gallant daring he had led his followers, guided alone by the pale starlight of the heavens, until at last they reached the enemy; and now the strife is over, but he is wounded mortally. As the general, his cheeks bedewed with tears, gazed down with sadness on his face, a sudden radiance illumined for a moment the youth's countenance as, looking up to Wolseley, he exclaimed, "General, didn't I lead them straight?" and then he died. O brothers, when o'er our eyes there steals the film of death, and when the soul flits solemnly from time into eternity, may it be ours to say in truthful earnestness to Christ concerning those committed to our care—We led our people straight!

II. **Should speak with unhesitating confidence in the truth.**—"With all authority." The minister is an ambassador for Christ, and speaks not in his own name, but in the name and with the authority of the great King he represents. The truth inspires him with power; and the more he studies and realises its virtue in himself, the more he is convinced of its supreme claims and enforces those claims with overwhelming emphasis. To palter and hesitate in the declaration of the truth is to be unfaithful to his trust and to the best interests of his hearers.

III. **Should command the respect of those he teaches and governs.**—"Let no man despise thee." He should speak with such vigour and assurance as to compel attention, and warn with such authority that no one may think himself above the need of admonition. Channing once said: "There is no office higher than that of a teacher of youth, for there is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, and character of the child. No office should be regarded with greater

respect." How much more is this true of the Christian minister! He should so speak and act as to commend the dignity and power of his commission to the most indifferent.

Lessons.—1. *The Christian minister deals with themes of the highest importance.* 2. *The presentation of Christian truth should be a subject of earnest and constant study.* 3. *The more we are possessed with the truth the more effectively we teach it.*

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Principalities and powers.**—The two words stand thus together to give fuller expression to the notion of authority. **To obey magistrates.**—R.V. "to be obedient."

Ver. 2. **To be no brawlers.**—R.V. "not to be contentious." As in 1 Tim. iii. 3. **Gentle.**—Such a man recognises that very often the *summum jus* is *summa injuria*, and therefore goes back from his legal rights. His opposite is Shylock.

Ver. 3. **Serving divers lusts and pleasures.**—As in ii. 3 we saw the women needed to guard against the slavery of wine, so here various desires and pleasures are said to have had sway. **Living in malice and envy.**—Passing the life in the indulgence of what we could get, and envy of what we could not.

Ver. 4. **After that the kindness.**—The original word (χρηστότης) is a beautiful word for a beautiful grace, pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing there what would have been harsh and austere. Christ's yoke is said to be easy (χρηστός), *i.e.* it has nothing galling in it. **And love of God our Saviour toward man.**—The R.V., by bringing "love toward man" into closer connection, has brought us nearer to "philanthropy"—St. Paul's word. It was necessary to cleanse the word from its heathenish use and degeneracy of meaning before taking it into the New Testament. Only again there, Acts xxviii. 2.

Ver. 5. **Not by works of righteousness which we have done.**—R.V. "works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves." They are works done in the spirit of a righteous man which are spoken of. **But according to His mercy.**—"If of grace [mercy], it is no more of works." Our verse is a truly Pauline sentiment, and may say something for the authenticity of the letter. See Ezek. xxxvi. 21: "I had pity for Mine holy name. . . . I do not this for your sakes." **By the washing of regeneration.**—R.V. margin, "through the laver." Baptismal regeneration can only be found here by substituting the sign for the thing signified. [Note in this verse the use of the prepositions. "Not *out of* works," "*in* righteousness," *according to* His mercy," "*by means of* the washing."]

Ver. 7. **Being justified by His grace.**—The pronoun leads Alford to say it is the grace of the Father. If St. Paul had been fastidious in his use of words we might think so. It seems better to admit, with Winer, that the usage is departed from in this case—the grace being, as usual, that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ver. 8. **Affirm constantly.**—R.V. "confidently." Not like a man who is only half convinced of the truth of what he states, nor like a man who is ashamed of what he says, though he may acknowledge its truthfulness. **Might be careful to maintain good works.**—To be interested to the point of anxiety in the maintenance of noble works.

Ver. 9. **Avoid.**—As in 2 Tim. ii. 16. "The meaning seems to come from a number of persons falling back from an object of fear or loathing and standing at a distance round it" (*Alford*).

Ver. 10. **A man that is an heretick.**—R.V. "heretical"; margin, "factious." It does not appear from this as if the right of private judgment were the same thing as to be a heretic. He is the heretic who disseminates his private opinions for the specific purpose of raising dissension. **After the first and second admonition.**—The admonition is a reprimand including both blame and exhortation. We may remind ourselves of our Master's words: (1) "Tell him his fault between thee and him alone"; (2) "Take with thee one or two more"; (3) "Tell it to the Church." These are the three steps before avoiding the impenitent brother. **Reject.**—R.V. "refuse"; margin, "avoid." It was a procedure wholly as unwarranted as wicked when this was interpreted "torture him," whether in body or mind.

Ver. 11. **Being condemned of himself.**—R.V. "self-condemned." Christ said to the Jews,

"Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth." Such a sinner would be called high-handed in the Old Testament.

Ver. 13. **Zenas the lawyer.**—Otherwise unknown. Either a Jew learned in the Scriptures, or a *juris consultus*. Perhaps the "lawyer" may show what he was before conversion, like Matthew "the publican."

Ver. 14. **Let ours also.**—R.V. "our people." **Good works.**—Not for salvation (see ver. 5), but for necessary wants.

Ver. 15. **Them that love us.**—That are dear to us as we are to them.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

Christianity and the Civil Powers.

I. **Christianity is on the side of law and order** (ver. 1).—The Cretans were easily excited to rebellion, and the Jewish element in the island fostered any disposition to violence against Christianity. Hence Titus is urged to enforce on his people a ready obedience to magistrates, and to render cheerful help in maintaining the public peace. Christianity is ever on the side of law and order, and does more to prevent war and suppress rebellion than thousands of soldiers and policemen. The civil powers find powerful allies in all Christian Churches and institutions.

II. **Christianity does not sanction the disparagement of civil officers.**—"Speak evil of no man . . . be no brawlers" (ver. 2). Especially not to speak evil of dignitaries and magistrates. The civil officer is the embodiment and representative of law; and whatever his character may be otherwise, the law must be respected in him. The civil powers have often made great mistakes in harassing the Christian Church, and the only retaliation the Church has made has been to defend the rights and privileges of the magistracy. The warning against brawls was not only applicable to the Cretans, who were notoriously quarrelsome, but is directed against all who would disturb the peace of the Church or of the community by giving way to a petulant and fault-finding spirit.

III. **Christianity teaches becoming behaviour towards all men.**—"But gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (ver. 2). The Christian spirit is forbearing and kindly, not urging its rights to the uttermost, lest by doing so it should stir up wrath and bitterness. Instead of indulging a passionate severity, it disarms opposition by meekly enduring wrong. "Morning by morning," writes Maclaren, "God's great mercy of sunrise steals upon a darkened world in still, slow self-impartation; and the light which has a force that has carried it across gulfs of space that the imagination staggers in trying to conceive, yet falls so gently that it does not move the petals of the sleeping flowers, nor hurts the lids of an infant's eyes, nor displaces a grain of dust. So should we live and work, clothing all our power in tenderness, doing our work in quietness, disturbing nothing but the darkness, and with silent increase of beneficent power filling and flooding the dark earth with healing beams." If God is so kind and beneficent to all, we ought to be meek and gentle towards each other.

IV. **Christianity enforces obedience to the civil powers by reminding us of our former lawless life** (ver. 3).—The recollection of our own wild and reckless conduct in the past, and the forbearance often shown to us, should teach us to stand by those whose duty it is to maintain public order and decorum.

Lessons.—1. *Christianity is the guardian and promoter of peace.* 2. *Civil authority is potent as it is imbued with the Christian spirit.* 3. *Sin is the cause of rebellion and disorder.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *The Authority of Law.*

I. **Law is of God.**

II. **Authority is derived from God.**

III. **Obedience to law an essential preparation for good works.**

Lessons.—1. *Duty once learned may be and often is forgotten.* 2. *Duties of every-day life are most readily forgotten.* 3. *Christian ministers are required to remind their hearers of duty, as well as to proclaim privileges.*

Vers. 2, 3. *The Transforming Power of the Gospel.*

I. **What even Christians were.**—1. *They were distinguished by folly.* 2. *Disobedience.* 3. *Liability to deception.* 4. *Sensuality.* 5. *Passion.* 6. *Unloveliness.* 7. *Unbrotherliness.*

II. **What Christians become.**—1. *Their lives display humility of spirit.* 2. *Gentleness in action.* 3. *Truthfulness in word.*—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 4—7.

The Programme of Salvation.

I. **Salvation originates in the philanthropy of God** (ver. 4).—There was nothing impelling God to save men but His own loving-kindness. His grace, flowing over in streams of beneficence, is the practical manifestation of that love. Love is its own perennial fount of blessing and the inspiration of the noblest acts. Life without love would be intolerably dreary. Love is unselfish, and must find outlets for its exercise, though it is lavished on unworthy objects. Life, the world, the universe, is all the richer for the revelation of the love of God.

II. **Salvation is an act of unmerited mercy.**—"Not by works of righteousness . . . but according to His mercy He saved us" (ver. 5). As an old writer has said, "We neither did works of righteousness nor were saved by them, but His goodness did the whole." Salvation is a manifestation to the soul of the Divine mercy. Faith, as our part in the personal realisation of salvation, is not mentioned, but is presupposed. The object of the apostle here is to describe the Divine side of the work, and to show that our salvation was brought about independent of all merit on our part. Every saved sinner can sing,—

> "'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
> For, O my God, it found out me."

III. **Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit.**—"By the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly" (vers. 5, 6). As the priests in the old tabernacle had to wash in the laver of cleansing before they could enter in the Holy Place to minister before the Lord, so the sinner must be cleansed in the laver of regeneration before he can enter upon the service of God, in which service the work of inward renewal is perpetually going on. The washing and the renewing are the work of the Holy Spirit, and the renewing is perfected by the abundant shedding forth of the Spirit's influence. "I know my soul am as clean as cotton," said an old Baptist negro, "'cause I was immersed when de tide was running over."

IV. **Salvation entitles man to an inheritance of future blessedness.**—"Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (ver. 7). Being justified by Divine grace, we are constituted heirs of God, and the heirship inspires the hope of possessing the inheritance of eternal life, and entitles us to it. Eternal life is the grand realisation of the hope. Until we are saved we are without hope; but once possessing the blessed hope we have the strongest motive for leading a life of practical holiness, which is the prominent argument of the apostle in the paragraph.

Lessons.—1. *Salvation is wholly a Divine work.* 2. *Salvation is realised by the agency of the Holy Spirit.* 3. *Salvation fits the soul for eternal glory.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4-7.—*The Source of Salvation.*

I.—**Salvation is based on Divine mercy.**

II. **Is independent of human merit.**

III. **Is provided abundantly.**—1. *As an exhibition of abundant mercy.* 2. *As a remedy for great sin.* 3. *As a provision for all who will repent.*

IV. **Is everlasting.**—1. *Justification a ground of hope.* 2. *Eternal life the object of hope.*—*F. W.*

Ver. 5. *Salvation.*

I. **The salvation effected for us.**—1. *In general, the deliverance from any evil.* 2. *In particular, salvation from sin.* From its guilt, misery, power, and stain, and from the wrath of God. 3. *It is a certain salvation.* "He saved us." The veracity of God ensures it; the experience of the believer exemplifies it.

II. **The medium through which it flows.**—Not through human goodness, but Divine mercy, both in its origin and course.

III. **The agency by which it is imparted.**—The cleansing and renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

Lessons.—1. *Here we have cause for humility.* 2. *Gratitude.* 3. *Diligence.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 8.

Good Works—

I. **Are in harmony with the genius of the gospel.**—"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly." The gratuitousness of God's gift of salvation, the great theme of gospel revelation, is an ever-present and powerful motive to practical benevolence. The vain and unprofitable questions reprobated by the apostle do not incite to good works, but are a serious hindrance. The gospel is the only system that helps us to be good and do good. In some of the American lakes the boats are strangely hindered in their progress. They are drawn downwards, and the use of the oar is difficult, because of the magnetic power of deep mud concealed below the surface of the waters. So it is in the lives of men and the life of the world. Good works are vessels that cannot advance without difficulty over the waves of life, because of evil which, as mud, has slowly gathered. There must be purgation: new proclaimings and enforcing of the gospel must become as the powerful, cleansing flow of a great stream.

II. **Must spring from an active faith.**—"That they which have believed in God." Faith enables us to see that God is good, approves of good, and will bless only what is good. We learn to credit all that God says as being true and faithful, and we become anxious and diligent to do what will please Him. We believe also that He will certainly punish every dereliction of duty. Faith is a power ever working in the direction of good.

III. **Must be consistently and steadily maintained.**—"Be careful to maintain good works." "Good works," says Luther, "do not make a Christian; but one must be a Christian to do good works. The tree bringeth forth the fruit, not the fruit the tree. None is made a Christian by works, but by Christ; and being in Christ, he brings forth fruit for Him." Do all the good you can (1 Tim. vi. 17-19), in all the ways you can (1 Cor. xv. 58), to all the people you can (Matt. v. 44, 45), at all the times you can (Prov. iii. 27, 28), as long as you can (Eccles. ix. 10); do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. x. 31).

IV. **Are beneficial to ourselves and to others.**—"These things are good

[to ourselves] and profitable unto men [to others]." A good deed has a reflex influence. Like mercy, it is twice blessed; it blesses him who gives and him who takes. It adds to the volume of the beneficent force that is working out the regeneration of the world. We cannot bless others without being blessed ourselves.

Lessons.—*The gospel is the ministrant of universal good.* 2. *To do good we must first be good.* 3. *Good works have no merit, but no one is a Christian without them.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

A Contumacious Spirit—

I. **Is mainly occupied with the discussion of useless questions** (ver. 9).—The tendency of the contentious spirit is to dwell on the minute and trifling, and exalt them into undue importance. The method of investigation proceeds on a false basis. The disputatious man strives to make human traditions agree with the law, instead of judging all human theories by the light and authority of the law; it is a vain attempt to make God agree with man. It is a waste of time and power. It produces no moral good, but is the harbinger and active cause of much evil. It sows the seeds of future heresies.

II. **Should be faithfully admonished, and then left to itself.**—"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject" (ver. 10). A heretic is a man of contumacious spirit, self-willed, and contending for his own theories, though they are opposed and contradictory to the universally received doctrines of the Church and the unmistakable revelations of the word of God. Such a man must be faithfully warned, not once, but twice; and if he refuses to be advised and continues recalcitrant, leave him to himself—have nothing more to do with him, either in admonition or intercourse. We cannot help a man who refuses the kindliest suggestions, and to be controlled by anything but his own wild, ungovernable temper.

III. **Brings about its own punishment.**—"Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (ver. 11). His perversity is his ruin. He cannot say no one has told him better. He wilfully sins against knowledge, and against the faithful warnings of those who have striven to bring him to a better mind. He is self-condemned, and his punishment is to be in perpetual restlessness and uncertainty. "There is," says Pascal, "an intestine war in man between reason and the passions. He might enjoy some repose had he reason alone without passion, or passion alone without reason. But having both, he must needs live in a state of warfare, since he cannot maintain peace with one without being at war with the other. Hence he is always divided, and always at variance with himself." The gospel is the cure of the contumacious; but even this will not avail unless it be believingly received.

Lessons.—1. *A contentious spirit magnifies trifles.* 2. *There is much useless talk in the world.* 3. *Nothing can be done to rescue the man who rejects the gospel.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 9. *Some Hints to Preachers.*

I. **Fundamental truths are to be continually enforced.**

II. **Practical preaching is never out of season.**

III. **Christian duties are of universal application.**

IV. **Trivial questions are out of place in the pulpit.**—1. *It is possible to have repetition without sameness.* 2. *Belief that does not change the life is useless.* 3. *The law is to be obeyed in spirit rather than in letter.*

Vers. 10, 11. *The Treatment of Heresy.*

I. **Heresy is not an unsound opinion, but an unsound life.**

II. **Is to be dealt with firmly, but gently.**—1. *Firmly, by admonition.* 2. *Gently, by repeated admonitions.*

III. **Hardened heretics are to be rejected.**—1. *But this only applies to exclusion from Christian fellowship.* 2. *It is no warrant for persecution.* 3. *Excluded heretics are to be deemed objects of pity.*—*F. W.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—15.

Concluding Counsels—

I. **Indicate an absorbing interest in the welfare of the Church** (vers. 12, 13).—Artemas or Tychicus is to succeed Titus in Crete, so that he may join Paul at Nicopolis, the city of victory, so called from the great historic battle of Actium, and in which city Paul is arranging to spend the winter. He summons Titus to his side to help him in the work, or to give him directions as to extending missionary operations and breaking up new ground. Zenas and Apollos are to be supplied with all the means necessary for their journey and the exigencies of their work. Paul forgets himself in his absorbing devotion to the work of God. The cause of Christ must be supreme, and everything else subsidiary and made helpful to its support and diffusion.

II. **Emphasis is laid on the necessity of maintaining good works** (ver. 14).—Active benevolence is a fruit of grace. Thus early in Church history it is discovered and enforced that true religion is intensely practical, and recommends itself by the life and conduct it produces. The needs of the Church and of the world afford unceasing opportunities for doing good. Our benevolent acts may be abused, but that is no reason for ceasing to be generous. "I would rather," said a Christian philanthropist, "relieve two undeserving objects than that one deserving person should escape my notice." Mark Antony, when depressed and at the ebb of fortune, declared he had lost all, except what he had given away.

III. **Finally express the best Christian wishes** (ver. 15).—Christian greeting is special and personal—"All that are with me salute thee"; and it is general and all-inclusive—"them that love us in the faith"; and in both cases it is genuine and sincere. The best Christian wishes are summed up in the benediction of grace to all—"Grace be with you all." The heathen salutation was "health." There is a life of the flesh and there is a life of the spirit—a truer, more real, and higher life; above and beyond all, the apostle wished them this, not health or happiness, but grace—the wealth of the gospel compressed into one great benediction.

Lessons.—1. *The best Christian worker is the happiest.* 2. *Christianity is a system of active benevolence.* 3. *The Christian minister finds among his people constant themes for prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12-14. *A Good Man's Personal Concerns.*

I. **Personal selection of agents.**

II. **Personal desire for companionship.**

III. **Personal consideration for absent friends.**

IV. **Personal solicitude for the spiritual prosperity of others.**

Ver. 15. *A Closing Salutation—*

I. **Indicates the strength of Christian friendship.**

II. **Is crowned by a solemn benediction.**—*F. W.*

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON.

INTRODUCTION.

Philemon, a convert of St. Paul apparently during the period of his Ephesian sojourn, had joined the company of believers in Christ at Colossæ. Amongst the members of the Church gathering for worship in his house he appears to have gained esteem. Of the traditions by which he became bishop and then martyr no notice need be taken. It seems to have been a common thing in the case of men of whom we know little and would fain know more, first to make bishops and then martyrs of them, and then to be shocked at the impiety of any who doubted the tradition.

Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, for some offence against his master, had been obliged to flee, which was a further offence in the eye of the law. He seems to have taken shelter where such characters oftenest do—in the crowds and purlieus of a great city. That he had fled to St. Paul on purpose, as Meyer says, we cannot think. For anything he knew, Paul was as likely to turn informer and hand him over to the *fugitivarii*, or slave-detectives, as he was likely to become intercessor for him with his master. How they met we cannot tell; but Paul seems to have conceived a strong affection for him, which he requited by devoted service.

Occasion and style of the letter.—The aim of St. Paul in this letter is to procure for Onesimus a free pardon, and, hard test of Philemon's Christianity as it would be, his reception into the company of brethren at Colossæ. Tychicus was just about to leave for the home of Philemon, so St. Paul took the opportunity to send the fugitive back along with him, carrying the letter which was to effect his reconciliation. "The aim of the letter is pursued with so much Christian love and wisdom, with so great psychological tact, and, without sacrifice of the apostolic authority, in a manner so thoughtfully condescending, adroit, delicate, and irresistible that the brief letter—which is in the finest sense

'seasoned with salt' as a most precious and characteristic relic of the great apostle—belongs, even as regards its Attic refinement and gracefulness, to the epistolary masterpieces of antiquity." It is sufficient that this high praise is from so competent a critic as Meyer.

Outline.

Vers. 1—3. Address and greeting.
4—7. A fine tribute to the Christian character of Philemon.
8—21. The object proper of the epistle—intercession for Onesimus.
22—25. Request for preparing to entertain the apostle. Salutations and conclusion.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **A prisoner.**—There is evident design in this opening word of the letter. How could Philemon resist an appeal which was penned within prison-walls and by a manacled hand? **Unto Philemon.**—A citizen of Colossæ, who owed his conversion, his better self, to the apostle (ver. 19). We know nothing of him but what this letter reveals of his character.

Ver. 2. **Our beloved Apphia.**—R.V. "Apphia our sister." It is a safe inference, from the connection of the names, that Apphia was the wife of Philemon. Since the name always retains the aspirate, it cannot be the Roman name Appia (*Lightfoot*). **Archippus our fellow-soldier.**—Less confidently, but still reasonably, inferred to be the son of Philemon and Apphia, in the fellowship of Christian service, either at Colossæ or Laodicea, preferably the latter.

Ver. 4. **I thank my God.**—There the apostle carries all his joys and troubles into the presence of his God.

Ver. 5. **Hearing of thy love.**—Perhaps the bearer of the refreshing news was Epaphras. The love of Philemon is the chief element so far as the immediate purpose of the apostle is concerned. **And of the faith.**—The explanation of this order generally given is by the figure called chiasmus. In ver. 5, "love and faith"; in vers. 6 and 7, "faith and love." Meyer's explanation is that faith here means fidelity, and is not to be taken in the dogmatic sense.

Ver. 6. **That the communication of thy faith.**—R.V. "fellowship." Two interpretations of this phrase deserve consideration. (1) Your friendly offices and sympathies, your kindly deeds of charity which spring from your faith. (2) Your communion with God through faith. The parallel passages strongly support the former sense (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 7. **Because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.**—R.V. "hearts." This letter, short as it is, contains this expression three times. Lightfoot considers the prominent idea to be that of terror, grief, despondency, etc., and the refreshing as a preparation for the renewal of labour or suffering.

Ver. 8. **Though I might be much bold.**—R.V. better, "though I have all boldness." St. Paul feels that his relationship to Philemon might warrant the casting away of reserve in speech. **To enjoin thee that which is convenient.**—R.V. "befitting." To lay down what would be proper.

Ver. 9. **For love's sake I rather beseech.**—Such *a gentleman* as the apostle was (*Coleridge*). The love that "hopeth all things" seems here to be intended. **Paul the aged.**—So R.V. text. R.V. margin, "Paul an ambassador." Ambassadors being generally venerable men, perhaps the apostle meant to convey the double idea of age and office.

Ver. 10. **My son Onesimus.**—The R.V., like the Greek, holds back the name that might raise some feeling in Philemon's breast. **Whom I have begotten.**—If Philemon had been a cynic, he might have said the pain had been his (ver. 18), whilst Paul seems to have had only the joy over this child of his captivity.

Ver. 11. **Unprofitable . . . profitable.**—We have here a play on words. Christus was often pronounced by Pagans Chrēstus, so that the adjectives ἄχρηστος, εὔχρηστος, would suggest the meanings of "non-Christian" and a "good Christian" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 12. **Whom I have sent again.**—There were police—*the fugitivarii*—whose duty it was to track out runaway slaves: love succeeds better.

Ver. 13. **I would have retained.**—"I could have wished I might keep him." Paul was not a man to take a liberty with a friend. **In thy stead.**—It was not with Philemon's consent that Onesimus was in Rome; but if he might be his proxy, St. Paul knew that would be the most likely way to have retained the runaway for himself.

Ver. 14. **That thy benefit.**—Lit. "thy good." There are spontaneous benefactions, and others that are given reluctantly, but without a tell-tale face.

Ver. 15. **Perhaps he therefore departed.**—He does not say, "For this cause he fled," but "For this cause he was parted"; for he would appease Philemon by a more euphemistic phrase (*Chrysostom*). **That thou shouldest receive him for ever.**—Not the design of Onesimus, but "there's a Divinity that shapes our ends." Paul sees the design in the event which he reckons upon securely.

Ver. 16. **Not now as a servant.**—The apostle utters no syllable of "emancipation," though we can almost think he is playing round the word.

Ver. 17. **If thou count me therefore a partner.**—The master-stroke of the apostle's policy. Who would not pay a goodly price for the privilege of calling such a man comrade or friend? **Receive him as myself.**—Not as a slave, nor a pardoned slave, nor a freedman, but as an apostle of God (cf. Gal. iv. 14).

Ver. 18. **Put that on mine account.**—As we should say in modern mercantile language, "Debit me with it."

Ver. 19. **I Paul have written it.**—R.V. "I Paul write it." A signature to a deed in ancient or mediæval times would commonly take this form, "I so-and-so" (*Lightfoot*). **Thou owest unto me even thine own self.**—This is St. Paul's creditor side of the account. With this debt outstanding he can meet the payment on account of Onesimus.

Ver. 20. **Let me have joy.**—The apostle appeals to what has been a customary thing with Philemon (ver. 7). The verb is at the root of the name Onesimus.

Ver. 21. **Thou wilt also do more than I say.**—What would he do? Set Onesimus at liberty? If so, this reserve is eminently characteristic of the gospel. Slavery is never directly attacked as such, but principles are inculcated which must prove fatal to it (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 22. **Prepare me also a lodging.**—"There is a gentle compulsion in this mention of a personal visit to Colossæ. The apostle would thus be able to see for himself that Philemon had not disappointed his expectations" (*Lightfoot*). What would one not have given to be present if ever Philemon did play the host to Paul afterwards, Onesimus being "one of them that sat at meat with him"!

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

Christian Salutation—

I. **Significant as proceeding from a devoted champion of the truth.**—"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ" (ver. 1). A designation not adopted for effect, and yet most effective by its undesignedness and simple truth. Paul speaks not as the apostle, but as the friend, and this description of himself as a prisoner of Jesus—a sufferer for the gospel—would go straight to Philemon's heart. He drops all allusion to the authority of his office, and "lets Philemon hear the fetters jangling on his limbs—a more powerful plea.' It was for the cause of Christ that Paul was in the Roman prison. Jewish hatred had succeeded in shutting up the ringleader of the Christian movement; but Paul was less concerned than they in the course events were taking. It enabled him to preach the gospel in the metropolis of the world-empire.

II. **Addressed to an exemplary Christian household** (vers. 1, 2).—Philemon is first mentioned as the head of the house, then Apphia his wife, Archippus, probably their son, and the little company of believers who were very likely accustomed to meet under Philemon's roof, the whole regarded as constituting a Church. We have here a glimpse of a quiet Christian home in the early times. The gospel makes most solid progress when the family is converted and consecrated to Christ. Christianity imposes upon every believer the sacred duty of showing piety at home.

III. **Supplicates the bestowal of special blessings** (ver. 3).—Grace is the unmerited but all-comprehensive favour of God, and peace an enjoyment resulting from grace, and a blessing to be diligently sought and increasingly cultivated. Grace and peace comprise Heaven's choicest benedictions.

Lessons.—1. *Prison life cannot suppress Christian freedom.* 2. *Religion hallows family life.* 3. *Our greatest blessings come through prayer.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—7.

Distinguished Christian Excellence—

I. **Is an occasion of thanksgiving and prayer.**—"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers" (ver. 4). The frequent expression of

the apostle's thanks and prayers indicates his habitual devoutness of spirit. A prayerful heart is keenly appreciative of the least evidence of Christian excellence, and joyfully thanks God as the Source and Giver of all good. Prayer and gratitude are usually blended together.

II. **Manifested in a loving heart** (ver. 5).—Love, though mentioned first, is really the result of faith, but it is the grace the apostle in this instance wishes to prominently refer to, and to be exercised towards the runaway slave. Love is the essence, the strength, and the ornament of the Christian character. Without love all other graces are cold and inactive.

III. **Practically appreciates the best things in the Christian life** (ver. 6).—The apostle's prayer for Philemon desires the enlargement of the fellowship of his faith so as to recognise and experience every good thing of which Christ is the source. The germs of all Christian excellencies are planted in the heart when we believe in Christ, but they must be nurtured into growth and expansiveness by exercise and by practical benevolence. In every Christian heart there are the potentialities of all good: every grace is developed by use.

IV. **Shown in sympathetic benevolence** (ver. 7).—Philemon's good to others, in supplying the wants and cheering the hearts of the saints, was a joy and comfort to the apostle. All our works should be done, as a primal motive, to please God; but it is no small motive to persevere in well-doing, that our good deeds give pleasure to those we esteem and love. "Neither Paul nor Philemon dreamed that, made immortal by the word of the former, the same transient act would find its way across the centuries, and would 'smell sweet and blossom in the dust' to-day."

Lessons.—1. *The Christian life is a life of love.* 2. *Christianity is practical benevolence.* 3. *Growth in piety is an occasion of joy to the good.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 4. *Thanksgiving and Prayer—*

I. **Are the evidences of a genuine Christian spirit.**

II. **Should be always united.**

III. **Act and react upon each other.**

IV. **Should be constantly cultivated.**

V. **Are pleasing to God.**

Vers. 5-7. *Christian Love—*

I. **Is the product of a vital faith** (ver. 5).

II. **Is the love of God and man** (ver. 5).

III. **Sees good so far as it sees Christ in everything** (ver. 6).

IV. **Occasions joy to others by its timely and beneficent ministries.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.— Verses 8—11.

A Plea for a Delinquent Slave—

I. **Is not enforced by mere authority** (ver. 8).—Paul here acknowledges that what authority he has is not in himself, but in Christ. He prefers to beseech where he might command. It is never wise to use all the power we have. Force should be the very last resource. There is a power in gentleness that rarely fails, and it is always best to try that first.

II. **Is urged on the ground of personal affection.**—"For love's sake I rather beseech thee" (ver. 9). To deepen the pathos of his entreaty, Paul appeals to his age and to his condition as a prisoner of Christ—two considerations that could not fail to quicken the love of Philemon towards the friend to whom he owed more than he could repay. "The rocking-stones which all the storms of winter

may howl round and not move can be set swinging by a light touch. Una leads the lion in a silken leash. Love controls the wildest nature. The demoniac, whom no chains can bind, is found sitting at the feet of incarnate Gentleness. So the wish of love is all-powerful with loving hearts, and its faintest whisper louder and more constraining than all the trumpets of Sinai" (*Maclaren*).

III. **Recognises the closeness of spiritual relationship** (ver. 10).—The slave for whose restoration Paul pleads is a new man. Coming under the influence of the apostle's preaching in the very city in which he was in hiding, he repented and embraced the truth. The man in bonds was the instrument of the slave's spiritual freedom; and Onesimus is now recognised as a son of Paul, and therefore a brother of Philemon. This tender spiritual relationship intensified the plea for kindly and considerate treatment.

IV. **Strengthened by the fact of genuine conversion.**—"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me" (ver. 11). Paul does not excuse the slave's past conduct. He may have been the worst of his class, the cause of more loss than profit to his owner, and ending a worthless career by theft and flight. But his conversion was real, and Paul had proof of it in the valuable service he had rendered to him. The changed life and well-tested qualities of the Christian character of the slave would render him of real value in the future service of his Master. "Christ does not need to be besought to welcome His runaway good-for-nothings, however unprofitable they have been. That Divine charity of His forgives all things, and hopes all things of the worst, and can fulfil its own hope in the most degraded."

Lessons.—1. *Entreaty is more potent than command.* 2. *The gospel can transform the worst characters.* 3. *Christianity recognises the true brotherhood of man.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 9. *The Christianity of Old Age.*

I. **In the two most marked characteristics of old age—the obtuseness of immediate perception and the freshness of remote memories—may we not discern an obvious intimation of the great future, and a fitting preparative for its approach?**

II. **The veneration for old age which Christianity inspires comes not from the past alone, but rather from the future.**

III. **Christianity teaches the aged disciple how to regard the world and himself as leaving it.**

IV. **The aged, ere they depart, are able to report to us something of the exactitude of the Divine retribution.**—*Martineau.*

Ver. 10. *A Plea for Onesimus.*

I. **In Philemon's house.**—His privileges. His dishonesty.

II. **At Rome.**—A large city and strange, and full of temptations. Yet it was the place of his spiritual birth.

III. **Under Paul's preaching.**—A hearer, a convert.

IV. **Attendant on Paul.**—Reality of his conversion proved by his desertion of evil companions and courses, by his services to Paul, and by his willingness to return to Philemon. Paul's affection for the slave, and his uprightness to his owner.

V. **In Colossæ again.**—Return, reconciliation, joy. Faint picture of the joy in heaven.

Lessons.—1. *Adore the riches of Divine grace in the conversion of Onesimus.* 2. *Do not presume on his case.* 3. *The advantage of living in a religious family.*—*G. Brooks.*

Paul and Onesimus.

I. Here we see the providence of God at work.

II. **The power of Jesus Christ to save.**

III. **We learn how to become peacemakers.**

IV. **We learn how to make restitution.**

V. **We learn how to forgive.**

VI. **We learn that all men are one in Jesus Christ.**

VII. **We learn wh it is to be diligent in season and out of season.** —*W. Galbraith.*

Ver. 11. *The Christian Solution of Social Problems.*

I. **Of problems like slavery.**—1. *Its method—disintegration, not revolution.* 2. *The reform of the individual.*

II. **Of the problem of employers and employed.**—*By imbuing employers with a Christian spirit.* 2. *By imbuing employees with the same spirit.*

III. **Of the problem of the lapsed masses.**—1. *By their evangelisation.* 2. *By continued brotherly oversight.*—*S. E. Keeble.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—16.

The Christian Teacher and the Slave.

I. **The Christian teacher acknowledges the civil rights of the slave-owner.**—"Whom I have sent again" (ver. 12). Paul did not propose to keep Onesimus, nor did he ask for his liberation from slavery, unless the words in ver. 21—"Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say"—may be so construed. Even in these words there is no definite request for the manumission of the slave, but only a delicately expressed hint. Nor did Onesimus object, but seemed eager to go back to the master he had wronged. The time had not then come, as it did come, for the Christian teacher to boldly attack the inhuman system of slavery, which was so deeply and widely interwoven with the social life of that day. The law sanctioned the system: the apostle respected the law.

II. **He identifies himself with the condition of the slave, and recognises the value of his services in the gospel.**—"Receive him, that is, mine own bowels [my own heart]. . . he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel" (vers. 12, 13). Onesimus had so endeared himself to Paul that he regarded him as a part of himself, and had found his services so helpful that, if he had harboured the thought, he would fain have retained him. He was sure Philemon would have sanctioned such an arrangement; but justice demanded that he should be returned to his master, who could not but receive kindly the slave of whom his friend Paul spoke so highly, and with whom he so thoroughly identified himself. "We are all Christ's Onesimuses, and He out of His pure love makes Himself one with us and us one with Him."

III. **He hesitates to claim what he believes the slave's master would have cheerfully rendered** (ver. 14).—Paul might have kept Onesimus, and could easily have gained the consent of Philemon to do so; but with that fine delicacy of feeling that always distinguishes the true Christian gentleman, he declined to force an act of kindness which would lose all its grace and value if not spontaneous. "The principle underlying these words is, that where the bond of love is, compulsion takes the sweetness and goodness out of even sweet and good things. Freedom is essential to virtue. That freedom Christianity honours and respects. So in reference to the offer of gospel blessings, men are not forced to accept them, but appealed to, and can turn deaf ears to the pleading voice, 'Why will ye die?' For nothing is good but the free turning of the will to goodness, and nothing bad but its aversion therefrom" (*Maclaren*).

IV. **He discerns the Divine purpose in a personal incident of slave life** (vers. 15, 16).—Onesimus' escapade, and Philemon's loss of his services for a time, led to the slave's conversion, and his return to his master with heightened

qualifications for service, and in a new spiritual relationship—"above a slave, a brother beloved." So God's purpose of mercy works through all the ways which our follies have made crooked. The history of every conversion is full of suggestive incidents that illustrate the gracious overruling of our waywardness and transgressions.

Lessons.—1. *The minister of the gospel has a special love for his converts.* 2. *Christianity teaches us to respect the rights of others.* **3.** *The saving power of God is realised in the most unlikely circumstances.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12-14. *Restitution*—

I. **An undeniable Christian duty** (ver. 12).

II. **Resists all temptations not to do what is just and right** (ver. 13).

III. **Does not bargain for conditions** (ver. 14).

IV. **Leaves the wronged one free to forgive the wrong done and for which restitution is offered.**

Vers. 15, 16. *Providence in Individual Life*—

1. **Works out its plans in the midst of sin and suffering.**

II. **Accomplishes its purpose in the most unexpected manner and by the unlikeliest methods** (ver. 15).

III. **Is always beneficent in its aims and results** (vers. 15, 16).

IV. **Exalts the individual into the highest spiritual relationship** (ver. 16).

V. **Brings loving hearts into closer union with each other** (ver. 16).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—19.

The Unselfishness of Christian Love—

I. **Recognises the equal rights of Christian fellowship.**—"If thou count me therefore as a partner, receive him as myself" (ver. 17). Paul claims for the converted slave the same share and comradeship in Christian blessings as he and Philemon enjoyed. Love overleaps all minor distinctions, and admits its object into a full participation, on equal terms, of its holiest fellowship.

II. **Generously undertakes responsibility for the deserving.**—"If he hath wronged thee . . . I will repay it" (vers. 18, 19). "The formal tone of the promise rendered more formal by the insertion of the name—and perhaps by that sentence only being in his own handwriting—seems to warrant the explanation that it was half playful; for he could never have supposed that Philemon would exact the fulfilment of the bond, and we have no reason to suppose that, if he had, Paul could really have paid the amount. But beneath the playfulness there lies the implied exhortation to forgive the money wrong as well as the others which Onesimus had done him" (*Maclaren*). Love is often abused by undertaking obligations for the undeserving, but this does not prevent its helping the worthy. Love would rather suffer itself than that others should suffer, even by its cautious suppression.

III. **Pleads for others by a delicate reminder of spiritual indebtedness.**—"Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides" (ver. 19). Philemon owed Paul more than the mere money loss of which Onesimus was guilty. He owed his spiritual life which he had received through the apostle's ministry. Love does not parade its services and insist upon its claims as if it were a matter of barter and exchange. We owe our

all to Christ, but He does not harass us for the payment of the debt. He lovingly reminds us of it, to make obedience all the easier and pleasanter.

Lessons.—1. *Religion admits to a hallowed fellowship with all the good.* 2. *Love willingly shoulders the burdens of others.* 3. *Love is irresistibly persuasive.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 17. *Put Yourself in His Place.*

I. **Christianity has compassion for the erring.**

II. **The Christian benefactor remembers how much he has been himself forgiven.**

III. **Christianity is a partnership in Divine and spiritual treasures which it invites all men to share.**

IV. **Christianity raises the worst of slaves to the highest freedom.**

Vers. 18, 19. *Vicarious Responsibility—*

I. **Becomes willingly chargeable for the debts of the truly penitent.**

II. **Is a faint imitation of the conduct of the Divine Redeemer.**

III. **Does not and cannot annihilate individual responsibility.**

Ver. 19. *An Undischargeable Debt.*

I. **We can never repay the man who led us to Christ.**

II. **The charm of the service rendered would be destroyed if the debt could be discharged.**

III. **Undischargeable debts will augment the enjoyment of souls in heaven.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—25.

Christian Entreaty—

I. **Is based on the joy which an act of kindness affords.**—"Let me have joy of thee in the Lord" (ver. 20). It would weigh with a nature like Philemon's that compliance with the request would give pleasure to Paul: it would help him in his own Christian experience. "Refresh my heart in the Lord." It is an inducement to be kind that it will please those we love; but the highest motive for doing good is that it will please God. It stirs the heart to duty when it knows that every act of goodness gladdens the heart of God.

II. **Has confidence in the generous response of the Christian spirit.**—"Having confidence in thy obedience . . . knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say" (ver. 21). The Christian heart cannot withstand the appeal of unselfish love. It responds quickly, not as rendering a slow, mechanical obedience, but as if eager to lavish its wealth of generosity and do more than it is asked. "When love enjoins, there should be trust in its tones. It will act like a magnet to draw reluctant feet into the path of duty. A will which mere authority could not bend, like iron when cold, may be made flexible when warmed by this gentle heat. If parents oftener let their children feel that they had confidence in their obedience, they would seldom have to complain of their disobedience" (*Maclaren*).

III. **Is more likely to succeed with the immediate prospect of a personal interview** (ver. 22).—A letter at the best is but a cold, formal vehicle to convey the heart's desires. The prospect of Paul visiting Colossæ in person would tend to secure a kindly reception for Onesimus. But the apostle does not write as if he had any doubt on that score. He looks forward to the pleasure of social and Christian intercourse with one whose generosity is undoubted, and hopes that the prayers of the Church in Philemon's household on his behalf may be

answered in his liberation, so that he may soon be with them. The joy of once more meeting his father in the gospel would make Philemon eager to gratify his wishes. So the prospect of one day seeing Christ as He is should inspire us with eagerness to fulfil all His wishes concerning us.

IV. **Concludes with salutations and prayer** (vers. 23-25).—Epaphras, who had been sent by the Colossian Church to minister to the wants of Paul, and who was so closely identified with the apostle as to be called his "fellow-prisoner," is naturally mentioned; and he, along with two Jews and two Gentiles, joins in the Christian greeting. The parting prayer is suggestive. In the beginning of the epistle Paul invoked grace upon the household "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"; now he represents that grace as the gift of Christ. "In Him all the stooping, bestowing love of God is gathered that from Him it may be poured on the world. That grace is not diffused like stellar light through some nebulous heaven, but concentrated in the Sun of Righteousness, who is the Light of men. That fire is piled on a hearth that from it warmth may ray out to all that are in the house. The grace of Christ is the best bond of family life. Here it is prayed for on behalf of all the group, the husband, wife, child, and the friends in their home-church. Like grains of sweet incense cast on an altar flame and making fragrant what was already holy, that grace sprinkled on the household fire will give it an odour of a sweet smell, grateful to men and acceptable to God" (*Maclaren*).

Lessons.—1. *The Christian is ever ready to plead for the unfortunate.* 2. *Love is generous both in its gifts and expectations.* 3. *Love prompts and then rejoices in every act of kindness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *The Stimulating Power of Kindness—*

I. **Excites the best affections.**

II. **Creates the holiest joy.**

III. **Intensifies our appreciation of the power and love of God.**

Vers. 21, 22. *The Expectations of Love—*

I. **Inspire confidence in the goodness of others** (ver. 21).

II. **Are realised beyond all power of expression** (ver. 21).

III. **Yearn for personal fellowship** (ver. 22).

IV. **Are fed by belief in the power of prayer.**

Vers. 23-25. *Christian Salutations—*

I. **Indicate the unity and reality of the Christian brotherhood.**

II. **Are tokens of genuine mutual affection.**

III. **Are prompted by the affluent realisation of Divine grace.**

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

INTRODUCTION.

It cannot be said that the dispute concerning the authorship of this epistle or treatise has been settled, but it may be said that the general result of the elaborate and long-continued discussion is confidence in its Pauline character, but not in its Pauline authorship. The inscription to the epistle in the Authorised Version carries no authority, and represents no more than private opinion. Whether it is to be regarded or not as the actual work of St. Paul cannot be decided by early Church traditions. It must depend on a critical examination of the language, style, tone, and doctrinal settings of the epistle, as these are compared with the admitted epistles of the apostle. The differences, indeed, between it and them are so evident that the cursory reader cannot fail to recognise them. And making all due allowance for the differences in the language, style, and thought of authors at different times in their lives, as well as the differences which belong to variety of subjects, and effort to adapt to varying conditions in those addressed, it must be admitted that the marks of St. Paul's own handiwork cannot be traced in this epistle. Paul's rhetoric is intense, the rapid utterance of strong passion; the rhetoric of this writer is formal, studied, precise. St. Paul magnified his office as the apostle to the Gentiles, and it is hardly conceivable that he could write a treatise without once mentioning them, or showing any concern for their particular interests. It was not in St. Paul's way to prepare a sketch or outline of the thought and argument which he wished to present; this writer has evidently worked out a pre-arranged plan, and his digressions are practical applications of each part of his theme. But the point which seems to be of the greatest importance is, that while St. Paul and the writer of this epistle both deal with the inferiority of Judaism to Christianity, St. Paul sees it as a scaffolding which can be taken down when the permanent building is erected, while this writer sees it to be the germ out of which Christianity has come as an unfolding. This difference of standpoint almost assures the non-Pauline character of the work. St. Paul's contentions

with the Judaising party tended to make him intense and even bitter in his references to the older dispensation, as may be seen in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. Boast though he does over his Jewish origin and relations, there is almost a pugnacious tone when the two systems have to be contrasted. But in the epistle to the Hebrews the tone is eminently conciliatory; there is nothing that could shock even the unconverted Jews. The writer sees in Judaism not so much a law as a system of worship; and Christianity is but the unfolding and flowering of the primary truths that were kept safe, and carried through the ages, by the Jewish types. The writer had, indeed, an idea of the Divine education of the race which it is difficult to associate with St. Paul. To these considerations it is usual to add that the two writers use the Old Testament Scriptures in different ways; and that the writer of the "Hebrews" shows, in a very marked way, the influence of the teachings of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew. If the writer came under the direct influence of St. Paul, it is certain that he also came under the influence of the Alexandrian School. The following writers tend to favour the Pauline authorship: Stuart, Davidson, Wordsworth. The following represent the Continental divines who are opposed to the Pauline authorship: Luther, Erasmus, Calvin, Melancthon, Grotius, LeClerc, Tholuck, Delitzsch. Dr. R. W. Dale seems to consider the arguments for and against as about equally good.

Various suggestions of likely authors from among the Pauline disciples have been made. Barnabas, Luke, Clement, Mark, Titus, Sylvanus, and Aquila have been named, but the trend of modern opinion is decidedly in favour of the authorship of Apollos, as he appears to meet all the exigencies of the case. He belonged to Alexandria; was remarkable for eloquence; and came under the direct influence of St. Paul. Dean Plumptre, writing in the *Expositor*, May 1875, worked out a very interesting, but quite independent, argument for the authorship of Apollos. There is a work belonging to the same period as the epistle to the Hebrews, but it is not a Christian work. It is known as the Wisdom of Solomon, and it is anonymous. The dean very elaborately shows that certain words and phrases are characteristic of and peculiar to both this book and the epistle to the Hebrews. Both works are manifestly indebted to Philo, the leader of Jewish thought in Alexandria. The dean's suggestion is, that Apollos wrote both the Wisdom of Solomon and the epistle to the Hebrews,—the former before knowing the truth in Christ, and when only acquainted with the baptism of John, and the Jewish reformation that was inaugurated by him; the latter after, when instructed in the way of God more perfectly. Luther started the idea that Apollos may have been the author. Dean Farrar warmly supports the suggestion, going so far as to say that either Apollos wrote the epistle or it is the work of some author who is to us entirely unknown. He bases his judgment on the following considerations: Apollos was a Jew. He was a Hellenist. He was an Alexandrian. He was famed for his eloquence, and his powerful method of applying Scripture. He was a friend of Timotheus. He had acquired considerable authority in various

Churches. He had been taught by the apostle. He adopted an independent line of his own (1 Cor. iii. 6). We have no trace that he was ever at Jerusalem; and yet his style of argument was specially effective as addressed to Jewish hearers. There need be no difficulty in accepting the Divine inspiration of Apollos for the work of writing this epistle, seeing that we fully accept the inspiration of St. Peter's disciple, Mark, and of St. Paul's other disciple, Luke, for the writing of the gospels.

No certain knowledge can be gained concerning either the place from which the epistle was written, or the persons who were first addressed. The date even is undefined, save that its contents indicate the Temple at Jerusalem as still standing. The object of the epistle is, however, very well defined. It is designed to be corrective of the special dangers to which the Hebrew Christians were at that time exposed, especially the danger of relapsing into Rabbinical Judaism. They were liable to persecution both from the pagans and from the strict Jews. They were tempted to apostatise from their faith in Christ. They were perplexed by the difficulties of ordering opinion and conduct according to the rules of Mosaism, and also to the principles of Christianity. They were attracted to a sort of reformed Judaism, which assumed to treat Christianity as unnecessary. Dr. Moulton gives a suggestive note on the conditions which called for the epistle: "The Christians addressed were in eminent danger of apostasy. The danger was occasioned partly by seductions from without, partly by weakness within. Even when the fabric of Jewish power was falling, the influence of its past history, its glorious treasure of promise, its unique associations, retained a wonderful power. As we look back on the years preceding the fall of Jerusalem, the case of the people may seem to us hopeless; but the confidence of the nation was unbroken, and even at that period we note outbursts of national pride and enthusiastic hope. Bitter hate and contempt for Christianity on the one hand, and the attraction of their ancestral worship and ritual on the other, had apparently won a victory over the constancy of some Christians belonging to this Hebrew community. Where open opposition had not prevailed, the tone of Christian faith had been lowered. The special temptations of these Christians seem to have been towards a loss of interest in the higher Christian truths, and a union of elementary Christian teaching with that to which they had been accustomed as Jews."

The homiletical treatment of the several paragraphs may be wisely prefaced by a general survey of the course of the writer's argument. The leading purpose is to show the relation of Christianity to Judaism, and at the same time the essential superiority of Christianity as a spiritual over Judaism as a formal system. 1. There is a comparison of the manner in which the revelation is given in the two dispensations. The law, by the disposition of angels, who are only servants; the gospel, by the manifestation of the Son, who is a direct source of authority. Upon this argument an exhortation is based. Apostasy was terribly punished under the old and formal dispensation. How much more must it be terribly punished under the higher and spiritual dispensation! 2. Then comes a com-

parison of the mediators of the two dispensations. In respect of faithfulness both Moses and Christ win Divine approval; but Moses only takes a place as part of the furniture of the old dispensation—Christ takes place with God as the Founder and Builder of the new. Moses was a servant in the house; Christ is the Son over the house. An exhortation follows, based on the historical fact that many of the Israelites failed, by reason of unbelief, to gain the promised rest of Canaan. Soul-rest in Christ is equally imperilled by unbelief. 3. Then comes a comparison of the high priests of the two dispensations. A common relation to the people through a human experience. Likeness in being both appointed by God to office. Difference in the types—Old Testament after type of Levi; New Testament after type of Melchizedek. The course of the comparison is arrested in order to insert an exhortation and reproach. Imperfections of Christians make the deep things of God difficult of apprehension. Continuance of imperfections put in grave peril of apostasy. There is encouragement for all, who would be steadfast, in the promises of God, confirmed by His oath. Then the writer reverts to his comparison of the priestly orders. Melchizedek was priest before Levi, and even received the homage of Levi. The Levitical order was subject to death and change. The order of Melchizedek, being spiritual, is permanent. Christ belongs to the Melchizedek order; for He sprang from the tribe of Judah, not of Levi. A priest was promised after the order of Melchizedek. That promise is not fulfilled unless it is fulfilled in Christ. Resuming the comparison, the writer shows that in Judaism the appointment was made without an oath, in Christianity with an oath. Moreover, the Jewish priests were many; the spiritual Priest is one. Levitical priests had their sphere in earthly and ceremonial affairs, Christ in heavenly and spiritual affairs. The first covenant was in every way imperfect and educational, the second was in every way superior. 4. Then follows a comparison of the *services* of the two priesthoods. The following points are presented: (1) The ceremonial indicated that the way into the holiest was not made plain. That way is made plain by Christ. (2) The old service was entirely outward, formal, ceremonial. There might be spiritual life in it, but there need not be to constitute effective service. The service of Christ is altogether spiritual. (3) The old sacrifices were of unwilling beasts; the sacrifice of Christ was that of His own will, His own consenting personality. (4) Salvation and pardon were associated with blood and death. So they are in Christ in a spiritual manner. (5) The old sacrifices were numerous; the one sacrifice of Christ is offered once for all. (6) The old sacrifices had their spiritual virtue only so far as they were typical of Christ's sacrifice. (7) The cleansings effected by the old ritual concerned only ceremonial relations, and were only temporary. Christ's cleansing is perfect because it is the renewal of the will. (8) The old priests were ever coming to the altar; Christ, having offered His sacrifice once, is seated on His throne. The remainder of the epistle is hortatory. These being our privileges, let us take good heed that we do not fall short of them, by reason of any unfaithfulness or apostasy, and let us inspire our souls to noble things by keeping ever before us the thought of those heroic souls who

won the victory of constancy and faith. Throughout the epistle there is nothing to cause offence to any sensitive Jew. The one thing the writer is anxious to show is, that a Jew comes up into Christianity much as a Jew boy comes up out of the limited sphere of thought and interest of his boyhood into the larger, wider sphere of his manhood. But he should not want to go back into his boyhood stage again.

These preliminary explanations will put the reader *en rapport* with the epistle. We deal with it entirely as furnishing suggestions for homiletic treatment; the exegetical and expository elements are introduced in this commentary only so far as they may be necessary in order to sustain the homiletic hints. Succinctness and suggestiveness are constantly kept in view, as the work proposes to be *thoughts for thinkers.*

The Pauline Authorship Freshly Presented.

The Rev. W. M. Lewis, in the *Thinker* (September 1893), admitting that the Pauline authorship cannot be maintained by the arguments hitherto adduced by its advocates, the place, time, and circumstances given, during the life of Paul, to its production leaving its difficulties unexplained, thinks the proposition can be maintained that "it was the joint production of St. Paul and St. Luke during the imprisonment of the former at Cæsarea, A.D. 58-60."

CHAPTER I.

THE ESSENTIAL SUPERIORITY OF THE REVELATION IN THE SON.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **God.**—Placed abruptly, as the first and emphatic word, in the English translation; and properly so placed, because the unity of God is the truth concerning which the Jews were so supremely jealous, and the message of this treatise could not have been received by the Jews if it had raised the faintest suspicion of sympathy with the Gnostic heresy, that the Old Testament dispensation was the work of another and inferior deity (demiurge). The monotheistic truth was entrusted to the care of the Abrahamic race; and at the present day the great stumbling-block in the way of the Jew's acceptance of Christianity is the *tri-theistic* notion which he gets from the form of the Christian teachings concerning the Trinity. **Sundry times and in divers manners.**—"At many times by many persons." The writer appears to be thinking of revelations by persons, not of revelations by things. Revelations by persons can be compared with the revelation in the person of the Son. R.V. renders, "by divers portions and in divers manners." Alford, "in many portions and in divers manners." Stuart, "in various parts and in various ways." Webster and Wilkinson, "in manifold portions and manifold methods." The fragmentary, and consequently imperfect, character of all the earlier revelations is distinctly indicated. The variety of agents and agencies indicates the constant need for precise adaptation to differing conditions. The incomplete and preparatory character of the earlier revelations is indicated at the very beginning of the treatise, and it is the foundation on which the writer's argument is raised. He had to remove the impression which had been made so deeply on the Jewish mind, that the revelation in the Mosaic system was final and complete. As there must be relativity to imperfect creatures, who are always in some educational stage, no revelation made to them can ever be absolutely final. It should be an advance beyond anything previously given, but it always involves the possibility of an advance beyond itself. It is important to keep the word "revelation" for the Divine *matter* that is communicated, and the word "inspiration" for the Divine *power* which rests on the agents employed for communicating it to men. **Spake in time past.**—Or having spoken then in one way, speaks now in another way. Since the communication of thought from man to man is chiefly made through the agency of words, words must be the principal medium for communicating the thoughts of God to the mind of man. The possibility of a book-revelation was much discussed in the early part of this century; but that is only a *detail* when the principle—and the historical fact—of a *word*-revelation is accepted. It only concerns the mode of preserving the words. Revelation is God speaking, putting His thought into some form of words which will allow of our apprehending it. The term λόγος, or "word," properly means, "that medium or agency which translates one man's heart to another." When this treatise was written, no fresh revelation had come from God in any prophet for more than four hundred years. The ministry of John the Baptist is not taken into consideration, because it properly belongs to the Messianic age; and what John had to say did not immediately concern this writer's argument. It did not in any of its characteristic features belong to the series of the earlier Divine revelations. **The fathers.**—A Pauline form of expression. See Rom. ix. 5, xi. 28, xv. 8. **By the prophets.**—More precisely *in* the prophets: not διά, but ἐν; in the persons of the prophets; God in them, speaking by means of them. The word "by" separates the message from the messenger; the word "in" suggests that the messengers were essential to the message; and this prepares for the comparison with the Son, who both brought a message and was the message. Philo says, "The prophet is an interpreter, while God from within whispers what he should utter." The term "prophets" should here be taken in a comprehensive way, as including all persons whom God has ever been pleased to use as mediums for communicating His will to men.

Ver. 2. **These last days.**—R.V. "at the end of these days." Two ideas are suggested; the second is the more suitable. 1. At the end of this present pre-Messianic age of the world. 2. In these days that are the last time. Perhaps it is better to take the words as

simply meaning "nowadays," in our times. The last times are always those in which an author writes. It is not necessary to assume that this writer had in mind the "end of the world." **By His Son.**—In a Son. The article is omitted in order to make the point, that the revelation came in One who stood to God in the relation of Son, *ἐν υἱῷ*; and the absence of the article makes the expression emphatic, "He is Son, and nothing else." Alford suggests reading, "In Him who was Son of God." **Appointed.**—Constituted, ordained. Reference is especially to His revelational and redemptive mission. The eternal Sonship is not in thought here. **Heir of all things.**—The classical meaning of the Greek word *κληρονόμος* is one who either acquires by lot or inherits by death. The writer would set forth that this only Son is virtual possessor with the Father of all things. **Made the worlds.**—The universe, as apprehended by man's senses. The material world is the first revelation of God, and the basis of natural religion. All Divine activity in the material, sensible spheres is properly thought of as the operation of the Divine Son. He is the medium of all Divine working in man's sphere. The exalted and unique pre-eminence of the Son of God is the writer's topic. For the idea of the Son as Creator of the worlds, compare Eph. iii. 9; Col. i. 15-19; John i. 3, 10; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Heb. i. 10. The word *αἰῶνας* may mean "age," "period of time"; but that is not to the point here. Alford treats the assertion very comprehensively: "So that the universe, as well in its great primeval conditions, the reaches of space, and the ages of time, as in all material objects and all successive events, which furnish out and people space and time, God made by Christ." Compare the following sentences from Philo: "You will discover that the Cause of it [the world] is God . . . and the Instrument the Word of God, by whom it was equipped." "But the Shadow of God is His Word, whom He used as an Instrument in making the world."

Ver. 3. **Brightness of His glory.**—R.V. "effulgence of His glory." The bright shining forth. Light flowing from a luminous body; seen, as ray, in our atmosphere, and enabling us to apprehend a glory which is wholly beyond mortal vision. "The glory of Christ is the glory of the Father, just as the sun is only revealed by the rays which stream forth from it" (*Farrar*). **Express image.**—Impression as of a seal. The word *χαρακτήρ* may mean a stamping instrument, or one who stamps, or the thing stamped which takes the impress; so exact image. Compare seal and die, picture and photograph, photograph and sculptured figure. Philo says of wisdom, "She is the effulgence of the everlasting Light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness." The word *ὑπόστασις* is an exceedingly difficult one to explain, because so many different ideas have been attached to it, and made bases of doctrine. In classical use *ὑπόστασις* means (1) foundation, (2) steadfastness, (3) resolution, (4) substance or essence. In the sense of "person" it was first used by Greek writers after the Arian Controversy began. Athanasius used it as distinct from *οὐσία*. The general meaning of the figures may be thus given: If God is Light, Christ is the Radiance; if God is Substance, Christ is the Manifestation. The words "by Himself" are not in the original. **Purged our sins.**—R.V. "made purification of sins." Stuart says that in Hellenistic Greek the word *καθαρισμός* is also employed for expiation, and carries the idea of atonement. To make purification by the removal of sins may be illustrated by John i. 29; 1 John iii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 9. In the LXX. the Day of Atonement is called the Day of Purification. **Sat down.**—The position at the right hand of one on a throne implies commanding, ruling, administrative authority. For Jehovah's investiture of the Son of Man with unlimited dominion, see Dan. vii. 14; and with supreme dignity, see Eph. i. 20, 21. *Farrar* says, "The description of Christ in these verses differed from the current Messianic conceptions of the Jews in two respects: (1) He was Divine and Omnipotent; (2) He was to die for our sins."

Ver. 4. **Being made.**—R.V. "having become." Christ as Son always was superior to the angels in dignity and essence; the writer asserts that He *became* mediatorially superior to the angel-ministrants of the old dispensation, as the agent of the sublime scheme of spiritual redemption. By right of inheritance He *has* a better name. By right of commission He has *gained* a better name. Compare Phil. ii. 9. *παρά* after the comparative degree is peculiar to this epistle. The new paragraph shows how the name and dignity of Jesus Christ can be established by the testimony of Scripture, the Scripture being treated on the then familiar Jewish method, Messianic references being much more freely recognised than we can approve from strictly logical standpoints.

Ver. 5. **Angels.**—Properly, any living being carrying out the Divine will is an angel, a messenger, a servant. But the word "angel" is precisely kept for such messengers as belonged to other than the earthly sphere. The angelophanies of the Old Testament were foreshadowings of the revelation in the "Man Christ Jesus." **Said He.**—The interrogation is intended to be a strong negation. **Begotten Thee.**—Constituted Thee; but the term is designed to indicate the different relation in which Christ stands to God and the angels stand to Him. To angels He is Creator; to Christ He is Father. Three references of the term have been assigned: (1) the eternal generation of the Son; (2) His incarnation; (3) His full manifestation, as the obedient Son, in His resurrection. "The idea of the eternal generation

of the Son is the pure offspring of the metaphysics of the Greek Fathers, rather than of New Testament teaching" (*Barker*).

Ver. 6. **Again.**—Read as R.V. "when He again bringeth." **First-begotten.**—R.V. "first-born." Another expression for Son, but adding to Son the right of primogeniture. Son and Heir. Only Son and only Heir. See Rev. i. 5; Col. i. 15, 18; Rom. viii. 29; Heb. xii. 22, 23. The quotation may be from Ps. xcvii. 7, or Deut. xxxii. 43. The latter is the more probable source, as the LXX. Version reads, "Rejoice, ye heavens, along with Him, and let the angels of God worship Him."

Ver. 7. The difficulty of this verse lies in its setting inanimate things after animate. *Delitzsch* renders, "Who maketh His messengers out of winds." The writer's point appears to be this: As even material objects may be the messengers or angels of God, so to be an angel in the higher sense is to be no more than a minister of the Divine will. But the Son is one with the Divine will, and in doing that will does His own. *Dr. Moulton* explains in another way: "The meaning appears to be that God, employing His messengers for His varied purposes, sends them forth in what manner He may please, clothing them with the appearance of the resistless wind or the devouring fire."

Ver. 8. **Sceptre of righteousness.**—Lit. "rod of straightness."

Ver. 10. The 102nd Psalm is not so clearly Messianic; but if the consciousness of the original writer was aware of nothing more definite than a description of the eternity of Jehovah, it is yet competent to an inspired New Testament writer to tell us that this language is applicable to our Lord.

Ver. 14. The word for ministering, λειτουργικά, is not classical, but it is used in the LXX., and it implies "sacred service." **Heirs of salvation.**—Because salvation is conceived as both a present state and a final fruition: "Made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. iii. 7). The Jewish conceptions of angels need not be made into a Christian angelology.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

The Earthly Mission of the Divine Son.—This so-called epistle is remarkable as having no opening salutation or prayer. The beginning is abrupt, as arresting attention, after the manner of the rhetorician. Being addressed to Christian Jews, it opens with the conciliatory assertion of the unity of God. Compare Gen. i. 1. There is one God, from whom has come all the various revelations which men have received. He is God, and only God. The writer belongs to the Alexandrian School, but he has no sympathy with those who regarded the Old Testament system as the work of a demiurge. He would not exalt Christianity by depreciating Mosaism. The stand taken by the writer is distinctly Jewish: "The Lord our God is one Lord." The former revelations were real revelations, no matter how long a time their coming may have covered, or how various may have been their forms and agencies. Law, prophecy, type, allegory, didactic teaching, promise, threatening, oracle—all may fully be recognised as agencies used for the communication of the Divine will to men. All that need be affirmed is, that the Christ-revelation is higher than any previous revelation, because the conditions demanded a higher. It was an advance along the same line. It is not something altogether new, so there need be no antecedent prejudice against it. It is in the regular—it might even be said the necessary—line of progression. The pious Jew need have no hesitation about taking this step forward. It is but the older opened out, as the bud unfolds into the flower. It is as relative to the age of the writer, and the ages that were coming, as the older revelations had been relative to the ages that were past. It was precisely what the older had prepared for; and no one was called to speak depreciatingly of the preparatory stages of a Divine work which concerned humanity, rather than any mere section of it. The conciliatory character of the opening words of the epistle is quite evident. The writer would have obtained no unprejudiced hearing from a Jewish audience if he had begun by claiming that Christianity was an independent, original, and unconnected revelation. The Jew would have firmly replied, "Since Jehovah has revealed Himself to us, that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true." This conciliatory attitude towards the older

dispensation enables the writer to affirm that the older and the later revelations *can be compared* because they lie in the same plane. The revelation in a Son can be compared with revelation in a prophet, or in an angel, because they are all revelations made through human agencies. The person chosen as the agent for the latest revelation is a Son. Christ is indeed the eternal Son, to be thought of as the agency of God when acting in the sphere of created things. But the writer has rather in mind that, for relation to our world, and to ensure our apprehension of His person, relation, and mission, He is constituted Son, because that relationship both fathers and children can so fully understand and enter into. To call Christ the Son is distinctly revelational to us. In a brief passage the writer summarises what, as Son, Jesus came to earth to do.

I. **To reveal God to us.**—R.V. "who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." This may seem to be the work of every prophet. Take the deepest view of every man entrusted with a revelation, and we find that he is making God better and more worthily known. Knowledge of God is the eternal life. But we cannot know God save through His revelations of Himself to us. This truth men stoutly resist. In every age they have tried by searching to find out God; and in every age the quest has failed. The religions of the world represent the best success that has been attained, and there is no adequate representation of God in any one of them; and if the best conceptions of all were gathered together, the figure of the Divine would be found incomplete and unworthy. "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but the thunder of His power who can understand?" Precisely the things which cannot be found out aright by unaided man are God's relationship to us and the character which tones that relationship. Christ came to be the ray in the earthly atmosphere which enabled men to apprehend the mysterious orb of eternal Light. He was the Son revealing the Father. Christ came to be the seal which should declare the stamp which had impressed it—to be a life-character which should make real to us the Divine character. Fatherhood and personal love Christ came to reveal. And so to know God in a way that gives life is to "know Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." The following points may be developed: 1. God must reveal Himself to be known. 2. God must adapt His revelations, or they will reveal nothing to those who receive them. 3. God must advance His revelations, or they will not meet the needs of a progressive race. 4. God cannot be thought of as ending His revelations while the race continues to be progressive.

II. **To bring God's power for our help.**—"And upholding all things by the word of His power." This is intended to bring home to the Jews and to us the infinite ability of Christ. He is fully competent for the work entrusted to Him. He brings Divine power to the fulfilment of His mission. The writer asserts His oneness with God—the Divine in the human. The impression that God was, in Christ, with men for their help, is precisely the impression of our Lord's miracles. What the pagans of Lystra felt about Paul and Barnabas, when the lame man was healed, is what we ought to feel about Christ, as we watch Him doing His mighty works. This should satisfy us—God Himself is intervening for us. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

III. **To deal with our sins.**—R.V. "when He had made purification of sins"; A.V. "purged our sins." The thought is a Jewish one. Illustration may be taken from the ceremonies of the "day of atonement." But the idea is limited here to cleansing or purifying work. Christ came to arrange for the cleansing away of sins. In a sense Christ's mission was a limited one; and yet it was so truly at the very heart of things as to become unlimited. Sin is man's supreme woe. It is of no use whatever to deal with its consequences only; it must be dealt with at its root, which is the sinful—and biassed—will of man. In the recovery of the human will is found the great redemptive sphere. But what

was probably in the mind of the writer when he thus alluded to *sins* was the distinction between sins and ceremonial offences, which appears again and again in the epistle. The earlier system dealt, illustratively, with uncleanness. Christianity deals, practically, with moral evil, and effects the purification of *sins*. And this is the precise Divine intervention that we want. Jesus, God with us, saving us from our sins.

IV. **To gain a special power for permanently dealing with our sins.**—R.V. "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Not as One who had completed His work, and could retire to enjoy His rest and reward; but as One who, having done a preliminary part of His work, takes up a fitting position for permanently carrying it on. The visions of Stephen, and of Paul at Damascus, indicate the activity of the glorified Christ. And this epistle argues for a continual and even eternal priesthood. The earthly experience of Jesus involves special fitness for a permanent ministry. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." These truths have to be duly illustrated and enforced: 1. God would have us know Him aright—in His Son. 2. God is concerned for our deepest need—and that comes out of our sin. 3. God has made both immediate and permanent provision for meeting our deepest need—in Jesus, who is our Saviour and His Son.

The Gospel in the Old Testament.—Every revelation of God to men is a gospel; it is "good news." It is a Divine intervention for helping man. It assumes that man is in some condition that calls for the friendly hand. It may be a condition involved in his creaturely dependence, or it may be a condition involved in his wilfulness and sin. It is always in such precise adaptation, and it always has in view such a gracious purpose, that it always is a gospel.

I. It is always a gospel by reason of its **relativity.** Both the form of it and the substance of it are always precisely adapted to the people to whom it is sent, and to the conditions in which they are placed.

II. It is always a gospel by reason of its **limitations.** It were no good news for God to tell us now what we could not understand save by living the life of two thousand years hence. It could have been no gospel to tell Abraham what only Peter could understand. We ought not to read too much into the Old Testament revelations, because the grace of them lay in their wise limitations.

III. It is always a gospel because **it fits into an advancing series,**—each a gracious message within its limits, but nothing standing alone; each having this further gospel in it, that it prepared for something better, and made something better necessary. It created an unrest; it held out a hope: so every early revelation was a gospel which moved men on towards the great gospel of the Son.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *God. The Theological Postulate.*—The abruptness with which the writer commences his work gives it the character of a treatise rather than an epistle. No Hebrew writer would for one moment entertain the idea of proving that *God is*: that is the one admitted fact on which all his thinking rests. It is not possible for man to argue on any scientific subject unless he accepts certain facts which cannot be proved, and which it is mutually agreed shall be accepted without proof. Euclid must ask for the acceptance of certain axioms and postulates before he can work out a single mathematical problem. And there is one thing that must be admitted before any theological system can be constructed. It is an absolutely unprovable thing, because

every proof that can be offered must rest on assumptions, not on knowledge, since man has no power to *know* in the sphere to which this primary truth is related. It is the being of God. A man may deny the being of a God. Then we cannot talk theology with him; nor can we give him any idea of his moral duty. Scripture makes no attempt to prove that there is a God. It helps us to apprehend *what* He is, but not *that* He is. It starts with the sublime assertion, "In the beginning God." It proposes to deal only with men who accept that altogether incomprehensible fact as their starting-point. Back of that assertion no man's intellect can go. The absolute Being, *God*, no created being ever can know. A *beginning*, as related to the unknown absolute Being, no man can conceivably imagine. There is nothing possible to us but to begin our thinking with this as our accepted first fact, our foundation truth—*God is.* God—begin there; one Being; one uncreated, independent Being, sole Source and absolute Controller of all things and beings that exist.

Ver. 1. *God First.*—The first verse of Holy Scripture asserts something that God has *done.* "God *created* the heavens and the earth." But there is something that goes before the Divine action. God Himself must exist—the uncaused, the eternal Being. "In the beginning God." This is the place for Him, the only place, the place in which all reverent souls will ever keep Him. The first and foundation-stone of the great temple of revealed truth is a declaration which grasps all space, all being, all time, and bids us see, before them, above them, and altogether independent of them, one lonely, infinite Being, having life in Himself. When there was no heaven and no earth, in the silent, dark eternities, in the *beginning*, there was God. The first utterance of the Divine Word is altogether beyond the grasp of human reason; the first appeal of Divine revelation is made to faith: and as the revelation proceeds it never makes a greater demand on faith than in its opening sentence. It is well for us to observe this striking fact. No attempt is made in Holy Scripture to *prove* the being of God. There is the assertion that *He is*, but no more. The existence of God must be accepted as the beginning of human thinking. A revelation cannot be addressed to people who do not beforehand believe in God. St. Paul, when preaching at Athens, made no attempt to prove the being of God. He assumes His existence: "God that made the world and all things therein." We are told everywhere a great deal about God's operations of power and grace; but there is no consideration or discussion anywhere of human doubts about His existence. What may be the reason for this very remarkable fact? One certainly is, that God has set the proofs of His existence so abundantly on His other handiwork that He did not need to rewrite them in His book. He has even put them in the very constitution of our mental nature. We can never see anything without at once thinking there must have been a *cause* for it; and we follow the chain of causes until we find some living agent. Our minds refuse to stop at anything short of that. We see a book; we cannot help thinking of the writer and the printer. We see a machine; the orderly working of it, or its productions, will not satisfy us. We know there was an inventor and maker. And this peculiarity of our minds leads us back to a living Being, source of all created things. Precisely meeting that peculiarity, in perfect harmony with it, we are surrounded with objects which we did not make, which no man made, trees, flowers, streams, mountains, clouds, creatures; trace back their origin through what developments we may, our mind will push the series on and on until we find some living Being, and then only will it rest. We may leap at once back from the thing to the living Creator; or we may go, slowly and laboriously, under scientific guides,

through the long and various processes of development and growth; but at last, when we have reached the beginning, *there is God.* There is also settled into our souls the conviction of our dependence; no persuasions can remove from us the feeling that we are not self-centred. Our very leaning on each other we feel is but the shadow of the sublimer reality—we all lean on God. Our bodies are dependent on nurture, food, atmosphere. The length of our lives, the measure of our health, the place of our lot, the forms of our diseases, are all things out of our own control. The universal sense of dependence has found universal expression in human *worship.* In every age and in every land men have felt that they leaned upon a superior and invisible Power, and with rites and offerings they have ever sought to propitiate Him. The first chapter of Genesis is the assertion of God's eternal existence, and an account of His revelation of Himself in creation. We need not regard the chapter as literally descriptive; indeed, any approach to a scientific description would have been quite unsuited to the Hebrews of Moses' day. What may be found in the chapter is in perfect harmony with the opening sentence, which declares the absolute unity of God. The chapter asserts the exclusive relation of this one God to everything man can see, or hear, or feel, or know.

I. **The relation of God, as Cause and Creator, to the whole circle of existences.**—Could any language more perfectly cover the entire fields of human observation, all time, and all things? We may conceive of no created thing, no existing thing, to which Moses has not here attached the assurance, God made it; God ordained it; God arranged it. The chapter includes all the components of the earth's crust; all the treasures of the mighty deep; all the elements of the atmosphere; all the hosts of heaven, from the ruling sun to the faintest distant star; all the multiplied forms of vegetable life; all the higher forms of animal life; and all the yet higher forms of human life. And in affirming that all existence came from the hand of God, Moses includes all those natural forces and laws which act in creation. Every created thing has a power to act on every other created thing. The sun is holding the earth in its place; but the earth is as truly helping to hold the sun in his. The atmosphere is influenced by and influences the land and the water. Every living being is at once the subject and the source of some material influence. All these powers, laws, forces—whatever name man may give to them—are gathered up by Moses, and he boldly affirms that all these also are from God.

II. **The relation of God, as Cause and Arranger, to all the changes of creation.**—Changes are going on in nature continually,—changes sometimes, indeed, very silent and very gradual; but sometimes such as men call wild, sudden, wayward. Then, it may be asked, are these changes the introduction of some new power, the working of some new and rival divinity? Is it that some evil spirit has entered into God's creation, and is conflicting with Him, overturning His plans, producing riot and disorder? That, indeed, men have always been too ready to suspect. Again and again men have taken up the idea of two supreme powers, one good, and the other evil; and the changes of creation and life are represented as being their conflict. Moses shows us *one* living God at the beginning of all changes, designing all change, and presiding over all change,—dealing with chaos, *tohu and bohu,* emptiness and confusion; calling forth light, and settling order; separating land from water, and lifting waters from waters. Changes through long periods fitted the earth for man's abode. But all change God ordered, and over all its processes He presides. No second power can find room; no second deity is wanted. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

III. **The relation of God, as Cause**

and Controller, to the entire range of development in creation.—The whole field of animal and vegetable life is presented to our view. The order in which Moses arranged the creatures has not been improved in these latter days. First, the low forms of fish-life (water-life), through the egg-bearing classes upwards to the mammals, that bring forth from their own bodies, and suckle their young. All, in their growth and development, are God's, and the objects of His care. In everything living there is the faculty of reproduction, the power to prolong the existence of its kind. Vegetation casts its seeds and bears its fruits. Animals, from insects to men, are able to preserve their existence generation after generation. We ask: Is this some strange power developed by the creatures themselves? Have they within themselves any creative energies? Are they, in any sense, Divine? No, says this chapter. All this is still only a part of the one plan and the one arrangement. It is the Divine idea of development. God gave, to plant and creature, seed after its kind.

We have found then the place for God in the world. He is first, before all things; He is "in the beginning." Then we have found the place for God in a man's life. He must be *first*, always and everywhere *first*,—first in all a man's doings; first in all a man's thoughts; first in all a man's aims; first in all a man's interests; first in all a man's relationships; first in all a man's worship; and first in all a man's hopes. And this we constantly affirm: the adequate moral culture of a man is not possible unless he will give to God His due place; and that is *first* everywhere, and in everything.—*Partly from "Age of Great Patriarchs."*

The One God of Judaism and Christianity.—The epistle must be read in the light of the main purpose of its author—"to secure his Hebrew readers against the peril of an apostasy to which they were tempted by the delay of Christ's personal return, by the persecutions to which they were subjected, and by the splendid memories and exalted claims of the religion in which they had been trained." Three suggestions have been made as accounting for the absence of the writer's name. 1. The matter dealt with was so weighty that the writer desired to merge his own personality. 2. A shorter private letter accompanied this. 3. The name is concealed because of the relations between the writer and those to whom he was writing.

The primary religious truth entrusted to the keeping of the Hebrew race is that of the unity of God. Of this truth, ever since the Babylonian Captivity, the Jew has been profoundly jealous. Whatever is taught to the Jew must be in recognised consistency with this primary truth. In the heat of controversy the apostle Paul spoke slightingly of the Mosaic system, as "weak and beggarly elements." This writer takes care to prevent misunderstanding by his opening sentences. One and the same God is the Author of both Judaism and Christianity. And this involves the necessary relation—we may even say the interdependence—of the two systems. Gnosticism attributed the Old Testament to an inferior and even malignant deity, who was called the "demiurge."

Divine Revelations. — Revelations come from God to men through Divinely appointed agents and agencies. They are chosen in order to secure adaptation. They are arranged in a progressive order, which we can more or less perfectly recognise. "It has never been God's method to reveal all His relations to mankind at once. He revealed Himself 'in many portions.' He lifted the veil fold by fold. First came the Adamic dispensation; then the Noachic; then the Abrahamic; then the Mosaic; then the prophetic; then the Ezraic; then the Christian." "The first great truth which God prominently revealed was His Unity; then came the earliest germ of the

Messianic hope; then came the Moral Law; then the development of Messianism and the belief in Immortality"; then the mission of the Son (*Farrar*). Diversity, both in substance and in form, marks all first stages of Divine revelation; but the advancing tendency is towards unity. When preparatory revelations do their appointed work, they make a final and universal revelation possible. The highest revelation only removes the lower and earlier by bringing fully out their best. There is a sense in which Judaism is abrogated: there is a fuller sense in which it lives again in Christianity. There is a direct connection and relation between all revelations that are *Divine*. There never has been and there never can be such a thing as an isolated Divine revelation. Everything God does and everything God says fits harmoniously into a *whole* of gracious Divine purpose. This is true of God's revelations in all lands and in all times.

The Essential Idea of a Prophet.—A prophet is one who becomes a voice for communicating some will of God to the minds of men. But God's voice comes to men through, by means of, and not over, or as over-mastering, the individuality of the prophet. This is true of the teaching prophets of modern times. And herein the Jehovah prophet and the evangelical prophet are to be distinguished from the pagan receiver and transmitter of oracles. God's messages to men are sent to men in the forms and with the mental imprint which those who convey them can put upon them. The messages of God are often parabolic, but they are seldom, if ever, enigmatical as oracles usually are.

Divine Selection for Service.—Men in every age are honoured by being Divinely selected for service. There are still such selected men for the ministry of modern days; but their work may be to expound a revelation rather than to carry and find voice for one. It must be borne in mind that the men who expound a revelation may be as truly in the endowment of the Holy Ghost, and their work may be as spiritually authoritative, as that of those who receive a revelation. The only authority in a prophet or teacher which we can recognise is that which comes through absolute committal to the Divine lead.

The Characteristics of Early Revelations. — πολυμερῶς, πολυτρόπως. The first word means *in numerous parts or parcels*—which, however, were no doubt given *at sundry times*, so that the rendering in the A.V., though imperfect, is legitimate. The idea is that God did not at once open up the fulness of His mind and unfold to view the treasures of His grace. His plan proceeded on the principle of "here a little" and "there a little." His revelation was given "piecemeal." It came "bit by bit," as the fathers might be able to receive it. The revelation was not only *in numerous parts* or *portions*, it was given *in divers manners* (πολυτρόπως). Our translators received this rather cumbrous translation from the Geneva Version. Wycliffe's rendering was more literal, *in many manners*. Tyndale's was simpler, *many wayes*. The reference, as the Duke of Manchester correctly remarks, is not to the various modes in which God communicated His mind *to* the prophets, such as visions, voices, dreams, etc.; it is to the various forms which the subject-matter of the communications was made to assume, as it passed on *through* the prophets to the people at large. There were commandments. There were promises. There was history. There were exhortations, expostulations, invitations, warnings, pleadings, threatenings. There were predictions and types, parables and proverbs, psalms and songs. God spoke, as Cardinal Cajetan observes, "to the intellect, to the imagination, to the senses" (*intelligibiliter, imaginabiliter, sensibiliter*). He addressed at one time the principle of hope, at another the principle of grati-

tude, at another still the principle of competition and rivalry (compare Rom. x. 19), then perhaps the principle of fear, or the nobler principle of conscience, and of the consciousness of a certain Divine imperative speaking in authoritative tones within the conscience. Thus "in manifold fashion" did God reveal His mind to *the fathers.* —*J. Morison, D.D.*

Monotheism and Purity.—The idea of monotheism and the principle of purity might seem hardly enough to be the chief results of so systematic a discipline as that of the Hebrews. But in reality they are the cardinal points in education. The idea of monotheism out-tops all other ideas in dignity and worth. The spirituality of God involves in it the supremacy of conscience, the immortality of the soul, the final judgment of the human race. For we know the other world, and can only know it, by analogy drawn from our own experience. With what then shall we compare God? With the spiritual or the fleshly part of our nature? On the answer depends the whole bent of our religion and of our morality. For that in ourselves which we choose as the nearest analogy of God will of course be looked on as the ruling and lasting part of our being. If He be one and spiritual, then the spiritual power within us, which proclaims its own unity, and independence of matter, by the universality of its decrees, must be the rightful monarch of our lives; but if there be gods many and lords many, with bodily appetites and passions, then the voice of conscience is but one of those widespread delusions which, some for a longer, some for a shorter period, have before now misled our race. Again, the same importance which we assign to monotheism as a creed we must assign to chastity as a virtue. Among all the vices which it is necessary to subdue in order to build up the human character, there is none to be compared in strength or in virulence with that of impurity. It can outlive and kill a thousand virtues; it can corrupt the most generous heart; it can madden the soberest intellect; it can debase the loftiest imagination. But besides being so poisonous in character, it is above all others most difficult to conquer. And the (Hebrew) people, whose extraordinary toughness of nature has enabled it to outlive Egyptian Pharaohs, and Assyrian Kings, and Roman Cæsars, and Mussulman Caliphs, was well matched (by its strong grip of the unity of God) against a power of evil which has battled with the human spirit ever since the Creation, and has inflicted, and may yet inflict, more deadly blows than any other power we know of.—*Bishop Temple.*

God in Relations.—"Having of old time spoken." That is, God put Himself into communication with the moral beings whom He had made in His own image; set Himself in relations with them, and can be known by them only through those relations. Man has always gone astray when He has tried to know what God is essentially, absolutely. Philosophising about God has never proved satisfactory, because man's faculties, and man's language, the instrument of his faculties, are altogether below the range. He must be God who would know God's absolute being and nature. This is indeed involved in the very conception man forms of God. His transcendency is an essential element in the conception. In what sense then can God be known by the moral beings He has made? In the same way as they know everything else. Man knows nothing in essence, but anything and everything in relations. Man is as truly baffled by the essence of a stone as by the essence of God. He can know the stone through its relations, and he can know God through His relations, and in no other way. All the relations to His created world and created beings in which God has been pleased to put Himself are *revelations of Himself.* And the limit of man's knowledge of God is God's revelations of Himself. They come through the

speech of men, but they come in many other ways. It was the genius of the Jews to discover God in multiplied and various relations, and their dignity and their mission to the race lay in their fuller and worthier apprehension of God. This was taught in a very significant way to the founder of the Jewish dispensation. When God appeared to Moses in the symbol of the burning bush, Moses, with the natural curiosity of man, asked for the name of Him who spoke to him. It was the way in which he asked for an apprehension of the essence of God. The reply is a virtual refusal. It meant this: "I am *Being*—that is all you can know concerning Me. What I am *to you* you can know. You know through what I have been to men before you. I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob—a God ever standing in relations, which are the only possible and the altogether satisfying *revelations*."

Revelations in the World's Education.—We may rightly speak of a childhood, a youth, and a manhood of the world. The men of the earliest ages were in many respects still children as compared with ourselves, with all the blessings and all the disadvantages that belong to childhood. We reap the fruits of their toil, and bear in our characters the impress of their cultivation. Our characters have grown out of their history, as the character of the man grows out of the history of the child. There are matters in which the simplicity of childhood is wiser than the maturity of manhood, and in these they were wiser than we. There are matters in which the child is nothing and the man everything, and in these we are the gainers. And the process by which we have either lost or gained corresponds, stage by stage, with the process by which the infant is trained for youth, and the youth for manhood. This training has three stages. In childhood we are subject to positive rules which we cannot understand, but are bound implicitly to obey. In youth we are subject to the influence of example, and soon break loose from all rules unless illustrated and enforced by the higher teaching which example imparts. In manhood we are comparatively free from external restraints, and if we are to learn must be our own instructors. First come rules, then examples, then principles. First comes the Law, then the Son of Man, then the Gift of the Spirit. The world was once a child under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father. Then, when the fit season had arrived, the Example to which all ages should turn was sent to teach men what they ought to be. Then the human race was left to itself to be guided by the teaching of the Spirit within.—*Bishop Temple.*

Rabbinical Degrees of Revelation.—The Jewish doctors observed four degrees of Divine revelation. The first they called Prophecy, which included vision and any apparition whereby the will of God was made known. They had a second way of Divine revelation, which they called the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whereby the party was enabled without vision or apparition to prophesy, either as prophesying is taken for the foretelling of things to come, or for the resolving of things in doubt. The Rabbins give us the difference between these two, prophecy and inspiration: in prophecy (though it was from the Holy Ghost) a man was cast into a trance or brought into an ecstasy, his senses being taken away; but speaking by inspiration of the Holy Ghost was without any such change in or impressions upon the body. So David and other penmen of the Scriptures wrote by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, yet without visible apparitions to them or visible change upon them. And in a third way God revealed Himself by Urim and Thummim, which was an answer given by the ephod, or by the stones that were on the breastplate of the high priest. These three ways of Divine

revelation, as they observe, ceased in the Second Temple, the Jewish writers having this tradition, that after the later prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Ghost departed from "Israel," meaning the Holy Ghost not in the ordinary work of sanctification, but in those extraordinary ways of prophecy, inspiration, and of the Urim and Thummim. There was yet a fourth way of Divine revelation, which they call Bathcol, the daughter of a voice, or echo, declaring the will of God immediately from heaven. Such some conceive to be the voice heard from heaven (Matt. iii. 17), proclaiming the testimony of God concerning Christ. It is manifest that these distinctions are too subtle. It is better to think that Divine revelations differ in *kind*, but not strictly in *degree*, because they are always relative to the occasion, and precise, and adapted, and therefore perfect to the occasion. Imperfection and limitation can properly be applied only to our power of recipiency. A similar line of thought may be taken in relation to inspiration.

God.—The abrupt beginning of this epistle claims attention. It reminds us of the abrupt beginning of the book of Genesis. Scripture never *proves* the being of God. It assumes it. It deals with men only who assume it. In this only have men and the revelation a common platform. This it assumes: 1. God is. 2. God only is. 3. Man can know Him—in part. 4. Man cannot know Him—perfectly. 5. Man's power of apprehending God is adequate to man's *moral*, but not to man's *mental* necessities.

Christ the Son.—God had a Word to spell—His own Name. By degrees He did it. At last it came entire. The Word was made flesh. In this epistle the writer labours to show that Christianity was the fulfilment of the *idea* latent in Judaism—that from the earliest times and in every institution it was implied. This point is considered: The manifestation of God through a Son was implied, not realised, in the earlier dispensation.

I. **It was implied, not fulfilled, in the kingly office.**—See Ps. ii., xlv., cx. David was emphatically the type of the Jewish regal idea. The true King of men is a Son of God; One who is to His fellow-men God and Lord, as the Jewish bride was to feel her royal husband to be to her; One who is a priest; One who may be poor and exiled, yet not less royal. Whence is this idea fulfilled by Judaism? Is it fulfilled in David? In Jesus of Nazareth alone all these fragments, these sundry portions of the revealed Idea of Royalty, met.

II. **It was implied in the race of prophets.**—They were not merely predictors of the future; the office of the prophet was with the present. He read eternal principles beneath the present and the transitory, and in doing this of course he prophesied the future; for a principle true to-day is true for ever. It was the very condition of his inspiration that he should be one with the people. So far from making him superhuman, it made him *more* man. He felt with more exquisite sensitiveness all that belongs to man, else he could not have been a prophet. He was more man just because more Divine—more a son of man because more a Son of God. If, then, One had come claiming to be the Prophet of the Race, and was a Sufferer; claiming to be the Son of God, and yet peculiarly man; the Son of man; the Son of man just because Son of God; more Divine because more human,—then this was only what the whole race of Jewish prophets should have prepared them for. God had now spoken by a Son in whom the idea of the true prophet was realised in its entireness.

III. **The priesthood continued this idea latent.**—The writer of this epistle saw three elements in the priestly idea: 1. That he should be ordained for men in things pertaining to God. 2. That he should offer gifts and sacrifices. 3. That he should be

called by God, not be a mere self-assertor. . . . The spiritual Jew discerned that entire surrender to the Divine Will is the only perfect sacrifice, the ground of all sacrifices, and that which alone imparts to it a significance. He who can offer it in its entireness, He alone is the world's atonement; He in whose heart the law was, and who alone of all mankind was content to do it, His sacrifice alone can be the sacrifice all-sufficient in the Father's sight as the proper sacrifice of humanity. He who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, He alone can give the Spirit which enables us to present *our* bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. He is the only High Priest of the universe. —*F. W. Robertson.*

Vers. 1, 2. *The Perfection of the Evangelical Revelation.*—"Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *His* Son." The term "evangelical" is not used in its Scriptural sense, when it is confined to a particular setting of doctrines of sin and atonement. God's evangel, gospel, good news, is that He has sent to us *His Son*, and that His Son has something to *show* to us, something to *say* to us, and something to *do* for us. If Divine revelations to men have come in a progressive order, the climax has been reached in the revelation *of* the Son and *through* the Son. This may be worked out along several lines. One only we suggest, as having some freshness and point. Take the progressive views of *God* given in the advancing revelations. Notice the terms and human relationships used for each revelation, and show how the Sonship, which reveals Fatherhood, is the crown and perfection of revelations.

The Son a Spoken Word—"Hath spoken unto us in *His* Son." A word is that which conveys the thought of one mind to the mind of another. Anything—not merely speech—that puts what is in your mind into my mind is a word. The word is more than speech; it may be better than speech—a look, a movement, a sign, a vision, a person. Illustrate: Eastern kings consider it a mark of dignity not to speak, but to make their will known by dumb signs. It is said that girls in Lancashire mills, being unable to talk to one another because of the deafening machinery, get into the way of telling each other long tales by the motions of the mouth, face, and arms, without speaking a word. Jesus the Son is the Word which carries to us the most wonderful and most gracious thoughts that God has ever cherished concerning us. He is the love of God embodied. He is come to say, "God loves, and therefore saves." It is not so much that He has a word to say to us; it is that He *is* the Word. The Man is the Word; the Personality is the Word; the Son is the Word.

I. A man can be a word.—1. A prophet can be a word. Illustrate: Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah. They *were* —it is not only that they *brought*— messages from God. 2. An angel can be a word. The angel who spoke to the shepherds embodied the truth that God is concerned for sinful man. 3. A fellow-man can be a word. Think what impressions for God good men have made upon us. Then the "Man Christ Jesus" can be a word. The humanity of Christ is jealously affirmed. But we must keep before us that it is a *whole* humanity. We must accept it with its naturalness—true manhood; its uniqueness—typical manhood; its mystery—typical manhood is Divine. St. John uses three terms to vitalise for us the human personality of Christ: 1. "Made flesh"—a real bodily being. This is the impression produced on us by His coming as an infant. A certain unreality is in Adam's humanity, if we think of him as made a full-grown man. 2. "Dwelt among us." He made His own personal impression. He was actually put into the common every-day of life. 3. "Full of grace and truth." The impression that He

made was the impression of a character. The closer men come to Christ, the more do they feel that the most wonderful thing about Him was not what He *said* or what He *did*, but what He *was*. The "Man Christ Jesus" was God's thought of man put into a human life, so that the thought might be influential in our lives. We know, in Christ, what God wants us to be.

II. **A son can be a word.**—When we apprehend the glory of Christ, we find that it is His Sonship. "The glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father." The "Man Christ Jesus" is a Son. His character is Sonship. It tells us of the Father, and of the relation in which we should stand to the Father. The glory of Christ's life on earth being sonship, we can see that this—sonship—must be the glory of our lives in Christ. This is precisely the "spoken word" that Jesus is—Saviour by recovering sons to sonship. But what does that involve for Christ? How does He accomplish that saving work? 1. By the drama of a human life, He must show sonship under human conditions. 2. The winning of the acceptance of His own Sonship. 3. The right to give His standing, as an accepted Son, to us. 4. Gaining the power to help us *to be* what He represents us *as being*. The glory of Christ is this—He is perfect Son, and is helping us into His perfect Sonship.

Sonship as a Final Revelation.—"In Christ all the fragments of previous revelation were completed, all the methods of it concentrated, and all its apparent perplexities and contradictions solved and rendered intelligible. Sonship naturally suggests heirship, and in Christ was fulfilled the immense promise to Abraham that his seed should be heir of the world."—*Farrar.*

"By His Son." Revelation by "Son."—The pronoun, as is indicated by the italic type in our Bibles, has been supplied. There is not even the article in the original. And hence Wakefield translates "by a Son," and Rotherham "in a Son." Unhappily, however, for there is no indefinite article in the original. And yet we could not possibly say, in our English idiom, *in Son.* The area that is covered by the Greek article is by no means coextensive with the area which is covered by the English. And hence we should here either render the phrase *in "the" Son*, or use the pronoun *in "His" Son.* It is better to adopt the article. The idea is, *in Him who is emphatically Son.* The word was of itself so demonstratively conspicuous, that, in the Greek idiom, it could dispense with the demonstrative article. Others, it is true, besides Jesus, are *sons of God.* The poverty of human language could not, in the currency of common usage, afford to surrender the term to be the exclusive designation of the only begotten One. But, nevertheless, He is Son pre-eminently. He is partaker, not only in a moral point of view, but also physically or metaphysically, of the Father's nature. He is "true God." And thus, in relation to the universe, He is the one Prince Royal. "By" or "in" this Son God spoke "in the end of these days." There is an intentional antithesis to the expression "*in*" *the prophets.* God's speech was indeed "in" the prophets; but yet more emphatically "in" the Son. God's words were in both. But as neither Son nor prophets were mere mechanical sounding-boards or echoes, but receivers, reproducers, and interpreters, the outcome of words was very different in the two cases. . . . The Son was Himself, in His very essence, *the Word of God.* All that He was, as well as all that He said and did, was representation and revelation of the mind and heart of the Father.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Last Days.—Last days, or the end of the days, may be only relatively last. The absolute last of Divine revelations

to men we cannot possibly know. That revelation under which we live is the last *to us*: and for our response to it we must be judged. Last days are the fruitage for which earlier days have prepared. The revelation in Christ is the fruitage of all the revelations. In the Divine order all "last days" are beginnings. The last days of winter are the beginning of spring; the last days of childhood are the beginning of manhood; the last days of patriarchism are the beginning of Mosaism; the last days of Christianity will be the beginning of a now unknown something. God's last days are never abrupt; they are a quiet gliding into the new order.

The Contrast between Servant and Son.—This is brought out by our Divine Lord in His parable of the wicked husbandmen, who, though they had killed the servants, were fully expected to reverence the son, and yield themselves to the persuasion and authority that he brought. Son and servant both fulfil a mission. They differ (1) in personal rank; (2) in relation to the Divine mind and will; (3) and in their direct interest in their work. The Son reveals God in *being a Son*, as well as by what He said and did and suffered as the Son. Christ Himself is the great revelation. The eternal generation of the Son is an idea that we owe to the Greek Church. The writer of this epistle does not deal with it, but regards Jesus as constituted (or appointed) Son for the purposes of His special redemptive mission. "Generation" is an earthly term which cannot fittingly be applied to spiritual or Divine things. As Son He takes the authoritative place that belongs exclusively to God. God is owner of all things; the Son is owner of all things, because He is heir of all things. The heir to any estate differs essentially from a servant on the estate. The Son may be thought of as God operating in the material, the sense, sphere. Distinguish between God sending a servant to execute some commission for Him, and His being present Himself, in the person of His Son, to execute His own commission. The Son is, as it were, the visibility and materiality of God. Or, as the hymn expresses the sublime truth,—

> "God manifestly seen and heard,
> And Heaven's beloved One."

Ver. 3. *The Effulgence of the Glory.*—Our Lord is "the brightness of the glory of the Divine Father." A distinction of personalities is assumed. And it is further assumed that, in the Divine arrangements in reference to creation in general, and human redemption in particular, the Father represents the Godhead, and may therefore be emphatically designated "God." By the *glory* of the Father, Schöttgen would understand the Shekinah, or cloud-enveloped pillar of light—a notion too artificial and narrow. We naturally expect a broader and grander idea, such as "the sum of the Divine perfections," and thus "the essential glory of Deity." That is a "glory" which has "glowed" from everlasting, and which will glow on for ever, indiminishable. The radical idea would doubtless be derived from a sensuous source, light. The glory of the Lord "shines" wherever it is revealed (Luke ii. 9; Rev. xviii. 1, xxi. 23). At every rift or outlet there is the radiation of that light within, which is inaccessible. "God is Light." Our Saviour is the *brightness* of the Divine light or glory. The light shines forth *in Him*, and then *through Him* upon creation. "The words," says Dr. Owen, "denote the Divine nature of Christ; *yet not absolutely*, but as God the Father in Him doth manifest Himself to us." The word "brightness" is given in all the old English versions, from Wycliffe downwards. It is the reproduction of the Latin *splendor*, the Vulgate Version. It is thus a venerable, yet rather a feeble rendering. The idea of eradiation is inherent in the original term (ἀπαύγασμα). Our Lord is the *manifestive eradiation* of the Divine glory. Wells' translation of the word is "shining forth." Jesus is the "effulgence" of the Father's glory; "*ef*-fulgence" rather than *re*-ful-

gence," though Erasmus and Calvin give the latter. Our Saviour, indeed, is the image and reflection of the Father, but that is not the representation before us. Effluence is denoted. Rilliet's rendering is *rayonnement*. Effulgence is Wynne's word, and is given by Macknight, Rodolphus, Dickinson, Penn, and many other translators. Milton happily reproduced the idea in the line "Bright effluence of bright essence, increate" (*Paradise Lost*, iii. 6).—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Christ as Purger of Sins.—"When He had made purification of sins." This allusion to our Redeemer's earthly mission assumes the understanding of its object and its method by the disciples. But they were mostly, if not exclusively, Jews, and would think of the Redeemer's work with the aid of the figures of the old Mosaic ritual. "Clean" and "unclean" were the great words of the Mosaic system. Only the "clean" were allowed to take part in the Jewish worship. All sorts of things made men ceremonially "unclean." The unclean man was out of relations. He must be "reconciled" and "restored." He could only be by becoming clean; then the priest could make purification for him, and then he could be restored as clean. The sacrificial system of Judaism has received so much attention, that the importance of the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" in relation to our Lord's "purification" and "propitiation" has been neglected. Relative to the eternal temple, the sanctuary of God, the Divine favour, man's sins have involved his shutting out; he is "unclean," he cannot pass the gates. With this condition of things Christ dealt. He took on Himself, as a work that He alone would do, He "by Himself," the work of dealing with man's uncleanness, and restoring man's relations to the eternal temple, and to the favour of God. There was nothing to be done in the way of propitiating God, for He must be thought of as distressed by man's uncleanness, and longing to have him restored. There was much to be done in order to meet the necessary conditions of entrance into the heavenlies; but that work had to be done *in man*, and therefore *for man*. Christ had to get man *clean in will and purpose* (not actually clean, that was not necessary; that was involved, but that might come after); when Christ had man clean in will and purpose, He could represent him as clean before God. He could go into the eternal temple in His own personal right, as a clean man, and get the right to go in for every man whom He had made clean in will and purpose. So Jesus "made purification of sins," and restored unclean man to the spiritual and eternal temple.

Sitting at the Right Hand of God.—The end and purpose for which Christ ascended was that He might sit on the right hand of God (Luke xx. 42, xxii. 69). Some might suppose that all the prophecies and figures of the Old Testament are fulfilled by the establishment of our Lord's kingdom upon earth, which we see on all sides; but certainly a great deal more than this is intended, when such particular mention is made in Scripture of a power on the right hand of God being given to our Lord on His ascending to heaven. Thus our Lord Himself, on the Ascension Day, said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." But since we believe Him to be God equal to the Father, and with power equal to the Father from everlasting, how can it be said that power is then given to Him as if for the first time? All this is said of Christ, not as the Son of *God*, but as the Son of man. It is our poor human nature that is so highly exalted in Jesus Christ and set on the right hand of God; it is that human nature which in Christ overcame the enemy, and returned with garments dyed in blood from Edom. To speak after the manner of men, how is every nation always studious that one of themselves should be in the court of a foreign

king, to represent their interests, to speak for them, and through whom they themselves might find access. And even we, says the writer, have through Him admission and approach to the throne of grace. As a ship is secure and steadfast when its anchor is firmly fixed in the land, so amid the waves and storms of this life may our confidence be, if we have our hearts with Christ in heaven (see Heb. vi. 19). St. Paul so often alludes to the doctrine of Christ's resurrection to urge the necessity of our being risen with Him upon earth; so does he also to that of His being in heaven, as a reason for our being in mind and thought there with Him. As He continued forty days on earth after His resurrection, so after they are risen with Him from the death of sin in baptism have Christians to continue for their pilgrimage on earth, it may be for forty years of trial in the wilderness before they ascend to heaven; but to live as those whose treasure is in heaven, and whose hearts are therefore ever dwelling and abiding there. When our blessed Saviour says that "all power is given Him in heaven and in earth," He means some great and new power with regard to us, some power to be exercised for our benefit, if we are His true children. And when it is said that He is sitting on the right hand of God, or when He is seen, as by St. Stephen at his death, standing at the right hand of God, this signifies, that whether He is spoken of as sitting, *i.e.* in a state of rest after His labours, or as standing, *i.e.* as ready to succour and aid those who call to Him, yet it is always, in both cases, at the right hand of power, *i.e.* with some wonderful power given unto Him in His Church for our sakes,—power greater than was exercised by Him here on earth before His death; greater than was ever vouchsafed to man before Christ's ascension into heaven. In two points of view, therefore, have we, Christians, great and extraordinary privileges towards a holy life since the ascension of Christ. First, that we have in Him a Mediator and Intercessor in heaven; and, secondly, that we have on earth the great Comforter, whom He has sent down from the Father.—*Isaac Williams, B.D.*

The Right Hand of God.—Sitting at the right hand was regarded both among the Greeks and Orientals as entailing the greatest dignity: it was the position of the highest honour, and even involved participation in the royal dignity and power. As an illustration from classical writings we may cite Pindar, who speaks of Minerva as at the right hand of Zeus, associated with him in his sovereignty, and receiving his commands for the other gods. And Callimachus says that Apollo is able to reward the chorus, if they sing to please him, because he sits at the right hand of Zeus. As an illustration from Eastern life, a passage may be quoted from Eichhorn. Ibn Cotaiba says: "The *ridafat* is the dignity of sitting next to the king. But the radaf (he who holds rank after the king) sits on his right hand; and if the king drinks, the radaf drinks next before all others; and if the king goes out upon an expedition, the radaf sits on his seat and acts in his room till he returns; and if the king's army goes forth to war, the radaf receives a fourth part of the booty."

God is apprehended with the Christ-help.—The glory of God—His essential being—is beyond the vision of the human eye, or the grasp of the human mind. It is said that if a man could stand on the outer edge of the earth's atmosphere he would find unrelieved darkness, in which no sun or stars could be seen. The sun's rays in the earth-atmosphere reveal to us the sun; but what we see are the rays, not the sun. The Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle and Temple brought the sense of God's presence home to Jewish hearts; but what was seen was a light-filled cloud, not God. Moses, with the help of the "back parts," realised the glory of Jehovah; but what

he saw was the after-glow, not Jehovah. So Christ is the ray that reveals God, the Shekinah that declares His presence, the after-glow that suggests His glory. Philo compares man to a coin which has been stamped by the Logos with the being and type of God.

The Revelation of Moral and Spiritual Attributes.—What of God, as the supreme Moral Being, can be apprehended by man Christ came to help him to apprehend. The Christ-revelation is not of God's natural attributes, but of His moral and spiritual. Therefore the revelation is through a person, and a life of relationships. It is essentially the revelation of the Divine *Fatherliness*, and not in any sense of any materiality or personality of the Divine Father. We may argue these from the revelation, but the revelation itself concerns character and characteristics.

Providence as Persistent Divine Activity.—The Son bears the same relation to Providence that He does to creation. Philo calls the Logos "the Chain-band of things: Pilot and Steersman of everything. Creator and Upholder by the word of His power." God operating in the sphere of material things, to create them, or arrange them, or maintain them, or rearrange them, is always *God the Son.* God can only be thought of as always active, so He is always God the Son; and this is the "eternal Sonship."

A Son's Purging Work.—Purging, as applied to sin, is *cleansing work*, not bearing of penalty.

Ver. 4. *Essential Difference between Son and Angel.*—The differences between Christ and angels, in a general way, concern their respective ranks and relationships. But the difference that is most impressive is the difference in the authority with which their work is done, and their mission carried through. Angels do God's will, and with more or less of conflict with their own wills make God's will their own. Christ does God's will too, but He does it without any conflict, because God's will *is His own.* "I do always the things that please Him." There is no intention to undervalue angelic ministrations; but it is of supreme importance to set out most clearly that Christ is altogether beyond their range—a different, a higher being. Christ is spoken of as "begotten" (ver. 5); as "Son" (ver. 5); angels are said to worship Him (ver. 6); He is spoken of as "God" (ver. 8); as "Creator and Controller" (vers. 10, 12); as "Throne-sharer" (ver. 13).

Angel-service as doing God's Will.—Service must be rendered if it costs us the breaking of our will. Service only becomes liberty and joy when we can rise to the Christ-spirit, and God's will becomes ours because it is so freely, so fully, and so lovingly accepted. An angel serves with a strain. He makes more or less conscious effort to get and to keep his will in harmony with God's will. The Son serves without a strain. He never needs to make any effort to get or keep His will in harmony with His Father's will, for He embodies His Father's will. We only enter into the full joy of service when we rise above the constraint of the *servant* into the liberty of the *son.* Hence the exceeding value of the work the Divine Son does for us, in making His Sonship ours, and putting us into the inheritance with Him. "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Sonship was for Christ, and is for us, the "more excellent name."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—14.

The Service of a Servant and the Service of a Son.—The essential dignity of Christ is seen in a contrast between a servant and a son. Angels are taken for the first contrast because they are the highest form of servants that man can conceive, because their work was in the world before that of Moses, and because they were directly associated as ministers with the earlier dispensation. Angels have a very prominent place in the Old Testament Scriptures. They are the servants of the Divine house, agents who do the Divine Master's bidding, "ministering spirits." The contrast of angels, the *servants*, with Christ as the *Son* is a fair one, because Christ is Himself one of God's angels, a ministering spirit. He said of Himself: "I am among you as He that serveth"; "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." But the contrast between the Angel-Christ and other angels is very striking and impressive. "To which of the angels has God said at any time, Thou art My son; this day have I begotten thee?" Of the angels this kind of thing is said, "Who maketh winds His angels, and flames of fire His ministers." Of the Son this unique kind of thing is said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom."

I. **Ministry to others is common to a servant and to a son.**—The Scripture is full, from Genesis to Revelation, of the ministering of the angels to the sons of God. They kept the way of the Tree of Life, lest our erring first parents should stamp immortality upon their sin. They visited the patriarch Abraham, to give him knowledge of the Divine thought concerning Sodom. They went up and down that ladder of help between earth and heaven which Jacob saw in his night-visions. One mysterious angel wrestled with the anxious patriarch on Jabbok-side, through the long night unto the breaking of the day. He who came down to Sinai to give His fiery law was attended by thousands of angels. Grieved at the sin of His people, Jehovah almost withdrew His promise to go with them, and offered Moses to provide an angel-guide instead. An angel-form cheered Joshua with assurances as he entered on the invasion of Canaan. To Manoah the angel brought the tidings of the coming hero who should be born in his house. Angel-help was so fully realised by the psalmist that he could assure his heart in this—"He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." An angel with a drawn sword stood over Jerusalem when David's presumption must be punished. An angel kept three Hebrew youths safe from harm in the very midst of the fire, and the prayerful man unharmed among the lions. Angels brought the promise of a forerunner, and of a Messiah; and with their joy-songs angels heralded Messiah's birth. Angels waited on Jesus in His time of temptation. Angels watched the place where they laid Him dead. Angels spoke the promise of His coming again. Angels led apostles out of their prison-house. Angels brought revelations in lonely Patmos. And angels are to be with Jesus when He cometh in His glory. Everywhere we may find illustrations of the many-sided truth, that God uses agents to carry out His purposes of wisdom and grace. Sometimes He uses men; sometimes the various forces of nature; sometimes He calls for the service on our behalf of these creatures of His who belong to other spheres than ours, and yet can come into our spheres, exert influence on us, and even become apprehensible to our senses. There seem to be in some of these angel-manifestations of the Old Testament foreshadowings and suggestions of the glorious incarnation of the Son of God. It is not unreasonable that we should reverently recognise the Angel-Jehovah in Abraham's visitor, and in Jacob's night-wrestler.

But the work of ministering is not the work of angels alone. It is the noble side of all relationships, human and Divine. It gives the distinction between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The spirit of the world is "getting"; the Spirit of God is "serving." Seeking the good of himself is man's temptation to sin. Seeking the good of others is the sure indication of man's recovery to virtue. Only as he becomes an angel, a "ministering spirit," does man enter into full kinship with God, with God in Christ. Angels are our *helpers*; but it is also true that angels are our teachers, our examples. We learn from them what is the noble life, what our life would become if, from us, the self-seeking of our sinfulness were wholly taken away. "Ministering"—that is the Divine idea, for the Divine Being Himself, and for all the creatures that are made in the Divine image. We can rise no higher than that, for that is the sublime height of God Himself. God works. That is true, but His work is a ministry of blessing for His creatures. He is always about our path and our lying down—the infinite Angel, ever doing us good. Call nature-forces by some grand name of law, which takes the living will and beating heart out of them, and you make our human life poor and low indeed. Let the winds be God's angels, and the storms God's angels, and the spring-breathings God's angels, and the gentle rain God's angels. Winter snow, and spring sunshine, and summer rain, and autumn heat are God Himself *ministering*—they are His own angel-service to His creatures. When God takes upon Him our human nature, shadows Himself in human form, then we see an angel, a ministering spirit—the Angel of the Covenant. The angel-mark is most plain on all the human life of Jesus. He "went about doing good." Service was the characteristic of His most blessed life. His lesson on ministering was given in the upper room, when He went round and washed the disciples' feet. We may call that the great angel-lesson. For the work of Christ's Church will go into these few words, "ministering unto the necessities of saints."

II. **The ministry of a servant is doing another's will.**—It is the characteristic of a servant that he does not share in his master's counsels; he "knoweth not what his lord doeth." He does not understand the plan into which his work fits. Enough for him to receive definite commands without questioning, and to fulfil them without hesitation. The Lord Jesus Christ, recognising this as the characteristic of servants, lifted His relations to His personal disciples into a higher plane. He said to them, "I have called you friends; for whatsoever I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). But confidential servants are still servants who take their commands from another. Even if they are permitted to consult with their master, the decision rests wholly with him, and his will is done, not theirs. Even angels cannot be thought of as doing their own will. There are vague allusions to some who "lost their first estate" because they resolved to follow their own wills. Servants are not inventive: they make no plans; they only carry out plans. Their essential attitude is figured in the seraphim of Isaiah's vision: "Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly"; or, twain he held poised ready in a moment to fly, when a command came from the throne (Isa. vi. 2).

III. **The ministry of a son is doing his own will.**—Not as distinct from, or opposed to, his father's will, but as being his father's will. Ideally, in relation to the exercise of authority, the son's will is the same as the father's; and our Lord continually asserted the absolute identity of His will with the Father's. The servant puts his own will aside in order to do the master's will. The Son does His own will in doing his Father's. This indicates an essential distinction between angels and Christ. Some help may be gained from an illustration of the sentiments entertained on a great landed estate. All the

officials and servants, even up to the steward, have simply to do the nobleman's will. But the son and heir is treated with the same respect as the father, and is recognised as having the same unique authority. Applying this distinction between servant and son to the mission of redemption, we see that angels and prophets executed certain parts of the mission that were entrusted to them, but were not in the secret of the connections of the parts, or of the Divine purpose; but Christ, the Divine Son, carried out a mission which was His own design, because His Father's—the expression of His own love, because of His Father's love; and it was wrought by His own authority, which was His Father's. Thus in so many ways the writer of this epistle presses on attention the superiority of the Christian dispensation, in that it was administered by One who occupied so unique a position, who belonged to so different a range of beings.

The highest conception of life, then, is ministering service. However exalted in rank and station a man may be, and whatever his degree of authority may be, his true dignity lies in being, as Christ was, an *angel*-helper, ever "waiting on his ministering."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 5. *Figurative Use of the Term "Begotten."*—God's appointment to an office, or, more exactly, His removing of all obstacles and putting a man actually into the office He has appointed for him, is called "begetting him." Thus David was Divinely begotten when he was set by God as king upon the holy hill of Zion. "I have this day established thee as My chosen king, and thus constituted thee My son." When this figurative use of the term is clearly apprehended, we are relieved from anxiously endeavouring to understand, what never can be understood, the mysterious eternal relations of the Divine Father and the Divine Son. Our Lord was "begotten" when the fulness of times had come, when preparations were completed, when obstacles were removed, and He could be put into His office, and could begin His work as Messianic Saviour. "Begotten" rather suggests "giving birth to" than "conceiving."

David's Son and Lord.—Wonder not to find one and the same to be the Prince and Priest, God and man, the rod and root, the root and the offspring of David his son, and yet his Lord; for these things belong to one Person, who is both God and man; some of them as He is God, and some of them as He is man, and some as God-man. —*Jerome.*

The Worship of the Angels.—Often the idea of worship in Scripture is not "offering religious homage to," but "solemnly recognising the dignity of." It is often what may be understood by "worthship," or recognising and acknowledging the worth or superiority of a person. That appears to be the idea of the word "worship" in this verse. It is not necessary to the writer's argument to show that angels offer the Divine Son religious homage; it is to the point to show that they recognise His unique person, His transcendent worth, His special rights, and His extraordinary commission. There may be ranks and orders of angels, as servants, but they never for one moment think of classing Christ even with any in their highest ranks. They *worship* Him as one altogether beyond the angel, the servant, range.

Fatherhood apprehended through Sonship.—"I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." As Son, "the express image of [the Father's] person." When Christ came into the world, He said plainly to His disciples, who were supposed to understand Him, "He that hath seen Me

hath seen the Father." We may then say that it is the work of every man to find the Father in Christ. No man has truly seen the Son who has not found the Father in Him. And if we may think of God as our Father, we shall surely have the truest and most trustful view of Him. If God is pleased to reveal Himself to any of His creatures, He must do so through the nature of those creatures. If God determined to show Himself to *man*, He must not come to him as a cherub or as an angel, but as a man. So we are told, "Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." But there are varieties of aspects under which man may be viewed, according to the relationships in which he stands; and besides coming as a man, God must show Himself in some particular form of man. Men are kings, or prophets, or judges, or husbands, or fathers, or sons, or brothers; and God must make choice of the one among the many forms of relationship—forms of manhood—which shall most perfectly represent Him. We need not assume that God has restricted Himself to just one aspect. He is indeed represented as Shepherd, Husband, Friend, Prophet, Priest, and King; but we can have only one feeling—that if God should be pleased in a special manner to choose the form and term of Father, He would come nearest to us, and give us the very tenderest and holiest suggestions concerning Himself. Many try to persuade themselves that they are bound to think of God chiefly as a *King*. Certain exigencies of Christian doctrine absolutely demand the conception of a *Moral Governor*. But surely it should not be difficult for us to recognise that the term *Father* involves all the righteousness, authority, and government included in kingship, and is altogether a higher and profounder conception. None of us can say that we feel our hearts at all stirred by the mention of a king. A king is a person to be feared, obeyed, and served, but not necessarily a person to be loved. But there never has been age or land in which the dearest thoughts, and tenderest memories, and most reverent feelings of men's hearts, have not gathered round the idea of father and of mother: for men everywhere parents have presented the ideals of all that was pure, and true, and reverent, and good. It must be that we shall come near to God, if He be indeed the "Everlasting Father." It is sometimes said that the term "Father" will not do for God, because it makes Him out to be all kindness and indulgence, and shrouds all His awful attributes with a veil of love, making Him indeed to be all love. But if it does, what could be more deeply true? Do we not read, "God is love"? When men realise what an uncompromising, searching, holy thing love is, they will never be afraid to say of Him, "God is love." But this representation of the Fatherhood of God is most imperfect and unworthy. We never for a moment think of passing by justice and authority in order to exalt love, when we call God "our Father." Would it be fair to say of any good earthly father, "He is all love, all indulgence; there is no justice, no reverence, no government in him"? The better father he is, the more authority he exercises, the more holy fear he demands. What is God to you when you think of Him as King? Do you not feel as if He were shifted right back, out of sight, out of reach—seated on a glorious throne, and you outside the gates, the great shut gates? Thoughts of majesty, glory, august power, and exact judgment, oppress you. You feel that, as a King, tremendous considerations, wide as the infinite creation, sway His decisions, amidst which you may easily become a forgotten trifle. But what is God to you in those moments when you can realise that He is a Father indeed? Is there any failing of reverence for Him? Is your sense of justice, righteousness, law, authority, weakened when you think of Him as Father? You may try to make God

great by describing His Kingship; we will sit at the feet of Christ the Son, and learn from Him how rightly to know the true God and eternal life. And Christ shows us a weeping prodigal, pressing his face into a father's bosom; heart is beating to heart—the one in all the anguish of penitence, the other in all the anguish of pitying, fatherly love. Now the father's arms are round the restored boy; and who shall say that all highest law is not vindicated, when that father wipes away the tears, and calls for music and dancing, the best robe and the fatted calf? How deep to our hearts it goes if we may call God our Father! Who ever saw weeping rebels lying on kings' bosoms? It must be that we are deeper, far deeper, into the very heart of truth about God, if He will let us think of Him as our "Father in heaven." And is this truth of the Divine Fatherhood one which must be put under limitations and restrictions? Must it be anxiously guarded from possible misconceptions, and shielded round as belonging to men only under certain conditions? It is enough to reply, Christ never fenced it off. Christ never limited its application; then why should we? Christ never seemed afraid of preaching it freely everywhere. He evidently expected to bless men, to awaken a new spirit in men, the true spirit, the child-spirit, by telling them of their Father in heaven. If we follow Christ, we too will show men the Father-God everywhere in Christ's life and teaching; the Father-God especially in death, sacrifice, and atonement. Believe then in the Father. Learn of Christ the Son so to believe. Then the Spirit of the Son will grow strong in *you*; and from Jesus, your brother, you will learn well how to be a son of the heavenly Father.

Ver. 6. *Christ's Incarnation.*—The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ is as important as any in the whole Bible, and it stands not on one or two doubtful passages of Scripture, but on the plainest and almost numberless declarations of the inspired writers. In the passage before us the apostle is showing the infinite superiority of Jesus above the highest orders of created beings; and he adduces a whole series, as it were, of testimonies in proof of this point. The one which we have now read is taken from the 97th Psalm, and confessedly relates to Jesus.

I. **Christ is a proper object of Divine worship.**—1. *The command contained in the text is itself decisive upon the point.* God is a jealous God, and claims Divine worship as His inalienable prerogative; yet He at the same time requires it to be given to His Son. Therefore the Son is worthy of that high honour. 2. *The practice of the Christian Church confirms it beyond a doubt.* Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and addressed himself to Jesus. St. Paul under buffetings of Satan applied to Jesus for relief, and was answered; for from that time he "gloried in his infirmities." The whole Church of God worships Christ. 3. *To worship Christ is the highest act of obedience to the Father.* Every knee shall bow to Jesus. All must "honour the Son, as they honour the Father."

II. **His incarnation affords a special call to all, both in heaven and earth, to worship Him.**—1. *His incarnation affords the brightest discovery of the Divine perfections.* The angels had seen God's wisdom, power, and goodness in the creation and government of the world. But the Incarnation revealed His condescension and grace. The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest," and so should we. 2. *It opens a way for our reconciliation with God.* When Christ was manifested in the flesh, His mediatorial work commenced; and that course of sufferings and obedience, which is the meritorious ground of our acceptance, was begun. 3. *It reunites men and angels under one Head.* Jesus, by becoming man, gathers together again both men and angels under Himself as their common

Head. In heaven saints and angels join in one general chorus, ascribing "salvation to God and to the Lamb." To enforce the injunction we would say: (1) *Welcome Him.* Be not indifferent. Sing hosannas. Captious Pharisees may condemn; but if we keep silence, the very stones will cry out against us. (2) *Submit to Him.* Jesus has set up His kingdom. "Kiss the Son." Present your offerings before Him, in token of your allegiance and unreserved subjection to His will. (3) *Depend upon Him.* Let His vicarious sufferings and obedience be the stay and support of your souls. (4) *Glory in Him.* Since He is the boast of all in heaven, let Him be the boast of all on earth. Let the frame of your hearts be joyous. Exulting and triumphant, worshipping Him here, you shall be brought to worship Him for evermore in heaven above.—*Charles Simeon, M.A.*

Ver. 7. *Material Angels.*—The Hebrew words for "angels" and "spirits" (Psalm civ. 4) have double meanings; the former denoting also *messengers*, the latter "winds." The psalmist thought of those subtle but powerful agents, wind and fire, as created by God, and employed to execute His will. And in perfect accordance with the spirit of the psalmist, the verse is applied here to angels, whose inferiority to our Lord Jesus Christ is indicated by the fact that they are ranked as *messengers* with these subordinate physical agencies. Sir Harry Vane has this quaint remark, "As man in his bodily state was made dust of the ground, so the angels were made a flame of fire in their natural constitution." "The force of the passage lies in the vividness with which it presents the thought of the Most High served by angels who 'at His bidding speed,' untiring as the wind, subtle as the fire."

Angels.

I. **The nature of angels.**—Spirits.

II. **The Lord of angels.**—"Who maketh," etc. What must His own spirituality be who maketh spirit?

III. **The ministry of angels.**—1. Their office. "Ministers." 2. Their activity or zeal. "A flaming fire." 3. Their dependence. *Made* ministers. —*G. Rogers.*

The Psalmist's Figures.—"Who maketh His angels 'into' winds, His ministers 'into' flaming fire" (Ps. civ. 4). It is a *poet* who writes. His spirit, at the moment that we listen to him, is in one of its loftiest moods. His language is by no means intended to be strictly scientific or tamely prosaic. It glances, representatively, at the phenomena of storms, and especially of thunder-storms, which have always excited among men a profoundly ethical interest. The rapidity of movement in the perturbed elements, the fury of the gale rising into the hurricane or the tornado, the lurid grandeur of the flashes as they fitfully illumine the over-arching darkness, strike into an attitude of solemn and religious awe every unsophisticated spirit. The psalmist spoke as a true hierophant of nature, and of human nature, when he assumed that in these storms there is the presence and agency of God. And not *His* solitary presence and agency alone. He is surrounded with His spiritual attendants. And when He has designs of retributive providence to fulfil, He sends them forth on His errands, investing them for the occasion with what phenomena may be befitting —the phenomena of the hurricane, the thunder, or the gleaming bolts of fire. That is, "He makes His angels tempests, His ministers a flame of fire." When we gaze on the storm-drift, and feel awed by the flashes that leap out from the darkness, lo, God's ministers are there! His servants are working there!—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *The Son's Kingdom is Spiritual.* —To convince men of this was the apparently unsuccessful endeavour of our Lord's public teaching, but more especially of His esoteric teaching of

His disciples. The keynote of His kingdom was "righteousness." The force of His kingdom was moral goodness; and the triumphs of His kingdom were triumphs over moral evil. His dealings with physical and material evils were strictly *illustrative* of His true work. His kingship and kingdom are indicated in His answer to Pilate: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice" (John xviii. 37). Righteousness belongs to character. To work righteousness is to work in man's moral and spiritual nature. The kingdom of a son is a kingdom of obediences, submissions, and services, and these are things of character—spiritual things. (1) The Son's kingdom is a kingdom of spiritual *beings*. (2) The Son's rule is a spiritual *rule*. (3) The Son's aim is a spiritual *aim*. (4) The Son's acceptance with the Father is based on His spiritual work of "bringing sons unto glory." But the redemptive, regenerative, restorative, and sanctifying work which the Son does in souls will be sure to reach out its influence so as to embrace the body and the earthly relations. The spiritual proves to be the all-inclusive. "The kingdom of God is within you." Then it is *you*, wherever you may be found, and in whatever relations you stand.

Ver. 10. *The Quotation from Psalm cii.*—If the writer had deemed it necessary to account for the use that he makes of the passage, he might have unfolded his idea in some such manner as the following: "And in truth, since it is the Son, who, as we have seen, is the manifestive effulgence of the Father's glory, and the manifestive impress of the Father's hidden substance; and since, consequently, it is the Son, who, in manifestation of the Father, acted in the creation of the universe, and still acts in the maintenance of all things by the word of His power,—the grand words of the 102nd Psalm are truly and admirably descriptive of His super-angelic glory." We need to divest our minds of the stiff artificialities of logic which we are too apt to bring with us when we come to the unsophisticated representations of Scripture.—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Vers. 10, 11. *The Agency of the Divine Son in Nature.*—The writer sees a distinct reference to the Second Person of the Divine Trinity in the allusion of the psalmist. But this must involve a *Christian* reading of the Old Testament Scriptures, as it would be impossible to prove that the Jews ever thought of their expected Messiah as the Second Person of a Divine Trinity. Indeed, so intense was the Jewish jealousy of their nation's truth—the unity of God—that it is not conceivable that they ever accepted any formulated doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. *We* may find intimations of the threefoldness of God in the Old Testament, but it is important that we should recognise the *doctrine* of the Trinity as a Christian creation. It would seem to have been a prevailing thought of the age of the apostles, that the Divine Son was the agent in the creation of the world; for Philo represents his *Logos* to have been the instrument in creation. And the apostle Paul (Col. i. 15, 16) makes an important point of this relation: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation: for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been created through Him, and unto Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." We have to be equally jealous of the two truths, that of the Divine *Unity* and that of the Divine *Trinity*. We have to watch carefully lest Tritheism should get into our conceptions, under some subtle guise. Relative to the material world we may think in this way: We may associate God the Father with the design of it;

God the Son with the execution of the design; God the Spirit with the quickening of the life in it, which was a part of the design. Or it may be put in this way: God, the one, is the Creator of all things. But when we think of the design of creation, it is God absolute we think of. When we think of earth actually taking shape, it is God acting in the sense-sphere we think of. When we think of that unseen, mysterious thing as associated with material beings, it is the Spirit-God, breathing life, that we think of. The distinctions in God are in our apprehension of Him, whatever else they are.

Ver. 12. *His Unfailing Years.*—"And thy years shall not fail." We are asked to adore and to trust this changeless One. But can we? Is He not too unlike ourselves? Must there not be some congeniality of nature, some touch in Him of oneness with us before we can enter into such a fellowship of love and trust? Yes, we do crave a real sympathy; and a real sympathy can only be felt by one who is truly, or who has been truly, in the human conditions. As we are constituted, if we knew God simply as abstract Deity, as infinite Being, with Divine qualities, but without the living, breathing, human presentation of them—if He were God indeed, but not "God manifest in the flesh," He would not be to us so fully and perfectly, and so much to our hearts' satisfaction, "the Lord our God." We need some one unlike ourselves—some one who does not change or pass away; and yet we need some one like ourselves, with all our best affections, our greatest qualities, perfectly realised and enshrined in himself. This we have in Jesus of Nazareth, and alone in Him. Who is it whose "years" shall not fail? He who was born into a human home, who grew up from childhood to manhood like us—He it is whom we are asked to trust. Here is our refuge, and we find a perfect security in it—a security which we need at all times as mortal and as sinful creatures, but of which we feel the need especially when, by common consent, we make a barrier in our thought between the years. Where can a fountain of consolation be found for human weariness, distress, solicitude, sorrow, if not in Him who sounded all depths of mortal misery, travelled through the wide expanse of all human need, died our human death, and rose victor for us in life immortal?—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *Occasional Revelations.*—There are days on which the sun makes the clouds his chariot, and travels on curtained behind them. Weary of shining before a drowsy, thankless world, he covers the glory of his face, but will not quite take away the blessing of his light; and now and then, as it were in pity, he withdraws the veil for a moment, and looks forth to assure the earth that her best friend is still watching over her in the heavens, like those occasional visitations by which the Lord, before the birth of the Saviour, assured mankind that He was still their God.—*Guesses at Truth.*

Ver. 2. *Christ the Son.*—Plutarch tells us that when Themistocles, in the hour of his exile, wished to be reconciled with the king of the Molossians, whom he had previously offended, he took the king's son in his arms, and kneeled down before the household gods. The plea was successful; in fact, it was the only one the Molossians looked upon as one not to be refused, and so the philosopher found a refuge among them. And do not we come in this way when we approach the Majesty on high? We take hold of the King's Son.

Ver. 3. *Brightness or Effulgence.*—The word rendered "brightness" here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, a reflected splendour, or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its "brightness," that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; the beams which flow from it we do see. The meaning of this passage is, that if God be represented under the image of a luminous body, as He is in the Scriptures (see Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Mal. iv. 2), then Christ is the

radiance of the light, the brightness of that luminary by which only He is known.—*Stuart.*

Ver. 11. *God ever the same.*—On every Mohammedan tombstone the inscription begins with the words, "He remains." This applies to God, and gives sweet comfort to the bereaved. Friends may die, fortune fly away, but God endures—He remains.

Contrast of the Created and the Uncreated.—The heavens and the earth—those who know them best have them most, for they know best their glory; but they shall all wax old as doth a garment, and when they shall have served their purpose God shall fold them up and lay them by, and as a vesture shall He change them, and they shall be changed, but He is the same for ever and His years shall not fail. Why should they? What are years to God? Time did not make Him. He made time, and can unmake it, and then it will be eternity, not time, and a thousand years will be as one day, and, what is more, one day will be as a thousand years.—*C. Kingsley.*

Ver. 14. *The Ministry of Angels.*—"Are they not all ministering spirits," says St. Paul, "sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" In this passage we are plainly taught that ministering to the saints is a standing employment of angels throughout the ages of time. Accordingly they are exhibited in Jacob's vision of a ladder as "ascending and descending" from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven continually in the discharge of this great duty. According to this declaration also we are furnished by the Scriptures with numerous examples of their actual ministry to the children of God. Thus angels delivered Lot from Sodom, Jacob from Esau, Daniel from the lions, his three companions from the fiery furnace, Peter from Herod and the Jewish Sanhedrim, and the nation of the Israelites successively from the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Assyrians. Thus they conducted Lot, Abraham, and the Israelites in seasons of great difficulty and danger to places and circumstances of safety and peace. Thus they conducted Gideon to the destruction of the Midianites, Joseph and Mary to Egypt, Philip to the eunuch, and Cornelius to Peter, to the knowledge of the gospel through him, and to the salvation of himself, his family, and his friends. Thus angels instructed Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, David, Elijah, Daniel, Zechariah the prophet, Zachariah the father of John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, and their fellow-disciples. Thus they comforted Jacob at the approach of Esau, Daniel in his peculiar sorrows and dangers, Zechariah in the sufferings of his nation, Joseph and Mary in their perplexities, Christ in His agony, the apostles and their companions after His resurrection, Paul immediately before his shipwreck, and the Church universally by the testimony and instruction given in the Revelation of St. John.—*Dwight.*

Two Kinds of Angels.—The Rabbins have a beautiful bit of teaching buried among their rubbish about angels. They say that there are two kinds of angels—the angels of service and the angels of praise, of which two orders the latter is the higher, and that no angel in it praises God twice, but having once lifted up his voice in the psalm of heaven, then perishes and ceases to be. He has perfected his being; he has reached the height of his greatness; he has done what he was made for: let him fade away. The garb of legend is mean enough, but the thought it embodies is that ever true and solemn one without which life is nought: "Man's chief end is to glorify God."—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Angels.—Curious and extravagant notions have been entertained about the angels. The Rabbins taught the strangest things. They say that the ministry of angels may be divided into two parts—that of praising God, and that of executing His behests. In regard to the praising there are six hundred and ninety-four thousand myriads who daily praise the name of God. From sunrise to sundown they say, "Holy, holy, holy," and from sundown to sunrise, "Blessed be the Glory of God from His place." Every day ministering angels are created, whose apparent destiny is only to raise the praises of God, after which they pass away into the fiery stream whence they originally issued. A new angel is created to execute every behest of God, and then he passes away. It is characteristic of the Oriental, and especially of the Semitic mind, to see in every event, even the most trivial, a direct supernatural interference, wrought by the innumerable unseen ministers—both good and evil—of the Divine will.

The Sight of the Angels.—As it is given us in the night of this world to behold the heavens studded with stars, great, glorious, and beautiful, in like manner has Scripture opened to our view a sight of the blessed angels. They appear as stars around us, but no unconcerned spectators in their silent watches. Michael, "who is as God"; Gabriel, "the strength of God"; Raphael, "the healing of God" (so their names signify). They are ministering spirits sent by Him, shadows of His presence. He has revealed to us their deep concern for our welfare, their active ministrations about us day and night, and especially their peculiar regard for those who are of a meek spirit, and despised of the world. What a dignity does this shed on our daily life!—*Isaac Williams, B.D.*

Every Man's Angels.—In a Turkish allegory every man is said to have two angels—one on his right shoulder, and another on his left. When he does anything good, the angel on the right shoulder writes it down, and seals it, because what is done is done for ever. When he does evil, the angel on the left shoulder writes it down. He waits till midnight. If before that time the man bows his head and exclaims, "Gracious Allah! I have sinned; forgive me!" the angel rubs it out; and if not at midnight, he seals it, and the angel upon the right shoulder weeps.

The Angels of the Grass.—The Talmud says, "There is not a thing in the world, not even a tiny blade of grass, over which there is not an angel set."

Ministering Angels.—

They are evermore around us, though unseen to mortal sight,
In the golden hour of sunshine and in sorrow's starless night,
Deepening earth's most sacred pleasures with the peace of sin forgiven,
Whispering to the lonely mourner of the painless joys of heaven.

Seeing all our guilt and weakness, looking down with piteous eyes,
For the foolish things we cling to and the heaven that we despise;
They have been our guardian angels since the weary world began,
And they still are watching o'er us for His sake who died for man.—*Anon.*

The Angel-helper.—How sentimental ideas of angels cling about us, and may helpfully cling, is illustrated in the story of one Theodorus, a martyr who was put to extreme torments by Julian the Apostate, and dismissed again by him when he saw him unconquerable. *Rufinus*, in his history, says that he met with this martyr a long time after his trial, and asked him whether the pains he felt were not insufferable. He answered that at first it was somewhat grievous, but after a while there seemed to stand by him a young man in white, who with a soft and comfortable handkerchief wiped off the sweat from his body (which through extreme anguish was little less than blood), and bade him be of good cheer, insomuch as then it was rather a punishment than a pleasure to him to be taken off the rack. When the tormentors had done, the angel was gone.

Ministrant Spirits.—Angels are "all," without exception, ministrant spirits. Their duties are ever "liturgical," never lordly or regal. They render the service of lieges to the Lord of the universe, and are busied on the footstool, while Jesus sits on the throne. Even when charged with their highest behests, they but help, in some minor respects, the disciples of our Lord. They are sent forth to minister "*for them*"—that is, "*for their benefit.*"—*J. Morison, D.D.*

Heaven a Place of Universal Ministry.—Dr. George Macdonald makes a quaint character in *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*, dreamily figure the heavenly state, and, behold, all things seem to go on there even as here on earth. There is buying and selling, but there is no getting gain, because every one has learned the glory of "ministering," and so each one just serves his brother—each one hoping for nothing again, each one getting everything by getting the service of his brother. Could there be a sublimer, or a more enchanting conception of heaven, the home of God, of whom we may reverently think as the "infinite Angel," the glorious and eternal Ministrant, who ennobles ministry for all His creatures by His own unceasing service?

Ver. 14. *Angel-service.*—Service is not an incident in the history of angels; it is their whole history. This category suits the nature of angels so far as we have the means of knowing it. They are associated with the elements and powers of nature—are these under another name. They are changeable in form, appearing now as winds, now as fire. They are perishable, transient, as the pestilence and the storm, as tongues of flame, or the clouds, or the dew. They are one and many in turn: the one splitting up into the many, and the many recombining into one. They are impersonal, or imperfectly personal, lacking will and self-consciousness. Thinking, deliberating, resolving, is not their affair, but execution: "Ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure." They are incapacitated for rule by the simplicity of their nature. The angel-princes cannot take a wide survey of a nation's character and desert, like the prophets. They are blind partisans, mere personifications of national spirit. As a matter of course each angel-prince takes his nation's side in a quarrel. A prince of Persia is on the side of Persia, and the prince of Greece on the side of Greece. A human will is the meeting-place of many forces brought into harmony; an angelic will is a single force moving in a straight line towards a point. Angels are mere manifestations or expressions of the will of God. To impute to them dominion were to infringe on the monarchy of God, it were to reinstate paganism. Angel-worship is nature-worship under another name, not improved by the change of name. No wonder the author of this epistle is so careful to connect angels with the idea of service. It is his protest against the angelolatry which had crept into Israel from Persian sources.—*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

Angel-succour.—
How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
And come to succour us who succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love and nothing for reward.
Oh! why should heavenly God for men have such regard?—*Spenser.*

CHAPTER II.

THE HIGHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGHER REVELATIONS

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THE rhetorical character of the epistle is indicated in the hortatory passages that are so freely inserted. The exhortation here, vers. 1-4, introduces the reason for the peril of apostasy. It was the temporary humiliation of the Son which, unless its purpose was clearly understood, might so easily be misapprehended, and lead to a denial of His pre-eminence and Divine dignity. This brings the writer again to his argument. The humiliation of the Son was a *necessity* for the carrying through and perfecting of His high-priestly work.

Ver. 1. **Therefore.**—Because such superiority belongs to Christ as the Author and Head of the new dispensation. It is an Eastern idea to honour an invited guest by sending a servant of the highest rank to call him to the feast. Meeting this idea, the writer sets forth the supreme dignity of Christ as giving special claim to the invitation He brings. **More earnest heed.**—Scripture conceives of attention as an effort of will, with a view to the active obedience of what is heard. Diligent application of the mind. Intelligent understanding is the proper basis of faith. **We have heard.**—Distinct reference to the gospel as the Divine revelation made to *us*. **Slip.**—R.V. "lest haply we drift away from them." The word παραρρυῶμεν has two meanings: (1) to fall, stumble, perish; (2) to suffer to flow from memory, to forget. The Greek usage, as collected by *Wetstein*, is, "to flow as liquids." Best translation is, "lest we should glide by them." Not "run out as leaky vessels," a rendering first given in the Genevan Testament, 1557 A.D. "Unless the mind be held closely to the words that God has spoken, it must drift away from them, and from the salvation which they promise."

Ver. 2. **Word.**—Reference is to the law given on Sinai, and said to have been given by "the disposition of angels." See Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 10; Deut. xxxiii. 2. **Was stedfast.**—Proved steadfast, its sanctions being fully upheld. **Transgression.**—The figure in this word is lost in the English translation. It is "walking alongside of," and so, not walking *in* the path. The reference is to positive, intentional sin. **Disobedience.**—The figure in this word is "hearing": "to hear beside"; so "to hear by stealth," or inaccurately. Moral heedlessness. The reference is to negative sin, or neglect. **Recompence of reward.**—Pay for conduct. Reward of retributive justice, including punishments. A wide use of the term "reward."

Ver. 3. **We escape.**—We to whom the revelation ministered by the Son has come. Escape the judgment that must fall on those more highly privileged. **Great salvation.**—Proper word for the mission of the Son. The Jewish revelation may be called a "government," or a "regulation"; it was not evidently a salvation. The greatness is especially seen in its having a Divine Administrator. **By the Lord.**—Jesus Himself. Compare directly in the Son, and indirectly by the medium of angels and Moses. **Confirmed.**—Ratified. **Them that heard.**—Apostles and first disciples, of whom the writer of this epistle was not one. The more unquestionable the gospel message was, the greater was the responsibility of those to whom it came.

Ver. 4. **Signs.**—Tokens or indications of the near presence of God; a seal of power put on the person who accomplishes the miracle. **Wonders.**—Astonishing events, which the beholder can reduce to no law with which he is acquainted. Christ's miracles are never called "wonders" only. **Divers miracles.**—Or manifold powers. Principal reference is intended to the miracles and spiritual endowments of the early Church. "Wonders," indicating the effect on bystanders; "signs," indicating that they had a moral purpose; "miracles," or proofs of the presence and working of a Divine power; "gifts," endowments for use, such as tongues, and power to interpret. The word "gifts" should be "distributions."

Ver. 5. **World to come.**—The new dispensation. Rabbinical teaching was divided under two heads: (1) *hā'ōlām hazzeh* (the present world), and (2) *hā'ōlām habbā* (the world to come). The period referred to in this verse is that which succeeds the exaltation of Christ. But the word used by the writer strictly means "the inhabited earth."

Ver. 6. The writer brings this quotation from the 8th Psalm to show that man is recognised as inferior to angels. This he admits must apply to Jesus, the Head of the new dispensation. He has therefore to meet the Jewish objection, that Judaism, ministered by *angels*, must be a higher dispensation than Christianity, which was ministered by a *man*. Notice that this writer does not affirm the Davidic authorship of the psalm. The quotation is taken from the LXX. Version. The writer's thought may be thus given: "According to Scripture the world is subjected to *man*, not to *angels*. We ought therefore to cherish high notions of man's dignity. Man has not, however, yet gained his full sovereignty. There is hope for him now; for we do see the "*Man* Christ Jesus," though humiliated for a purpose, crowned with glory and honour, and constituted the Head of the race. In Him and through Him man will reach His full dignity." "There is One in whom the Divine purpose is fulfilled in all its parts."

Ver. 9. To understand this verse we must keep in view the Jewish objection which the writer is combating. It may be stated thus: "The Christ whom you are so greatly exalting was only a *man*, and suffered an ignominious *death*." He replies: "There was a necessity for that humiliation to share our humanity, and a necessity for that experience of death. And on the ground of consenting to that humiliation, and suffering that death, He is crowned with glory and honour." Compare St. Paul's glorying in "Christ and Him crucified." **Taste death.**—Passing through a complete human experience. **For every man.**—In order to gain redemptive power on every man.

Ver. 10. **Became Him.**—God, rhetorically described in the next clause. **Many sons.**—An assertion of the relation of man to God which Christ the Son fully represents. **Captain.**—Better, "Bringer-on." Christ is the living Leader of souls. "Author" is a suitable term. **Perfect.**—In the sense of "perfectly competent." But two thoughts seem to be included: (1) perfectly fitted for His work of bringing on; (2) perfect, as crowned with glory and honour, *for reward*. It became God to give the reward. **Sufferings.**—The characteristic lot of humanity.

Ver. 11. **Sanctifieth.**—The LXX. and the New Testament use of the word ἁγιάζω is the selecting out, and adopting for, God's service. It suggests the moral side of the Redeemer's work. **All of one.**—Of one and the same human nature. If Christ was to exert moral power on us, manifestly He must be a moral being in our sphere, and familiar with our experience. **Brethren.**—Real brother-men. The full value of our Lord's humanity in relation to His complete redemptive work is only now coming into the full view of theologians.

Ver. 14. **Partakers of flesh and blood.**—This opposes the errors of the Docetæ. **The devil.**—A deadly power of leading men into sin is ascribed to the devil (see John xvi. 11; Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12; 1 Cor. ii. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 14). *Stuart* explains, "To render null the deadly power of Satan is to prevent the effects of it, as bringing men to incur the sentence of spiritual death."

Ver. 15. **Fear of death.**—Not physical dying, but the *sin-sense*, which darkens the future.

Ver. 16.—R.V. "For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." Does not redemptively interest Himself in angels.

Ver. 17. **Behoved Him.**—It was as becoming as it certainly was necessary. **High priest.**—This allusion rhetorically introduces the writer's next comparison. The great point impressed in this chapter is, that the Son accomplishes His redemptive work largely through the power of sympathy; to secure that sympathy He must have fellow-experience with man in His sufferings and death.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

Three Great Things.—A remarkable feature of this epistle is the frequent introduction of hortatory passages, which remind us of the preacher rather than of the letter-writer. Those passages reveal the distinctly practical object of the writer. He is concerned with doctrine for the sake of its practical applications to life and conduct, rather than for the sake of its theological interests. Ever before his mind is the danger of the Jewish Christians relapsing from their Christian profession into their old and formal Judaism. And in dealing with them he does not wholly trust to argument as an appeal to mind; he uses urgent persuasions—the personal force—as an appeal to heart. "Out

of the heart are the issues of life." But it should be borne in mind that the appeals are made to persons with Jewish feelings and associations, and are precisely adapted to *them*. 1. "How shall we escape?" implies recognised peril. In the writer's mind are the judgments which came on the unfaithful under the old covenant. These are representative of the judgments which come on those who are unfaithful to God's covenant with man. To that covenant all of us are found unfaithful, and all of us stand exposed to judgment. 2. Neglect implies that a way of rescue has been provided. What was the way under the old covenant? Illustrated by the arrangement of cities of refuge. The way of bringing sacrifice; sin, trespass, burnt offerings. These foreshadow and represent the spiritual sacrifice which Christ offered, and which *we* offer—"our bodies a living sacrifice." 3. Neglect further implies some preoccupation hindering attention. The preoccupation of some mistaken views. What would lead an old Jew to neglect sacrificing? 4. The greatness of the salvation implies a serious increase of peril for the negligent. That older salvation from ceremonial penalty was a great salvation. It was God's own intervention. Now the salvation is from sins, and involves the sacrifice of God's own Son. 5. The tone of the question "How escape?" implies the hopelessness of finding any other rescue. As addressed to the Jewish Christians, it pleads in this way: You cannot fall back on the old, now you know its essentially preparatory character, and its limited, ceremonial range. And certainly you cannot fall away to idolatrous schemes, seeing that your old religion was so decided an advance upon them. Once advance, you can never go back.

I. **The great salvation.**—A Divine intervention for man's relief and help. God's constant work is redeeming; that work, at its highest level, is redemption from *sin*. Think of the greatness of this salvation. 1. In its sphere—sin's penalty and power. 2. In its range—all humanity. 3. In its agency—personal surrender and self-sacrifice. These are not, however, immediately present to the writer's mind. He sees the greatness of the salvation (1) in the Agent working it out; (2) in the agents conveying the report of it; (3) in the miracles supporting the agents.

II. **The great responsibility.**—"How shall we escape?" The plea is based on the universally working law that "privilege brings responsibility." This is one of the truths of fact that were prominent in our Lord's teaching. But it is very easy for men to say, "Then we are better off without the privilege, and may envy the heathen who have none." We must not think thus, because our glory and our joy lie in advance, in progress. Animals make no progress. Birds build their nests to-day just as they built them in the trees of Paradise. For a man to hear the gospel is for him to become another man. He can never be the same again. He has stepped up into privilege. He must be judged in the light of the new knowledge.

III. **The great condemnation.**—"If we neglect." Apply to the Jewish Christians, who were not rejecting, *only neglecting*. In some audiences it might be necessary to plead that Christ was being *rejected*. In ordinary congregations the danger is not rejection, but *neglect*. There is: 1. The neglect of indifference. 2. The neglect of preoccupation. 3. The neglect of shaken confidence. Rejection may be the sin of the one here and there. Neglect is the sin of the many. But is it reasonable to make so much depend on simple neglect? It is, if you recognise what moral character is shown in rejection, and what in neglect. Neglect is more hopeless than rejection. Those who reject may think again. Those who neglect let the opportunity slip by. For those who neglect there is the misery of having missed eternal life because they would make no effort.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. "*Let slip.*"—You know how it is when water is poured into a leaky bucket: it runs out quickly; it is very soon all gone. When we have bad memories, our minds are such a leaky vessel; the things that we are taught run away from us as water runs through a sieve. And so this lesson about holding fast is a very important one; it is the same duty that the angel in the Apocalypse urges on the Christians of the "seven Churches."—*R. Newton.*

Drifting.—Drifting! drifting! that is the precise word. The boat is unanchored. It is at the moment in a quiet place; but by-and-by the tide ebbs and bears it in its bosom on to the middle of the current, and then it is carried out and away, and perhaps, if no one has observed its motions, irrecoverably lost.—*Dr. Tayler.*

Drifting from Christ.—"Lest haply we drift away." Those who deliberately renounce their Divine hope are few; those who make shipwreck of faith by imperceptibly getting further and further away are many. This drifting away is possible: 1. Because we are not always moored to Christ when we are brought to Him. 2. Because there are powerful adverse currents which tend to carry us from the Saviour. 3. Our departure from Christ may be for some time imperceptible. To drift from Christ is to drift to ruin. (1) It is to forsake the only refuge for sinful men. (2) It is to disregard the supreme claims of Christ. (3) It is to resist the grace that has brought us close to Him. Conclusion: 1. If we are moored to Christ, our blessedness consists in the maintenance of close fellowship with Him. 2. Though we are close to Christ, we are in great peril until we are anchored there. 3. If we are drifting away from Christ, everything depends on our returning before we get further off.—*Charles New.*

Drawn on to the Coral Reefs.—In the Southern Seas sailing vessels, when there is no wind, dare not approach the islands nearer than two or even three miles. Currents constantly flow towards the land, and they insensibly act upon the vessels, so that they *drift* to destruction on the coral reefs.

Drifting from the Truth.—The idea is, that these Jewish Christians, to whom the epistle was addressed, were in danger of being carried away from the gospel of Christ, just as a vessel will be drifted down the stream unless it is held firmly to its anchorage, or unless there is constant exertion on the part of those who are on board to resist the current. There was a strong tide running, and unless they gave earnest heed to the gospel they would be swept away into their old Jewish life.—*R. W. Dale.*

Ver. 3. *Great Salvation because Great Saviour.*—On the intrinsic greatness of the salvation the writer does not dwell. It is implied in the unique dignity and commission of Him through whom it is given. To the Jewish Christians the message of the salvation came: 1. Direct from Christ. 2. Then from those who actually knew Christ. 3. And their testimony was sealed by the miracles of healing and blessing which they wrought.

No escaping if there is neglecting.—Consider the argument of this epistle. It is an argument against apostasy. These Hebrew Christians were in danger of going back to an effete Judaism; but "the Old Testament dispensation, with its prophets and priests and Temple and sacrifices, was only a type of Christ, and was to disappear when Christ Himself had come." The revelation of God in His Son is the culminating revelation. That having been made, that which has led to it and introduced it is no

longer necessary, and to cling to it is to cling to superfluity. The man who trusts in Jesus is safe whether the Temple fall or stand, whether he worship within its precincts or be thrust out of them. Then the epistle goes on to substantiate this truth by various argumentation. Angels, the messengers of God, had to do with the introduction of the old economy; but Christ, the Founder of the new economy, is superior to angels. His *title* is superior. He is called the Son of God. No angel was ever called the son of God in such terms as would involve sameness of nature with God; but Christ is. Therefore He is superior; but angels are required to *worship Christ.* Therefore, again, He is superior. Then, again, the angels are called winds and lightning—names implying servitude; but Christ is He at whose behests the angels go forth as winds and as lightnings; and so, as King over them, Christ is their superior. And therefore, since Christ is thus the superior of angels, the dispensation which He Himself personally introduced must be higher in authority, and more enduring in existence. This, then, is the first argument in substantiation of the theme of the epistle. But the Bible is the most practical of books. Let a truth but be established, and at once it springs to press that truth in application. So before another argument is introduced to substantiate further the mighty theme of the epistle, the discussion tarries for pressing the truth it has carried home. If, though this preparatory dispensation was less in authority and grandeur, yet if even this lower and lesser word spoken by angels and delivered to men by Moses was nevertheless a word most firm; if disobedience even to that lower and lesser word was always followed with its threatened penalty,—then how shall we escape if we neglect this *so great* salvation; this word, the highest and most precious possible, which the Son of God Himself has come to tell us? Such is the setting of the inspired argument. A most pertinent question, How shall we escape if we neglect? 1. There can be no further and other Divine *revelation* as to salvation from sin. In Christ dwelleth all *the fulness* of the Godhead bodily (Eph. ii. 9). God cannot speak more plainly than He has spoken by His Son. 2. There can be no other and further Divine *sacrifice* for sin. God has nothing more to give than He has already given. Even infinity does not possess a preciousness beyond that of the only begotten Son. 3. Our own good works cannot possibly match or go beyond the efficacy residing in the *finished* work of Christ. To trust in them, rather than in what He has done, is not only folly—it is sacrilege. 4. No sacramental rite administered by man can possibly equal the completed atonement wrought by Christ and ministered by the Holy Spirit to the believing soul. 5. In every sense this salvation is a salvation *utmost.* In no way can we touch or pass beyond that limit. How, then, can we escape if we neglect? 6. And to neglect it is to refuse it.

Responding to our Privileges.—Perhaps you have not noticed the force of the text as it stands in its connection. It really is a very serious warning to converted people; the neglect referred to is the sort of neglect to which professing Christians are tempted. It sets us upon the inquiry, "How may you and I, who have so long borne the Christian name, be found to-day neglecting the responsibilities, claims, and duties of the 'great salvation'?" The epistle to the Hebrews is distinctly addressed to *Hebrew* Christians, to Christians who had been Jews, and for the most part devout and zealous Jews. From the tone of the epistle we gather, that these Judaic Christians were placed under some special perils and temptations. There was evidently some grave danger of their returning upon the formalities of that Mosaic system out of which they had come. The writer seems deeply impressed with the peril, the disgrace, the hopeless-

ness, of apostasy. The danger of those Hebrew Christians recurs in every age. It is ours to-day as truly as it was theirs yesterday. Those who have gained a *spiritual* religion are exposed to the temptation to pass back upon a *sensuous* religion. The religion of the surrendered will and the heart's love is difficult to maintain; easily we come to substitute for it a religion of attending services, observing sacraments, and pressing conduct into moulds. The Christian Jews addressed in this epistle had stepped up out of formal Judaism into spiritual Christianity. They had served the law written upon tablets of stone; now they had learned to serve the law written on the mind and heart. They had been religious by following and obeying rules; they had become religious by responding to Divine inward inspirations. They had been associated with a material Temple; they had now discovered that man can be the "temple of the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God can dwell in him." They had lived by the *letter*; they now lived in the *Spirit*. But it was only with extreme difficulty that they could keep up in that high, spiritual atmosphere. We can quite understand their difficulty. The interests of the old Mosaic system clung to them. They had been the associations of their earliest years. Judaism was the religion of their childhood and youth. Every sentiment of reverence and affection gathered round the old system. No man ever yet found it easy to grow out of his youth-time associations. Some of us to-day can scarcely say that we have quite outgrown that hard, unloving Calvinism which was the atmosphere of our boyhood. It is stern work this growing in spiritual things. And formal religion, which gives us something for the eyes to look on, for the hands to handle, and for the knees to do, always has a strange fascination for sense-bound man. Formal religion, that requires routine, but asks for no mind and no feeling, always has been attractive, and it always will be. The many will always find a sort of contentment in that lower stage. Enough for them to ask, "What good thing can I *do* to inherit eternal life?" The sad thing is, that the religion of forms and ceremonies should even keep its fascination for those to whom the glories of *spiritual* religion have once been unfolded. Well may the apostle exclaim, in a passion of indignation, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." And we must take into due account another fact. The advocates of the Mosaic system, who resisted the claims of Christianity, were intensely active in demanding continued obedience to the Jewish laws and rules. What are called "Judaising teachers" followed Paul everywhere, and persisted in claiming that every Christian convert should keep Mosaic rules; should be circumcised, should make vows, should observe rites, and should bring sacrifices, just as if he were a Jew. They declared that the formal religion could never be superseded, could never rise into anything higher or more spiritual. The New Testament tells us of the peril of falling back on formal Judaism from spiritual Christianity. The history of the first three centuries of the Church shows us the peril of falling back on paganism from spiritual Christianity. It is a sad story. The Gentile converts brought in Gentile ways, and soon Christianity became the old paganism, with new associations. The Church ritual that is so fascinating to men to-day, is, in almost every detail, old pagan ritual carried in to the ruinous overlaying of spiritual Christianity. It is of course possible, in a spirit of self-complacency, for us to say that all this concerns the apostolic Christians and the early Church Christians, and it is very sad,

but then it has nothing whatever to do with *us*. I want to show you that, in forms and ways suitable to our own cases, this danger of falling from *spiritual* religion back upon *formal* religion is precisely the danger to which you and I are exposed to-day. We need the warning, lest we too should be found "neglecting the great salvation." Our own religion begins in formality and routine. Mother makes us say our prayers, and sees that we say them regularly; and it is only *saying prayers*. Mother takes us to the services, and sees that we behave suitably. For long years every child's, every boy's, religion is in the Judaic stage. It consists in doing things that ought to be done. Then may come the experience which we call "conversion"; the soul's awakening to personal relation with Divine and eternal things. We rise, in that hour of personal decision, to spiritual religion. But it is as hard for us to keep up there, in that spiritual region, as it was for the converted Jew to keep up in the refined atmosphere of spiritual Christianity. You and I are always ready to fall back on our old boy-religion of ordered prayers, attended services, and shaped conduct. We have no harder task than that of keeping ourselves right up in that spiritual realm, which, in the power of God's Spirit, we have entered. You can easily become a *formal* Christian. It will cost you much and constant watchfulness and endeavour if you keep a *spiritual* Christian. The tendency is an ever-enduring and universal one. It belongs to biassed and deteriorated human nature; and the epistle to the Hebrews has always been wanted, and will always be wanted, because it deals with this tendency. It does so partly by a series of arguments, and partly by a series of persuasions. These are blended in a very striking way throughout the epistle, each branch of the argument being followed by a characteristic warning or persuasion. The argument is mainly a rhetorical comparison between the agents and mediators employed in connection with the two dispensations —the Jewish and the Christian—and between the sacrifices required in the two dispensations. We only now take the first of these comparisons. What has to be compared is the two Divine dispensations, the two great religious systems established by the Divine revelation—the formal system of Judaism, the spiritual system of Christianity. It must first of all be made perfectly clear that these systems were not antagonistic. They are related to each other; they are in no sense opposed to each other. They may be helpfully *compared*; they may never be *contrasted*. They stand in an order of time. That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is carnal, and afterward that which is spiritual. The one is the preparation for the other, the necessary preparation; it is the schoolmaster that trains for the life in Christ. The earlier unfolds into the later, and it may pass away when it has done its preparation work. The seed we sow in the ground is preserved by the husk, and the germ of the future plant is fed by the starch stored in the seed. But when the germ bursts forth into leaf, the flour and the husk may die. They have done their work, and passed into the plant that is to be. The spring bud is encased in a sheath, and protected while it is maturing; but when the flower opens, the sheath may fade and drop off. It has done its work, and really lives still in the beauty of the summer flower. The children's scrap-books and picture-books are put away on the shelf—every home has a big pile of them: they seem to be useless; nay, they live on in the cultured power to read which they have quickened and trained. The apostle Paul puts the matter in a clever and suggestive sentence: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Ceremonial

Judaism is as the toys in the cupboard, and as the picture-books on the shelf. They have had their day, and done their work, but we do not want them now. Somehow we never quite lose our interest in the toys and the books; and some never lose interest in formal Judaism. But the Spirit of the Lord has come, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."

I. In the passage from which the text is taken **the agents of the two dispensations are compared.** It was the received opinion of the Jews that their law was given on Mount Sinai "by the disposition of angels." That was thought to declare the supreme grandeur of the revelation, of the law-giving. Angels! But what are angels? What are angels more than we? Are they not all ministering spirits? Created dependent servants, executing their Lord's bidding, even as we are? The spiritual revelation and law given from Mount Sion came by Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is the "heir of all things, and by whom God made the world; who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person; who upholds all things by His own power." The applications and enforcements of the Mosaic law were made by a series of prophets, among whom were many great, many extraordinary men. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." The applications and enforcements of spiritual Christianity are made by the apostles of Jesus. The word at first was "spoken by the Lord," but "it was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him." On the face of it, therefore, this new revelation of God's will to men is altogether higher and nobler: it brings to us higher privileges; it involves us in heavier responsibilities; it can crush us with heavier penalties. This is the argument, and this is its attendant persuasion: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It is suggestive that the old dispensation and the new one should both be called a "salvation." It is evidently named from its initial incident. Its true beginning was the great and glorious redemption of Israel from the Egyptian bondage, when Pharaoh's chariots and host were cast into the sea, and Israel walked a wondrous way, and began their national life from those farther shores as a delivered, redeemed people. They sang in their song of triumph, "The Lord is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." But that "salvation" brought Israel under the claim to serve Jehovah, and Jehovah only. They were bound to receive, and to obey strictly and carefully, all the law that Jehovah might be pleased to declare to them; and seeing that they were a nation in its child-stage, Jehovah graciously adapted His revelation and His law to them, gave the knowledge of His will through elaborate pictures of rites, and ceremonials, and observances, and ruled conduct by precise laws covering all their daily life and relations—"a people saved by the Lord." They knew their Lord's will; and "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward." And so the new dispensation is called a "salvation," "so great salvation," because it too began with a great and glorious redemption—the redemption wrought in the ministry and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that redemption brings us under claim to serve Jehovah Christ. We are bound to receive and obey His law in everything. And that law, in its most searching spiritual way, takes motive, principle, feeling, enriches them with new force, and so affects all our conduct from within. The ransomed of the Lord ought to

respond to all the claims and responsibilities involved in so "great salvation."

II. **The penalties of the two dispensations are compared.**—There is an appearance of severity in the Mosaic sanctions. But we need not misunderstand it or exaggerate it. All first education is necessarily precise and severe. It ought to be. Parents and school-teachers properly begin by requiring exact obedience on penalty of punishments and deprivations. *Joubert* finely says that the universal law of training is "force till right is ready." There is a severe side to Christianity, though it does not show as plain as the severe side of Judaism. It is severer: its demands are more comprehensive and searching; they concern motive and feeling. Its penalties are severer: they come upon the soul; they break off its relations with God; they involve "the second death." "Of how much sorer punishment are they worthy" whose neglect of the great salvation may be figuratively described as "trampling underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace." That severer side of spiritual Christianity directly concerns you and me. With what condition of religious life may we think the warnings deal? 1. Penalties hang over all who pass *back upon formality.* "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh." I beseech you, search and see whether formalism has crept into any of the features of your religious life. Once your soul shaped all your doings and relations. Is it now thus with you? The routine is kept up, the order is gone through; but there is no soul inspiring it now. You say your prayers; you do not pray. You attend the services; you do not worship. You observe sacraments; you do not feed with ever-fresh appetite upon the Bread of Life. There is a terrible disease from which men suffer, often for a long time without knowing it. The very substance of the heart actually hardens. There is a strange dropping-well at Knaresborough, Eng. As the water falls on living substances it encrusts them with stone. That "disease" has its religious counterpart; that "well" has its religious antitype. Scripture describes the man who has fallen back from spiritual upon formal religion: He is "dead while he liveth." The penalty of formal religion, what is it? To be dead, soul-dead. What more awful penalty can you possibly think of? 2. Penalties hang over all who shrink from gospel responsibilities. Neglecting the salvation is neglecting the things the salvation involves. These I will only state in two forms: (1) We are put into the school of Christ. It is perilous work to show ourselves unwilling to learn of Him. (2) We are put into the rule of Christ. And it is perilous work to shrink from any form of the obedience to which He calls us. What hope of escape, in the great testing day, can the unspiritual Christian have? What hope of escape can the disobedient Christian have? What hope of escape can the negligent, unfaithful Christian have? "Every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is." Are you neglecting any of the claims, responsibilities, duties, of this great, this spiritual salvation? What —say what is your hope of escape in the testing day of God?

Ver. 4. *Spiritual Gifts witnessing to the Salvation.*—"Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." The writer has evidently in mind the extraordinary gifts which were bestowed on the early Church. The disciples were bidden by their ascending Lord to "tarry in Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high." What that power was, and what were the outward signs of its coming, we learn at the Day of Pentecost. What the power developed into, and how it differentiated, so as to gain adaptation to every necessity of the Church, St. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. xii. 8-11; and he most carefully associates the gift or power with the presence of the

indwelling Spirit. "For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits: to another *divers* kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will." In the possession of these gifts the Church has one of its best evidences of the "great salvation." The bestowment of the gift is God's direct witness to the "salvation."

I. **Gifts are special enduements of power.**—The man who has the gift has something which he had not before. It might or it might not bear relation to some natural faculty. But it was something new.

II. **Every person regenerate in Christ had some special gift.**—This truth has not been fully apprehended; and so the gift of each disciple has neither been looked for by himself nor by others; and consequently the Church is full of men with unused, and so virtually lost gifts.

III. **The gifts are the sign of the presence and the inworking of the Divine and indwelling Spirit.**—This is their deepest significance. We have them only because we have the Spirit. The Spirit comes to us before the gifts.

IV. **The presence of the Holy Spirit is the seal of our personal salvation.**—And so the gifts which declare that we have the Spirit witness that we are the saved ones on whom the Lord has "set His mark."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—18.

The Representative Manhood of the Divine Son.—It is necessary to deal with this passage as a whole, because only one subject is really treated in it. The writer has referred to the angels, and has shown the superiority of Jesus to them in being the Divine Son. But he had spoken of the angels as "ministering *spirits.*" Not men; not in the earthly range; and so not effective agents in accomplishing human redemption. If he had dwelt upon the *superiority* of Christ to angels, he must also recognise His temporary *inferiority* to angels. If he dwells first on the primary truth of our Lord's Deity, he must also present the equally essential truth of His humanity. "He was made a little lower than the angels" by becoming a *man*; and a man He must become if He would accomplish the redemption of man. "The temporary humiliation was the voluntary and predestined means whereby alone He could accomplish His redemptive work." But the writer approaches his theme from a fresh and somewhat unusual side; we might almost say that he comes round to it in an indirect way. This is his point, "The voluntary humiliation of Jesus was a necessary step in the exaltation of humanity."

I. **God's promise to man is vindicated in Christ.**—In having the limitations of a human body, with its five senses, man is made "a little lower than the angels"; but in the earth-sphere where he, in the body, is placed he is supreme, he is lord, everything is subject to him. So God constituted his relations. Amid all earthly things man stands first, "crowned with glory and honour." "Set over the works of God's hands," the entire material universe. And having "all things put in subjection under his feet." 1. Rule in the earthly and human spheres is in no sense given to angels. "Unto the angels did He not subject the inhabited earth [margin, R.V.] whereof we speak." 2. But, as a matter of fact, this complete rule, which God designed for him, has never yet been realised by *ordinary man.* "Now we see not yet all things put under him." That fact is explained by man's wilfully breaking loose from the laws and conditions which

God had arranged, and so bringing sin and death into the world, things which are entirely beyond man's control, by which he has always been mastered. All things then are not subject to the ordinary man. There is very much that is subject to him. In one direction he is limited. Death, and the sin which makes it a necessity, man cannot control. 3. This complete rule over absolutely all things in the earth-sphere is realised in one Man, the representative Man, the "Man Christ Jesus." The *Son* was made "a little lower than the angels," made a man, in order that He might deal with the one thing—death—which man had no power to conquer. As a man only was it possible for Him to "taste death," and in the very experience of it conquer it. "Through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death." It was as if an alien power held death; and from him man could never wrest it; so all his life, master whatsoever he might, man was afraid of death, and subject to its bondage. Christ the man won for man the mastery of the one thing that completed man's mastery of the earth, and now, in Christ, God's promise to man is realised—"all things are in subjection unto Him."

II. **See how much is involved in the vindication.**—Death is only a climax and result. It involves so much. And He who gains the mastery of death must gain with it the mastery of *all that it involves.* 1. It is the climax of sin. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Then it must be evident that Christ has gained the power to deal with and master human sin. 2. But the writer has another thing in mind. Suffering is in the world, as God's disciplinary agency for the correcting of sin. And He who conquers death for man, and masters sin for man, must also have the power to deal with suffering. And just as He yielded to death and took all its bitterness away, so He yielded to suffering and took all its bitterness away; nay, even gained His power to sanctify suffering, and take away sin by suffering—was made a perfect Bringer-on of souls to glory by suffering. What have we then in Christ when we can fully embrace the double truth of His Deity and His humanity? 1. His sympathy—born of actual experience—in our times of suffering. 2. His representative triumph over death, which secures us relief from the "fear of death." 3. The destruction of death itself in its relation to sin; and His present living mastery—as our Head—of the sins that bring on death, and the sufferings that were necessary to exhibit the evil of sin, and to discipline man in his efforts to master sin. "It behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren," that He might deliver them from their sin and death bondage, and come into their lives as a sympathetic and efficient spiritual helper.

(*In "Suggestive Notes" see passage from Moses Stuart.*)

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 5. "*The Infinite Superiority of Jesus to the Angels* is not diminished but rather enhanced by the temporary humiliation which was the voluntary and predestined means whereby alone He could accomplish His redemptive work."

The Temptableness of Christ's Manhood.—"Temptation of its own nature involves suffering, and it is too generally overlooked that though our Lord's severest temptations came in two great and solemn crises—in the wilderness and at Gethsemane—yet Scripture leads us to the view that He was always *liable* to temptation, though without sin, because the temptation was always repudiated with the whole force of His will throughout the whole course of His life of obedience." It is indeed essential to any and every moral being that he shall be temptable, and it shall be possible to yield to temptation and

fall. This truth is illustrated in the legend of the fall of the angels. Too often angels are thought of as untemptable. What is promised to us is not a future removal of the liabilities of the moral nature, which we shall always have, but a Divine life in our will, which will give us the absolute security that Christ enjoyed.

The Objection to Salvation by a Fellow-man.—As the Jews, one and all, conceded that the dispensation of the Messiah would be of a higher order than that of Moses, proof that Jesus was the sole mediator or head of the new dispensation, and that angels were not employed as mediators or *internuntii* in it, would satisfy them that Jesus was superior to angels. But the unbelieving Jew would be likely to urge the seeming absurdity of renouncing subjection to a dispensation of which angels were the mediators, and of acknowledging a subjection to one of which the professed head and mediator appeared *in our nature*. It was repulsive to the feelings of the unbelieving Jews, that one to all appearance like a man, and made up of flesh and blood in the same manner as themselves, should advance a claim to the exalted honour of a superior and Divine nature. The writer concedes the fact entirely, that Jesus had a nature truly and properly human. But instead of granting that this proves the new dispensation to be inferior to that of Moses, he proceeds to adduce evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures, to show that man, or the human nature in the person of the Messiah, should be made Lord of the universe. Consequently, in this nature, Jesus the Messiah is superior to angels. Nay, more, it was becoming that God should exalt Jesus, in consequence of His obedience unto death. To suffer this death, He must needs take on Him a nature like ours. And as His object was the salvation of *men* (and not of *angelic beings*), so He participated in the nature of men, in order that by *experience* He might know their sufferings, temptations, and trials, and thus be prepared, in a peculiar manner, to be compassionate and ready to succour. The sum of the whole is: "The possession of a human nature by Jesus is far from being a reason why the ancient dispensation (of which angels were the *internuntii*) is preferable to the new one; for—1. This very nature is exalted far above the angels. 2. Without participating in this nature, Jesus could not have made expiation for sin by His death. 3. The possession of such a nature did contribute in a peculiar and endearing manner to constitute Him such a Saviour as men could approach with the greatest boldness and confidence, in all their wants and in all their woes" (*Moses Stuart*).

Ver. 8. *The Limited Supremacy of Man.*—Scripture is no story of the material universe. Man is the central figure there, or, to speak more truly, the only figure; all else serves but as a background for him. He is not one part, not the highest merely in the scale of its creatures, but the lord of all; all the visible creation borrow their wealth and significance from their relationship to him. Such he appears in the ideal worth and dignity of his unfallen condition; even now, when only a broken fragment of the sceptre with which he once ruled the world remains in his hands, such he is commanded to regard himself still.—*Trench.*

Man a King.—Man is a king; God hath put a crown upon his head, and not only so, but hath given him a territory and subjects (see Gen. i. 26), where what David means by "all things" is in the same manner enumerated. St. Paul, however, extends the meaning of "all things" far beyond this. David's "all things" and Paul's "all things" are not the same: the one is thinking of the visible world, the other of the invisible world; the one speaks of that within us, the other of that which is to come. The words may

be true of man, but in their higher sense they are truer of Christ as the great Head of mankind, and of man only in Him, in whom only is to be seen their proper fulfilment.—*J. S. Perowne, D.D.*

Man's Authority in Creation.—The trust of *material* things committed to man, as recorded in Gen. i. 26, 28, man has fully responded to. It may be truly said that no living creature has been unable to yield to his authority: no nature-force has refused to be yoked to do his bidding; and no combination of difficult circumstances has baffled his masterfulness. But man has failed to rule himself. Having made the fatal mistake in not ruling himself, he cannot now recover his power of moral self-command. Christ, the ideal Man, came to this world to give man back his lost power over himself. His redemption is the recovery of man to his ideal. It is the completing of man's supremacy over everything, by winning for him the supremacy over himself. The sign of man's limited supremacy is his absolute inability to mate and master *death*, which is the issue and seal of sin. Before death man stands morally helpless, because before sin he is ineffective. Then the Saviour of man must show that He can, as man, deal efficiently with sin, by dealing, as man, efficiently with death. In man's name, and for man, and as man, Jesus wrestled with death, and conquered it; and so He has gained for man his full supremacy. *In Christ* "all things" are now put under him.

Burning the Earth.—Any one casually reading this verse might imagine that the last clause refers to the "thorns and briars," especially as this idea seems to be supported by comparison of the passage with Isa. ix. 18, xxiii. 12, etc. The original Greek, however, for "whose" (ἧς) is in the singular number, and must relate to *the land*, "which beareth thorns and briars." St. Paul alludes to the custom, common to the Romans, and other heathen nations, of burning the barren fields, or, rather, the stubble, etc., standing upon them, according to Virgil, who, in his book on husbandry (*Georg.*, i. 84), lays down this rule:—

> "'Tis well to set on fire the barren fields,
> And burn in crackling flames the stubble light."

Vers. 8, 9. *Manhood crowned in Jesus.*—The text brings before us a threefold sight. It bids us *look around*; and if that sadden us, it bids us *look up*, and thence it bids us draw confidence to *look forward*. There is an estimate of present facts, there is a perception by faith of the unseen fact of Christ's glory, and there follows from that the calm prospect for the future for ourselves and for our brethren.

I. **Look at the sight around us.**—"We see not yet all things put under man." It is a sight of human incompleteness. Where are the men of whom any portion of the psalmist's words are true. Look at them—are these the men of whom he sings? Visited by God! crowned with glory and honour! having dominion over the works of His hands! Is this irony or fact? 1. Let consciousness speak. 2. Let biographies speak. 3. Let observation speak.

II. **Look upwards to Jesus.**—Christ in glory appears to the author of this epistle to be the full realisation of the psalmist's ideal. Our text deals only with the exalted dignity and present majesty of the ascended Lord; but both the ascended Christ upon the throne, and the historical Christ upon the earth, teach us what man may be, the one in regard of dignity, the other in regard of goodness. Here is a fact. Such a life was verily once lived on earth—a life of true manhood, whatever more it was. And that life is to be our standard. In Jesus Christ is the type; and, albeit it is alone in its beauty, yet it is more truly a specimen of manhood than the fragmentary, distorted, incomplete men are who are found everywhere besides. Christ is

the power to conform us to Himself, as well as the pattern of what we may be. But what does Scripture teach us to see in the exalted Lord? 1. *A perpetual manhood.* There is a strong tendency in many minds to think of Christ's incarnation and humanity as transitory, the wearing of a garb of human nature but for a moment. The Biblical representation is, that for evermore, by an indissoluble union, the human is assumed into the Divine, and that "to-day and for ever" He remains the Man Christ Jesus. Without this truth, that mighty work which He ever carries on, of succouring them that are tempted, and having compassion with us, were impossible. 2. *A corporeal manhood.* The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ are our great reasons for believing that man, in his perfect condition, has body as well as spirit. And that belief is one chief means of giving definiteness and reality to our anticipations of a future life. 3. *Transfigured manhood.* The natural body changed into the spiritual body. 4. *Sovereign manhood.* Here is a Man exalted to absolute, universal dominion.

III. **Look forward.** — The day is coming wherein men shall be all that God proposed, and all that their Saviour is. Christ is the measure of man's capacities. He is the true pattern of human nature. Christ is the prophecy and pledge of man's dominion. From Christ comes the power by which the prophecy is fulfilled, and the pattern reproduced in all who love Him. He is more than Pattern —He is Power; more than Specimen —He is Source; more than Example— He is Redeemer. The answer to my own evil conscience, to the sad inferences from man's past and present, to the conclusions which are illegitimately sought to be extended from man's material place in a material universe to man's spiritual place as an immortal and moral being, lies in that twofold sight,—Christ on His cross the measure of man's worth in the eyes of God, and of man's place in the creation; Christ on the throne the prophecy of man's dignity, and of His most sure dominion. —*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 9. *The Bitter Cup.*—Jesus on the cross! Why is He there? By the force of circumstances? Hell and earth had conspired against Him. Every power and device which malice could summon are there to play their infernal part in His crucifixion. He dies by the hand of the law, moved by hatred; no—but by the grace of God. Did He die for expediency' sake? Must one life be sacrificed to assert the rights of truth and justice? No—but "by the grace," etc. "For God so loved the world," etc., and "delivered Him up for us all." The *cup* was sometimes the emblem of bitterness. So in Isa. li. 17: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out." The cup of *hemlock.* And He said in Gethsemane, "The cup which the Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" "They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxix. 21).

I. **The death of Christ was an act of voluntary submission to the will of the Father.**—The admiral of the *Orient* had a beautiful son of thirteen years, who was on board with him in the battle of the Nile. He was at his post according to his father's orders when the ship took fire, and he stood at his post until the powder magazine was fired, and the ship blown to atoms. This is a faint picture of the terrible sufferings through which the Son of God passed. In the garden the storm began to rage, and the flames issued from the hold; then He cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." But there was no answer. Again He cried, with blood-sweat running down His brow, but no answer. The storm raged more furiously. The nails are driven through His hands and feet. He is

on the cross, and the flames of hell are burning around Him. He cried again, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But no answer. Crash goes the vessel, and down He sank into the gulf of death. "It is finished!" The heavens are black with the smoke. The earth trembles. The old ship of the ceremonial law which had weathered many storms, and borne thousands of precious souls on its deck to glory, is totally wrecked. The old Aaronic priesthood is shattered, and the Son of God goes down in the catastrophe to show that there is *One* who obeys the Divine behests even unto death. All ye fallen angels behold Him, and ye stiff-necked sons of men witness the One who follows the Captain's orders to the bitter end! "For this cause the Father loveth Me," etc. "Lo, I come, O God, to do Thy will," etc. He tasted death by the grace of God, and the cup was drained by the lip of love.

II. **The death of Christ is the highest demonstration of God's mercy.**—The gracious promise at Eden's gate—the woman's seed; the breath of mercy tempering the moral law on Sinai, "Keeping mercy for thousands," etc.—all was mercy. As the lamb dies on the ancient altar, mercy speaks of repentance and peace. On Calvary wisdom is out of sight, power is in the shade; but mercy stands before justice in full array. Jesus dies because God is merciful.

III. **The death of Christ is the mightiest instrument for man's salvation.**—It is the lever with which God lifts up the human race. It has opened the way to the Father—a sacrifice for sin. In the light of the cross justice shines brighter than in the bowers of Eden. He has made the law honourable. Be not afraid; the living way to the Father through His flesh is straight and safe. It has dealt a deadly blow to sin. The hero and the suitors. Taking down the old bow, and striking home the arrow. Sin dies: the death-scene and funeral were witnessed on Calvary.

IV. **Jesus is crowned with everlasting glory.**—There is no more bitterness in the cup.—*Weekly Pulpit.*

Ver. 10. *The Physical Suffering, or Cross of Christ.*—The apostle is here virtually making answer to Anselm's famous question, "Cur Deus Homo." In the previous verse, finding Jesus made a little lower than the angels, and, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, it is as if the apostle's mind began to ask: Why did He suffer thus, or come in the way of suffering at all? Why could not God, the Almighty, strike out the needed salvation by a shorter method, without suffering, viz. by His omnipotent force? Whereupon He makes answer, virtually, that force is out of the question, because the needed salvation is a purely moral result, which can be accomplished only by moral means and motives. The declaration of the apostle's answer is, that God, the Almighty, must needs work morally in such a case, and not by force; and that Christ, the Leader, is made perfect, or perfectly competent, as regards the moral new creation, or bringing up into glory, by His cross and the tragic eloquence of His death. Let then our question be: Why should Christ, in the redeeming of souls and bringing them unto glory, subject Himself to physical suffering?—what, in other words, were the necessities and uses of that suffering? The question is here confined to physical suffering. He encountered two distinct kinds of suffering—mental and bodily—that which belongs to burdened feeling and wounded sensibility, and that which is caused by outward privation, or violence done against the physical nature. In the New Testament the word "suffering" is only applied to the latter. But physical suffering, taken by itself, or as being simply what it is in itself, is never a thing of value. On the contrary, it is, so far, a thing on the losing side of existence. It is not, in fact, a commodity of any kind, exchangeable or

not exchangeable, but a simple incommodity, a quantity purely negative, and a worse than worthless fact. And this is true of Christ's suffering. Taken as physical pain simply, nothing is to be made of it. It has no relation to personal desert; and, regarding the Divine order of the Sufferer, it is even a shocking anomaly, which reason cannot comprehend, and faith only can accept. God does not exact a retributive suffering, even in what is called His justice, because He wants so much in quantity to even the amount of wrong, but only that He may vindicate the right and testify His honour to it by a fit expression. It may be said: Are not the physical sufferings of Christ what are called, in the Scripture, His sacrifice for sin? And what is the use of sacrifice but to atone God's justice? But the fact is, that all the sacrificial and lustral figures set forth the sacrifice, not as a way of reconciling God to us, but of reconciling us to God. And so universally—I do not know the instance where Christ's cross and physical suffering are conceived as a making satisfaction to God's justice. It is quite conceivable that Christ could have been incarnated into the world in such a way as to involve no physical liability at all. There was no necessary condition of physical suffering implied in His Messiahship. Why then did He come under conditions of suffering? what uses did He expect to serve by it, such as would compensate the loss? It was done that He might be made perfect by such suffering,—perfect, that is, not in His character, but in His official competency; perfect as having gotten power over men, through His sufferings, to be the sufficient Bringer-on, or Captain, He undertakes to be, in bringing many sons unto glory. Coming down to do a work of love, He simply took the liabilities of a human person doing such a work. What then is the manner and degree of that power over men's convictions and feelings which Christ obtained by His physical suffering?

I. **The manner in which, by His physical suffering, He magnifies and sanctifies the law in men's convictions.**—The true Christian idea is that Christ is magnifying the law and making it honourable, not before the remote altitudes, but before the sinning souls of this world by whom it has been trampled. Christ came into the world with a perfect right to be exempted from physical suffering. There is nothing in His character to require this kind of discipline, or even to make it just. He also had power to put all suffering by, and sail over the world as the stars do, in a region of calm and comfort above it. But He would not infringe on the penal order of God's retributions. Having taken humanity, He takes all the judicial liabilities of human society under sin, preferring in this manner to submit Himself to the corporate order of God's judgments, and testify in that manner His profound homage to law and justice. He will let the world be to Him just that river of vinegar and gall which its sins have made it to itself. So He bears the world's bitter curse, magnifying, even by His pains, the essential sanctity of law and justice. He powerfully honours that justice in its dealings with the world, by refusing to let even His innocence take Him out of the murderous and bloody element it mixes. Hence the marvellous, unheard of power His life and gospel, and especially His suffering death, have exerted in men's consciences.

II. **The physical suffering of Christ has an immediate value, under that great law of human nature, that ordains the disarming of all wrong, and the prostration of all violence, by a right suffering of the evils they inflict.**—Nothing breaks the bad will of evil so completely as to have had its way, and done its injury, and looked upon its victim. When the wrath of transgression hurls itself upon the Lord's person, sparing not His life, nor even letting Him die easily or in respect, the bad will is only the more

fatally broken, that, accomplishing so much in a way so dreadful, it has yet accomplished nothing. Suffering kills, how often, the wrong-doing that inflicts it.

III. **The sublime morality or moral worth of Jesus could never have been sharply impressed, except for the sensibilities appealed to by His physical suffering.**—If He had lived in condition, and died as one admired for His excellence, the real depth of His virtue could never have been conceived. All the most effective powers of moral impression contained in His character would have been wanting if He had not borne the lot of wrong and bitter suffering.

IV. **It is only by His suffering in the flesh that He reveals or fitly expresses the suffering sensibility of God.**—As certain as God has any sensibility, such as belongs to a perfect mind and heart, that sensibility must be profoundly moved by all misery, impurity, and wrong. Impassible, physically speaking, He is not impassive to evils that offend or grieve His moral perfections. He suffers because He is a perfect being, and according to the measures of His perfection. This Christ, for our salvation's sake, has taken the flesh and suffered even death in order to impress. Nature, in her scenes and objects, had no power to express this moral pain of God's heart. The ancient providential history was trying, always vainly, to elaborate the same. Nothing could ever express it but the physical suffering of Jesus. And everything turns here on the matter of physical suffering; for, to our coarse human habit, nothing else appears at first to have much reality. And here comes to view the relation of the agony to the cross. One is the reality, the other is the outward sign or symbol. In one view it is even a scandal that we make so much more of the cross than we do of the agony. The grand thing to be revealed is that which stands in the agony; and the superior value of the cross, or physical suffering, lies in the fact that it comes to us, at our low point, speaking to us of the other, in a way that we can feel.

V. **It was necessary that Christ should suffer in the body, and get power over men by that kind of suffering, because the world itself is put in a tragic economy, requiring its salvation to be an essentially tragic salvation.**—Human history is tragic in its characters and scenes, and its material generally. The great crimes are tragic, and the great virtues scarcely less so. So if Christ will pluck away eternal judgment for the world, He must bleed for it. So great a salvation must tear a passage into the world by some tragic woe. The tragic power of the cross takes hold of all that is dullest and hardest and most intractable in our sin, and moves over palsied nature, all through, in mighty throbs of life. And this is Christianity, meeting us just where we most require to be met. Christ is a great Bringer-on for us, because He suffers for us. Christianity is a mighty salvation, because it is a tragic salvation.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

The Moral Necessity for Christ's Death.—Unlike St. Paul, the writer never enters into what may be called "the philosophy of the plan of salvation." He never attempts to throw any light upon the mysterious subject of the antecedent necessity for the death of Christ. He dwells upon Christ's death almost exclusively *in its relation to us.* The expression which he here uses, "it was morally fitting for Him," is almost the only one which he devotes to what may be called the *transcendent side* of Christ's sacrifice—the death of Christ in its relation to *God.* The "moral fitness" here touched upon is the necessity for absolutely sympathetic unity between the High Priest and those for whom He offered the perfect sacrifice (Luke xxiv. 46). Philo also uses the phrase "it became Him."—*Farrar.*

Perfect through Suffering.—The text

gains clearness if for the word "Captain" we put the more general term "Leader," or read the verse thus: "In bringing many sons to glory, to make the Bringer-on of their salvation perfect through suffering." By "perfect" we understand perfectly efficient to sustain and to fulfil His office, and to accomplish His work, of "bringing many sons unto glory."

I. **The sufferings of Jesus.**—1. Some of the deepest, though least comprehensible, of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus must have come out of *His very being and nature.* He was God, with all the feeling of God towards sin and its consequences. His body of flesh and blood must have been to Him a constant limitation and burden. That human nature which Jesus took, He took *as it was*—no longer the perfect thing of the Eden Paradise, but lowered, enfeebled, in some strange ways a bruised and wounded thing, shaped and fitted through long years to be the agency of man's depraved will and sinful soul. A sinful nature the Son of God could not take; but a bodily nature as marred and enfeebled by sin He did take; and we can but very unworthily conceive the strain on His daily life of the effort to utter His pure soul through that frail and feeble body. And that Divine-human being was not set in seclusion, and fitted to a place where no annoyance should reach it. It was put in the very midst of the world, and the world's worst. A pure soul can only be happy in pure surroundings. Ensphere true goodness in evil, and you may not thereby turn the good to evil, but you cannot help piercing, wounding, grieving, goodness to the very heart. 2. Some of the sufferings of Jesus must have come out of His unusual capacity for sympathy. To sympathise is to have a fellow-feeling with a sufferer, and to take his burden upon our heart. Then if Christ bore the burden of the sins and sorrows of this grief-loaded, weary earth of ours, must He not have suffered? Even love is scarcely possible without suffering. The worthier the love is, the more it makes us one with its object; and if it unites us with his joys, makes us keenly sensible of his sorrows, and deeply touched by his sins. 3. Something of the sufferings of Jesus appear as we consider the *work He undertook.* (1) Part of that work was to make men see and feel that *God was their Father.* The memory of their sufferings and sacrifices on our behalf make precious to us our earthly father and mother. If God is to be apprehended by us as our heavenly Father, it can only be in the revelation of His fatherly sacrifices and sufferings, borne in the endeavour to redeem us, and win us away from evil. But that work Jesus the Son must do. That revelation of the fatherliness of God He must make. (2) He was to demonstrate to men the *evil of sin.* Men can never know that save through its consequences. Death—the death of peace and purity and hope—is the great revealer of sin. So our Lord let men see in Himself the evil of sin. He laid Himself open to the fiercest attacks, and rudest buffetings, and deepest anguish that sin could bring upon a man. He put Himself into our human nature, that in suffering He might show the world what sin is, and what sin can do. The corruption of Greece was shown up when it had spent itself in the hemlock-death of its great teacher Socrates. The utter and hopeless badness of humanity is seen in this—men even turned out and crucified incarnate virtue, in the person of God's dear Son.

II. **How did the sufferings of our Lord fit Him to be the Bringer-on of sons to glory?**—1. Those sufferings brought Him *experience.* God saves moral beings by bringing moral forces to bear on them. He brings the most persuasive influence by giving to us a human Saviour. We want to feel sure that He has experience, and an experience like ours. If He has indeed trodden our valleys of humiliation, then He does know our human life altogether, and can help us. 2. The sufferings of Jesus set Him most fully

in the love and trust of His people. He might have been the founder of a religious ceremonial; but a new religious system could never bring any soul to glory. He might have been a great reformer; but a reformation is not necessarily a salvation. He might have been a teacher, with new truths and principles; but to furnish stimulus for the intellect of man is not to change and renew his heart. No man can be really a new man until his heart is reached. Our Lord Jesus, then, if He is to save the world, must get into the world's heart. He must draw out to Himself the full affection of a man's soul. But how shall that be done? By an exhibition of perfect purity and beauty? Men can admire without loving. By a revelation of Divine claims? Men are too busy to heed them; and unless God utters His laws amid thunders such as those of Sinai, men will not heed. Then let us adore the Divine solution of the mystery. God sets before men a sacrificed, suffering, dying Saviour. No man can pass by the cross of Calvary altogether unmoved, for suffering is sacred to every man. The suffering Saviour gets into the world's heart, according to His own word, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." 3. The sufferings of Jesus, in their result, showed *the way open, through suffering, to glory.* Suffering is God's witness to the evil of sin. Every pain, wrong, passion, disease, is a letter designed to help us in spelling out the abominableness of sin. Yet the grace of God turns the evil into good, changes earthen clay into better than fine gold, compels suffering to become even a pathway to glory. God sent His own Son to tread that pathway first; and He opens the way for us. We watch Him struggling through the common sorrows of a human life, through the over-crowding sorrows of an ignominious death, and we behold Him at last reaching a throne of everlasting dominion, and seated for ever on the right hand of God. Along that pathway to a like glory He is leading us. Apply: 1. Jesus is *the* Bringer-on of sons to glory. 2. Jesus is the *only* Bringer-on.

Ver. 11. *Christ the Friend.*—This verse is a statement of the union that exists between Christ and His people, and of the *perfect sympathy* which the Elder Brother feels for the other members of the family of God.

I. **The vitality of the union that exists between Christ and His Church.**—1. The union between Christ and a believer is not so much one of co-operation as one of incorporation. For as my limbs are a part of my body, as the branch is part of a tree, so Christ and His people are verily and indeed members one of another. And the union between Christ and His true Church—the members of His body—can never be dissolved. 2. Treat this truth as a solemn reality. Do not think of it as a mere theory or doctrine or speculation. It is a great fact to *live* by day by day. 3. Since the Saviour and His people are together sons of one God, He in His love and condescension annihilates the distance that is between them, and He calls them *brethren.* He is "the first-born among many brethren." He "is not ashamed to call them brethren."

II. **Connected with this truth there is the assurance of Christ's constancy.**—There is no sorrow, no emotion, that we need hide from our "Brother" in heaven; for there is no pang that the members feel which is not felt by Him. Nor is there any interruption to His sympathy.

Application.—As Christ is "not ashamed to call us brethren," let none of us be ashamed of Him. And remember that to confess Christ is to maintain His authority when it is despised, to uphold His laws when they are contemned, to oppose His enemies where we may make enemies ourselves. Let us *thus* confess Christ our Friend.—*Canon Bell.*

Vers. 11-13. *The Perfect Manhood of*

Christ.—"Sanctify" in the text, and throughout this epistle, does not refer to the cleansing work of the Spirit, but to the atoning work of the Son. The teaching of the text is—the perfect manhood of our blessed Lord.

I. **The proposition.**—That "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Of one what? "Father," "family," "race," "blood," "character"? No; of one "nature" (ver. 10). The perfect manhood of the Son of God is part of our faith, and the very foundation of our hope of heaven. The disciples needed all the evidence of His stupendous miracles, the dazzling scene of His transfiguration, the crowning proof of His resurrection, to convince them that He was perfect God; we need to feel that if in any respect He had been unlike "His brethren," it would have defeated one great purpose of His mission. He was precisely "of one" with us. 1. *In person.* His body, though always a chaste and perfect temple in which the fulness of the Godhead might dwell, had none of that superhuman glory with which we so often associate it. John the Baptist "knew Him not" till he saw the Spirit descend on Him. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Mary supposed "Him to be the gardener." 2. *In this perfect body there was enshrined as perfectly human a soul.* The conditions of the Incarnation required that both natures should exist in all their perfectness, in unity of person, but without any confusion of substance—and these two conditions were fulfilled in the Saviour. We have no more right to deify the Saviour's manhood than to humanise His Godhead. The human soul of the Saviour was so far distinct from His Deity as to be in every respect finite. His human soul was not possessed of an unassailable purity. As a human soul He wept, He prayed, He suffered. 3. *This oneness of nature between the Christian and His Lord is dependent not simply on the memory that He was incarnate once, but on the fact also that He is incarnate now.* Never was the Saviour more truly a man than He is now. Note His appearances to His disciples after His resurrection, the manner of His ascension. He is "God over all"; but no less surely is He perfect Man, throbbing with the memory of human sorrow, touched with the feeling of human infirmity, filled with sympathy for human nature.

II. **The confirmation of this doctrine in the Scriptures** (vers. 12, 13).—The first is taken from Ps. xxii. 22—a psalm prophetic of our Lord's sufferings. 1. "*I will declare . . . unto My brethren.*" This prophecy was fulfilled. "No man hath seen God," etc. "I have declared Thy name unto them, and I will declare it." 2. "*In the midst of the Church I will sing praise unto Thee.*" This was fulfilled. Immediately before His passion they sang a hymn. 3. *He engaged in human employments; and while we share in these employments, we are truly of one with Him.* What honour! He is not ashamed to call you His brother, sister, mother. (1) *To Christians.* How often since you have named the Saviour's name has He been "ashamed to call" you brethren? Are you faithful or faithless? How often ashamed to confess Him before a sneering world? "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." "Seeing then that we have such a High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus . . . let us come boldly to the throne of grace," etc. (2) *To unconverted.* Seek Him now. Religion is here presented in its most alluring form. Come. Plead His atonement, and know what it is to be "all of one" with Christ.—*Frederic Greeves, D.D.*

Ver. 14. *The Personality of the Devil.*—This was one reason why the Son of God took on Him our nature, that He might put Himself into circumstances where death was possible, in order that by dying He might free us from our ancient enemy. He has won the victory, and it is our fault if we are not free.

I. **The being who was to be reduced to impotence by the death of Jesus Christ.**—What do we know about his history, character, his power of affecting ourselves and our destiny? Some say: 1. "*It is an unpleasant subject.*" Nothing is gained, and much is lost, by shrinking from fact because fact is disagreeable. Religion, beyond everything else, should have the courage to look truth in the face. 2. "*The devil is an unprofitable subject for discussion.*" Much, practically, depends on our believing in him or not. We are more profoundly affected by feeling ourselves close to a living being, than by feeling ourselves under the vague and more intangible influence of a negative principle. When it is embodied in a living intelligence—in a living will—the case is very different. How can evil itself be, strictly speaking, a principle! Evil is a perverted selfish quality of the will of an already existing personal creature. Evil could not exist apart from such a creature unless the will of such a creature was free. When we speak of the personality of Satan, we mean that he is an intelligence capable of reflecting on his own existence; he is a will which has had the power of determining its destiny.

II. **There is no real room for question as to the existence of a personal evil spirit, if we believe the Bible to be a trustworthy source of information on the subject.**—All that implies personality is attributed to Satan in Holy Scripture, as distinctly as it is attributed to God. The New Testament representation is fuller and more sustained than that of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ spoke of Satan's personality: *e.g.* in parable of the sower; the saying about Judas; His denunciation of the Jews. His prayer bequeathed to us, "Deliver us from the Evil One." The facts of human life bear out what we learn from the lips of Jesus Christ. There are two points in the Christian representation of the Evil One to which attention should specially be given. 1. *Satan was not always what he is now.* He was once a glorious archangel. He became what he is now by his own act and deed. The Bible always represents Satan, not as a self-existent, evil being, but as a fallen and apostate angel. There is no such thing in the universe of the almighty and all-good God as a self-existing, originally created devil. 2. *The Satan of Scripture has limited, although extensive, powers.* It is a mistake to think of this being as omnipresent. He is often enough in the way—not always—not everywhere. His power is only for a given period.

III. **"How can you reconcile the continued toleration of such a being as the Evil One by God, with His attributes of goodness and almightiness?"**—The Master of the universe sees farther than we do, and will one day, perhaps, enable us to understand in a measure these rules of His government which perplex us now.

IV. **Let us fix in our minds the words and lessons of the text.**—Sin brought death. Jesus, as man, invaded this region of human experience, and conquered for Himself and for us its old oppressor. Let us follow the guidance of faith. The lessons of Calvary do not lessen with the lapse of time; and, among these, not the least blessed is the enfeeblement of Satan, and the deliverance of those who, through fear of death, would else be all their lifetime subject to bondage. —*H. P. Liddon, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *The Fear of Death a Lifelong Bondage.*—It is not possible to over-estimate the value to humanity of the "sanctity of human life." It is the primary law stamped upon the new human race when it stepped forth from the Ark to take possession of a cleansed earth. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). The sanctity of life is the basis of society, for it makes every man jealous of his brother's life for the sake of preserving his own. There is no safety for any one in lands where

this primary law for humanity is not recognised. But there is, of necessity, an apparently bad side to this good law. It involves dread of death. And this dread is universal. It applies to all beings in whom is the breath of life. It is natural. But the moral nature of man at once puts a new sanctity on life, and a new dread on death. The moral being man has brought sin into the world, and put a new significance upon death. In the consciousness of having sinned there has come the fear of penalties that must attend upon the sin, and a dread of death as taking us where those penalties must be endured. So the consciousness of sin has put on men a life-long dread of death. And that dread has come to be so stamped upon the race that it seems like a second nature, and the good cannot shake themselves altogether free of it. The saintly soul could only say this much, "I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of dying." What can give us liberty from this enslaving fear? Only the possession of a new life—soul-life—which death is altogether powerless to touch. Over the animal-life of man death has its power. Over the real life, the soul-life, when quickened in the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith in Christ, death has no power. The life in Christ is a spiritual and eternal life. Jesus Himself said, "He that believeth in Me shall never die." By the new life He gives, He delivers those who "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Vers. 16-18. *Christ made like us in all things.*—Two points in which Christ was different from us: 1. In being God as well as man. 2. In being without sin. In these things He had to be unlike His brethren, or He could not have been a Saviour at all. In all other things it behoved Him to be made like unto us. There was no part of our condition that He did not humble Himself unto. 1. He passed through all the terms of our life from childhood to manhood. He was an infant of days. He bore the trials and pains of boyhood. He suffered the afflictions and anxieties of manhood. 2. He tasted the difficulties of many situations in life. 3. He had special trials in connection with His own family. 4. He was assailed by Satan. 5. He was tested by God. The purpose of His human experience was: (1) to make an atonement for our sins; (2) to succour His people under their trials.—*R. M. McCheyne.*

Ver. 17. *Priestly Reconciliations.*—"To make propitiation for the sins of the people." There is no attempt to explain precisely how the high priest made the propitiations. Attention is fixed upon his ability to do it; and the ability is found very largely to depend upon his personal character. He could make propitiation because he was a "merciful and faithful high priest"—merciful by reason of his common experience with those whom he represented. He well understood their sins of frailty and of will, because he shared them. If a rebellious nation sent an intercessor to plead for pardon, they would select one of themselves, one most deeply interested in all their trouble, and the best and most acceptable man among them. That man would not only propitiate by what he said and did—he would propitiate by what he *was*; for standing before the king, that man would show what the people were, and wanted to be. He would embody the people to the view of the king; and nothing could possibly propitiate a king like such a living persuasion that his people had come to be right, were right, and meant to be right. Along this line the old priestly reconciliations of Mosaism gain simple and natural explanation. The high priest was acceptable to Jehovah, because he was in right relations. But he stood for the people, and they were as acceptable as he, because they were in the same right relations. Along this line the propitiation of Jesus can be explained. He is personally accept-

able to God as a man, but He stands before God for all who are in the same relations of purposed love and obedience as He; and they are accepted in and with Him.

Sympathetic Intercession.—When a tender-hearted mother would plead with the judge for a child about to be condemned, how would her tears trickle down, what weeping rhetoric would she use to the judge for mercy! Thus the Lord Jesus is full of sympathy and tenderness (Heb. ii. 17), that He might be a merciful High Priest; He has left His passion, yet not His compassion. An ordinary lawyer is not affected with the cause he pleads, nor does he care what way he goes; it is his profit makes him plead, not affection. But Christ intercedes feelingly; it is His own cause which He pleads in the cause of His people.—*T. Watson.*

Ver. 18. *The Helper of the Tempted.*—In promise (Gen. iii. 15) and in fact (Matt. iv. 1) the Saviour's work from the very first is associated with the tempted; and put His mission in any words you will, you cannot hide the link which unites Christ unto the tempted, and the tempted unto Christ. Wherefore did we need a Saviour, if not because we were overborne with evil, and of ourselves had not strength enough to cope with it? A Christ who could not help me in my temptations would be no Saviour to me. He might startle me with revelations, astonish me by works, amaze me with power, awe with holiness, instruct me by teaching; but if in the infirmity of my moral weakness He could not stand by my side, put His shoulder to my shoulder, and help me to fight the daily battle of my daily life, whatever else He might be to me, He could never be my Saviour; for it is only as we are made strong to resist and overcome temptation that we can be saved. This relation of Christianity to the tempted is, in fact, one of the secrets of its hold upon the human heart. To be a Christian at all we must start from the consciousness of weakness; and the religion of Christ is the religion of the strong, only by being first the religion of the weak. Christ is the Helper of the tempted, by sympathy learnt in the endurance of the same temptations from which He came to save. Some things can only be learnt by experience. Sympathy is one. There were some things which were not Christ's to know, until like us, by bitter human experience, He had learnt them for Himself. He shared our experience of temptation in its full completeness. Wherever we are tempted, so was He—through the senses, the appetite, the reason, the imagination, the affection, the ambition, the will—tempted wherever there seemed a point of vantage for the tempter. The three temptations on the threshold of His public work were *representative.* They were representative of temptations in His unrecorded history, of the number and intensity of which we can form no idea. We cannot too fully accept the great doctrine of the completeness of our Lord's humanity. By sympathy, learnt through the temptations of a common human experience, Christ is the Helper of the tempted. But sympathy does not seem enough; we want strength. Will this sympathy of Christ bring us strength? It will. The sphere of sympathy is spiritual, and within that sphere there is nowhere to be found such strength as that which comes from sympathy. Its power is electric. Men, naturally cowards, by sympathy have been made brave, and there is no trial of human suffering which sympathy has not enabled men and women courageously to bear. Amongst the world's regenerating influences there is none for a moment comparable to the sympathy of Christ. For the sympathy of the strong helps always to strengthen the weak. If I wanted to strengthen a morally weak man, I would link him with a man as strong as *he* was weak, quite sure that the companionship would act on him like a tonic, or be

to him like the sweet, fresh breath of mountain air. And thus it is that Christ, in His great sinless strength, is the Helper of the tempted. Let this be no empty doctrine to you, no mere point of theology, or article in a creed, void of all reality and force. Let it be a living truth, as vital as your own heart's blood. It will nerve you for mastery over the infirmities of your nature. It will inspire you to resist the evils of an evil world. And it will help you to victories of faith and love, to conquests of conscience, and of character like unto your Lord's.—*Johnson Barker, LL.B.*

Experience the Secret of Moral Power.—"He himself hath suffered being tempted." The reality of our Lord's human experiences is constantly enforced by the apostles. In the early days of the Church there was a tendency to present the Divinity of Christ in such a way as to imperil the truth of His real, flesh and blood, humanity. It was thought derogatory to a Divine Saviour to represent Him as sharing the common woes of the human lot. But unless we see worthily our Lord's veritable humanity, it must be impossible for us to understand how He can be a power of redemption to us. He is our Saviour only through His manhood.

I. **Moral beings can only learn through experience.**—A moral being is not intellectual only. He has a further sphere of feeling and emotion. He is a being with a will, which can be influenced by his *mind*, but is much more influenced by principles and feelings. And experience alone affects the feelings. See how a moral being is made, and is developed. Life does it; experience does it: learning can do but a little of it. Christ could not have taken rank with us as a moral being if He had not shared the experience which makes us moral beings. "In all points tempted like as we are."

II. **Moral beings get power to help one another only through a common experience.**—It is somewhat strikingly said of Tennyson that he had no experience of vice, and so all the *sins* in his poetry are human frailties. It is constantly observed that the best religious workers in any class of society are persons belonging to the class who have full experience of the class. If Christ was to gain moral power to help man, He must have the experience of man, of all that is essential to man, not of all that is accidental to sin. The experience of man's *conflicts* was essential, but not the experience of man's *defeats*. It is not essential to man to *fail* in the moral struggle. Illustrate from man's moral power to (1) sympathise with; (2) to strengthen; (3) to advise; (4) to deliver, his brother. He can only do it out of experience. This must be true of Christ as the typical moral Helper of humanity.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

Ver. 3. *Perils of simply neglecting.*—Simply neglect the great salvation, and you will make your everlasting ruin sure. Many foolish, faithless parents have killed their child, not by administering slow poison, or striking an assassin-knife through its young heart, but by the simple neglect of the first laws of health. Many parents, too, have wrung their hands in agony over a ruined son, fallen into disgrace, not because they have led that son into ruin, but because they had let him alone, and left him to rush into the cause of his misery unrestrained. Neglect was the boy's ruin. There is no need for a man to row towards Niagara's cataract—resting on his oars is quite enough to send him over the awful verge into eternal ruin.—*T. L. Cuyler.*

The Insult of neglecting Religion.—I can understand that man who says, "I have examined all the evidence, I have weighed and tested every argument, and I have come to the conclusion that the Bible is a fable, Christianity is a romance, and all that it says of eternity, death, and judgment the visions of a mere baseless dream." I pity and deplore his conclusions; but there is a consistency about it. I very much doubt if it be not a greater insult to God

to neglect religion, which is altogether inexcusable, than it is to reject it.—*Dr. Cumming.*

How escape?—The question "How shall we escape?" implies (1) peril; (2) provided rescue; (3) neglect of provision; (4) consequent increase of peril; and (5) hopelessness of finding any other rescue.

Ver. 4. *The Temporary Mission of Miracles.*—A gardener, when he transplanteth a tree out of one ground into another, before the tree takes root, sets stays to it, and poureth water at the root of it daily; but when it once taketh root he ceaseth to water it any more, and putteth away the stays that he set to uphold it, and suffereth it to grow with the order and influences of the heavens. So the Lord, in planting of religion. He put *miracles* as helps to stay it; but when it was once confirmed and fastened, and had taken deep rooting, He took away such helps; so that, as St. Augustine hath it, He that looketh for a miracle is a miracle himself; for if the death of Christ will not work faith, all the miracles in the world will not do it.—*Spencer.*

Cycles of Miracles.—The power and acceptableness of the evidence afforded by miracles is relative to the age to which they are given. Therefore it will be found that they have always come in cycles, and only in cycles.

Ver. 10. *Captain of our Salvation.*—We are the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Now that which nerves the soldier's arm and strengthens his heart as he goes forth to battle, is not so much the multitude of the army of which he forms a part, as the character of the chief whom he is following. It is related that in one of the Duke of Wellington's battles a portion of the army was giving way, under the charge of the enemy, when he rode into the midst of them. A soldier called out in ecstasy, "*There's the duke—God bless him!* I'd rather see his face than a whole brigade"; and these words, turning all eyes to their chief, so reassured his comrades that they repulsed the foe. For *he is beside us*, they felt, *who was never defeated yet, and will not be defeated now.* A military friend with whom I conversed on this subject said, that though he had never heard the anecdote, he could well conceive it to be true: the presence of that distinguished general, he added, was at any time worth five thousand men.—*Tait.*

"*Perfect*" *as applied to Christ.*—The Greek word translated "perfect," which occurs very often in this epistle, was used among the heathen in a specific sense; for instance. one thoroughly initiated into the arcana, or other mysteries, was called a "perfect" man. The meaning was not morally or personally perfect, but thoroughly acquainted with all the facts or mysteries of the caste or service. Our blessed Lord was made perfect by being thoroughly acquainted with human nature in all its points, save that of sin, and so became the author of eternal salvation by being initiated into all the sorrows and woes of humanity.—*Dr. Cumming.*

Blessings coming through Suffering.—In proportion as a horse is well trained and gentle, he had to suffer in being broken in. The white beautiful teeth of a little child, that look so much like ivory, cause much pain before they grow up in that regular row. A gentleman in Hartford (America) had a beautiful little daughter. But oh, how her parents grieved when they found that she was deaf and dumb, and could never speak or hear. She was bright and lovely, and no child among them all nestled so near a father's heart as little Alice; and so anxious was he for her, that he had no rest till the Deaf and Dumb Asylum was established, at which hundreds of such unfortunate children have been educated; so that all this great good may be said to have grown out of the sufferings of little Alice.—*Dr. Todd.*

Ver. 14. *Christ's Victory over Satan.*—When the devils saw Christ on the cross, there stood the exulting fiend, smiling to himself, "Now I have the King of glory in my dominion, I have the power of death, and I have the power over the Lord Jesus." He exerted that power till Christ died in bitter anguish. But how short-lived was that hellish victory, how brief the Satanic triumph! When Christ cried, "It is finished!" He shook the gates of hell. Down from the cross the Conqueror leaped, pursued the fiend with thunder-bolts of wrath. Swift to the shades of hell did the fiend fly, and swift descending went the Conqueror after him, and seizing him, dragged him to His chariot-wheel—dragged him up the steeps of glory, the angels shouting all the while. He had led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Life given for life.—When Mahomet, the second of that name, besieged Belgrade, in Servia, one of the captains at last got upon the wall of the city, with his colours displayed. A noble Bohemian espying this, ran to the captain, and clasping him fast about his middle, asked one Capistranus, standing beneath, whether it would be any danger of damnation to his soul if he should cast himself down headlong with that dog (so he termed the Turkish captain), to be slain with

him. Capistranus answered that it was no danger at all to his soul. The Bohemian forthwith tumbled himself down, with the Turk in his arms, and so by his own death saved the life of all the city. Such an exploit as this Christ plays upon the devil. The devil, like the great Turk, besieged not only one city, but even all mankind. Christ alone, like this noble Bohemian, encountered with him; and seeing the case was so, that this dog, the devil, could not be killed stark dead, except Christ died also, therefore He made no reckoning of His own life, but gave Himself to death for us, that He only dying for all the people, by His death our deadly enemy might for ever be destroyed.—*Old Author*, 1610.

CHAPTER III.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO GREAT MEDIATORS.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

IN the estimation of the Jews the pre-eminence of the Law—by that term meaning the Old Testament dispensation—was seen in three things: (1) it was ministered by angels; (2) it was in the hands of a mediator of singularly exalted character; (3) its principal official was a high priest of superior dignity and authority. Having compared the ministry of angels with the ministry of the Son, and brought out the superiority of the new dispensation, and answered the objections which might be grounded on the humiliation and shameful human death of the Son, the writer proceeds to compare Christ with the two great officials of the older dispensation. In the comparison of the mediators the following points are presented: 1. In the one respect of faithfulness there is similarity. 2. In another matter there is equality; for God is the Author of both dispensations. 3. Moses, however, does but take a place as part of the furniture of the house; Christ takes His place with God as the Founder and Builder of it. 4. Moses was a servant *in* the house; but Christ was *the* Son, who is over the house. Then follows a hortatory passage bearing on the peril of apostasy.

Ver. 1. **Wherefore.**—Lit. "whence." Allowing what has been said of Christ to be true, there is ground for fixing further and even closer attention upon Christ. **Holy brethren.**—An expression indicating the conciliatory tone of the epistle. As separated unto Jehovah, the Jews were a "holy nation." The writer makes no assertion of their personal holiness; he does but recognise the Jews as a people separated by God unto Himself. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." "Brethren" asserts the common relation of Jew and Christian to special revelations from God. The word means "one of the same faith or profession"; but it carries also the idea of friendly feeling, mutual sympathy. **Heavenly calling.**—Privileges of the new dispensation. "Heavenly" may be taken as equivalent to "spiritual," and as contrasted with the material features of the Jewish calling. **Consider.**—Fix your attention on. A worthy apprehension of the person of Christ would preserve these Jewish Christians from the temptation to return upon the older system. So Jesus endeavoured to give His disciples right ideas concerning Himself. Starting thought by asking them, "What think ye of Christ?" **Apostle.**—Compare ἄγγελος. That word is not used here because the writer had already used it in a special sense. The Jews called the minister or ruler of the synagogue an apostle. The word means "sent one"; "mediator," "communicator" between two parties; and comparison can be made between Moses and Christ, because they bore similar relations to each of the dispensations. **Our profession.**—Either (1) whom we confess; or (2) what we confess. A doubtful passage in *Philo* calls the Logos "the Great High Priest of our Confession." *Bengel* marks the distinction between Apostle and High Priest: "As Apostle, Jesus pleads the cause of God with us; as High Priest, He pleads our cause with God." **Christ Jesus.**—The best manuscripts omit the word "Christ." *Stuart* gives the point of the verse thus, "If the *curator ædis sacræ et novæ* be compared with the *curator ædis sacræ et antiquæ*, the result will be such as the sequel discloses."

Ver. 2. **Faithful.**—In carrying out the particular duties of His office. For the faithfulness of Moses see Num. xii. 7. **House.**—Not the tabernacle only, but the entire theocratic system. Compare "the house of God which is the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. iii. 15). *Moulton* says, "The house, or household, is God's people Israel."

Ver. 3. **This man.**—R.V. "He"—that is, Jesus. **More glory.**—Or, a fuller glory. *Farrar* points out that the "Jews had begun to elevate Moses into a position of almost supernatural grandeur, which would have its effect on wavering and almost apostatising converts." **Builded the house.**—Not "founding a family," but establishing a dispensation, under the figure of erecting and furnishing a house. Christ was really the Founder of the house in which Moses was an official. So Christ has higher honour than Moses. Observe the assumption that the Divine Son was ministrant of the older dispensation. He is the Executor of the Divine purpose in all *material* spheres.

Ver. 4.—The thought here is that every house has its maker, and we must conceive of a Maker of this house, or dispensation. It can be no other than God.

Ver. 5. **Servant.**—Ministering according to the will of another. Not δοῦλος, slave, nor διάκονος, minister, but θεράπων, voluntary attendant.

Ver. 6. **Over His own house.**—R.V. "over His," *i.e.* God's "house." **House are we.**—For the figure see 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22; 1 Pet. ii. 5. The rights of sonship are wholly distinct from and superior to the rights of servant-hood. Sonship involves independent authority. **Hold fast.**—A transition to the hortatory passage.

Vers. 7-19 form part of an exhortation, based on the superiority of Christ over Moses, and the conduct of the Jewish people in their relation to Moses. They were the chosen people of God, and yet they provoked Him by their unbelief, and were consequently precluded from entering the rest of Canaan. A promise of rest is also given to us. What is it? It cannot be the Sabbatic rest of God from the work of creation: it cannot be the rest of settling in Canaan. It is the rest of belief in Christ, ceasing from our own works and trusting in Christ. Let us take care lest we also fail to gain our rest.

Ver. 7. **Holy Ghost.**—Better throughout the epistle "Holy Spirit." Here conceived as Inspirer of the Bible-writers; and inspiration carries persuasion and authority (vers. 7-11 are a parenthesis). In what sense was the Holy Spirit in the older dispensation? The prophetic gifts, and the special endowments of such kings as Saul and David, gave the Jews their idea of inspiration.

Ver. 8. **Harden not.**—Do not resist good influence. See case of Pharaoh. The peril of free-will is that we can "harden ourselves against." **Provocation.**—Or time of provocation: from πικραίνω, to embitter. One typical occasion is referred to (Exod. xvii. 7. Compare 1 Cor. x. 1-12). **Day of temptation.**—If single day be meant, the reference may be to the aggravations of the time of worshipping the golden calf. But the expression may be intended to sum up the thirty-eight years of testing Israel amid the wilderness experiences. Those years of wandering in the desert made up their "day of testing."

Ver. 9.—Then comes a play on the words "tempted," "proved," Me. They tested Me in an evil and unworthy spirit. God may be tested by us when we want to believe, but feel as if we could not. God must never be put to the test by us in a spirit of doubting and suspicion, and with a view to the support of our self-schemes, and of our unbelief.

Ver. 10. **Grieved.**—The figure in the word is "running a ship ashore."

Ver. 11. **My rest.**—For the Jews that was Canaan. It was called "rest" because it came after their long wanderings. The figure of God *swearing* is consistent with the idea of Him as an Eastern king. But the swearing is strictly official.

Ver. 12.—Carries on the "wherefore" or "whence" of ver. 7. **Evil heart of unbelief.**—Doubting may be good or bad, right or wrong, according to the state of will that is behind it. An evil heart *wants* to doubt, and is keen to find reasons and excuses. Faith, when intellectual only, is *belief*; when inspired by heart-feeling, it is *trust*. **Departing.**—In the sense of apostatising.

Ver. 13. **Exhort.**—Admonish; use Christian fellowship for the establishing of faith. **Deceitfulness of sin.**—Sinful delusions; either influence of Judaising teachers, or of persecution and worldliness.

Ver. 14. **Partakers of Christ.**—Of His living and saving grace.

Ver. 19. **Could not.**—The failure was altogether on their side. The word "unbelief" reminds us that the reason of failure was a *heart*-reason.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

Christ above Moses.—The bigoted Jewish party distressed the Christian Jewish party, by urging that the Jewish dispensation was manifestly superior to the Christian, on two grounds: (1) it was ministered by angels; (2) its agent was the most remarkable man that had ever lived. In the previous two chapters the assumed superiority in the ministration of angels has been dealt

with. Now the writer deals with the extravagant claims advanced on behalf of Moses (see Illustration), and shows that in nature, relation to God, and office, Christ is altogether above Moses.

I. **Fix attention on the Head of the new dispensation.**—The word "consider" means "fix your thoughts attentively on." His unique nature, as the Divine-human Being, and His primary and essential relationship to God as Son, have already been treated. Now attention is fixed upon His office. The writer takes an ideal rather than an actual view of Moses. In fact, Moses was prophet or apostle, and Aaron was high priest; but Aaron's association with Moses was a Divine after-thought. Ideally, and in the Divine plan, Moses was the head of the dispensation, and was both the prophet and the priest, and as such was the type of Messiah the Christ. A man occupying the position of Moses must be what *Bengel* says Christ is, Apostle from God to man, and High Priest from man to God. "As Apostle Jesus pleads the cause of God with us; as High Priest He pleads our cause with God." The complete mediatorship of the Old Testament was, in fact, in the hands of Moses and Aaron combined, and regarded as one. The Mediatorship of the new dispensation is in the hands of Christ alone, and He is actually one. Here is a mark of superiority. 1. One side of Christ's work is represented by the term "*Apostle*," which is virtually the same as "prophet." Both terms mean "messenger," "sent one." Both imply a direct commission from God to men; a Divine message which they—prophet or apostle—have to put into their human language for the apprehension of men. Moses and Christ were both revealers, prophets, teachers, for God. Fixing attention on Christ, we can see two marked peculiarities: (1) His message was *Himself*, in a sense that Moses' message was not. (2) His message belonged to the sphere of spiritual things, not of material or ceremonial. 2. Another side of Christ's work is represented by the term "*High Priest*." Later in the epistle this term is treated more fully. Here one thing more especially is in the mind of the writer. One work of the Mosaic high priest was to "make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people" (chap. ii. 17). The limited idea, which need not injuriously affect the larger idea, which we shall have to consider later on, is this. When as a prophet Moses brings a message from God, the fact must be taken into account that men will use their free wills upon the message, and will receive it or reject it: the rejection of it will be sin, and will lead to sin, and will put men out of relation with God. The prophet therefore will need to be also priest, and deal with the restoration and reconciliation of those who break their relations with God by rejecting His message. And this which applies to Moses must apply also to Christ, who, if He is Apostle, must needs also be Priest.

II. **Compare the heads of the two dispensations.**—Lest the writer should be thought in any sense to lower the dignity of Moses, he freely recognises that both the apostle and high priest of the old dispensation, and the Apostle and High Priest of the new, were faithful to their several trusts. There is no call whatever for exalting Christ by the depreciation of any other of God's servants. Accept every man at his best; estimate his life and work most charitably and most hopefully, and still there will be no difficulty in showing the unique superiority of Him who is Son of God, Son of man, and Saviour from sin. The faithfulness of Moses is asserted in Num. xii. 7.

III. **Contrast the heads of the two dispensations.**—The use of the term "house" as a figure for dispensation, or religious system, suggests the points of contrast. "The house is *God's* house or household, *i.e.* the theocratic family of which the tabernacle was a symbol. See 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1. Christ was more honourable than Moses, as a person, seeing that He was *Owner* of the house in which Moses was a servant. 2. And Christ's range of service was

higher than that of Moses, as owner-faithfulness must always be in a higher plane than servant-faithfulness—though, as faithfulness, both may stand in equal acceptance. The contrast of service may also be seen in this: (1) That of Moses was a service of preparation; (2) that of Christ was a service of fulfilment. Do, then, all honour to Moses. Recognise the dignity of his position and the faithfulness of his service, and still it is reasonable to ask that men should pass from Moses to Christ, seeing that He is no servant in the house, but Son over His own house. Carry all thankfulness for the earlier revelation, and all honouring of the agent of that revelation, over with you into the reception of the later, completing, and spiritual revelation, of which the Son of God is the agent. Keep considering, fixing attention, and ever learning more concerning, the "Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

Jewish Glorifying of Moses.—Eagerly as the writer is pressing forward to develop his original and central conception of Christ as our eternal High Priest, he yet has to pause to prove His superiority over Moses, because the Jews had begun to elevate Moses into a position of almost supernatural grandeur, which would have its effect on the imaginations of wavering, and almost apostatising, converts. Thus the Rabbis said that "the soul of Moses was equivalent to the souls of all Israel" (because by the cabalistic process called *Gematria* the numerical value of the letters of "Moses our rabbi" in Hebrew equal 613, which is also the value of the letters of "Lord God of Israel"). They said that "the face of Moses was like the sun"; that he alone "saw through a clear glass," not as other prophets "through a dim glass"; and that whereas there are but fifty gates of understanding in the world, "all but one were opened to Moses." St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iii. 7, contrasts the evanescing splendour on the face of Moses with the unchanging glory of Christ.—*Farrar.*

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Messenger and Priest.*—1. Consider Christ as the Apostle or Messenger of God. The word "apostle" means "messenger"—one ordained and sent on a particular embassy. 2. Consider Christ as the High Priest of our profession. The duty of the High Priest was twofold: to make atonement; to make intercession. (1) Consider Christ as making atonement. (2) Consider Christ as making intercession.—*R. M. McCheyne.*

The Duties of the High Priest.—He must be free from every blemish and defect (Lev. xxi. 16-23). He must not observe the external signs of mourning for any person, or leave the sanctuary upon receiving intelligence of the death of even father and mother. He must wash his hands and feet when he went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and when he came near the altar to minister (Exod. xxx. 19-21). He must offer daily, morning and evening, the peculiar meat-offering he offered on the day of his consecration (Exod. xxix.). He must perform the ceremonies of the day of expiation (Lev. xvi.). He must arrange the shewbread every Sabbath, and eat it in the holy place (Lev. xxiv. 9). He must judge of the leprosy, and adjudicate in certain legal questions. When there was no Divinely inspired judge, the high priest was the supreme ruler, until the time of David, and again after the return from the Captivity (1 Sam. iv. 18). Other duties were: Bearing before the Lord the names of Israel for a memorial (Exod. xxviii. 12, 29); inquiring of God by Urim and Thummim (1 Sam. xxiii. 9-12, xxx. 7, 8); consecrating the Levites (Num. viii. 11-21); appointing priests to offices (1 Sam. ii. 36);

interceding (Num. xvi. 43-48); blessing (Lev. ix. 22, 23).—*After Kitto.*

Consider Christ.

I. One great comprehensive demand—consider Christ.—The word implies an earnest, fixed, prolonged attention of mind. A Christian man's thoughts should be occupied with his Saviour. A simple and obvious remark, but one much forgotten in practice. The measure of a man's Christianity is the occupation of his mind and heart with the truth as it is in Jesus. There is implied in the word "consider": 1. That the occupation of mind must be the result of conscious *effort*. 2. It must be the look of eager interest; it must be *intense* as well as fixed. 3. It must be *steady* or continuous.

II. The great aspects of Christ's work which should fix our gaze.—We have *Himself* proposed as the object of our thoughts; not merely the truth concerning Him, but *Him* as brought near us by the truth. Scripture never deals with Christ's work apart from Him, the worker, nor presents truth in the hard and abstract form which it must necessarily take when men begin to reflect upon it, and try to arrange their thoughts into something like order and consistency. Two aspects—consider Him as Apostle and as High Priest. He is the "Apostle" of our profession. No declaration was more common on our Lord's lips when on earth than that He was "sent of God." He is the sole messenger, sent by God as none others are sent, to declare His whole name once and for all, to bring His whole love, not only to serve but to save, not only to help but to rule, the sons of men, His brethren. The Apostolate and the Priesthood are to be included in the one word, Mediator. The idea of priesthood depends upon that of sacrifice, and the idea of sacrifice is incomplete without that of expiation. The idea of priesthood includes that of representation, and the priestly representation of the people is incomplete without the presence of the priest within the veil.

III. The great reasons for this occupation of mind and heart with Christ, our Mediator.—They are: 1. Our relation to Christ, and the benefit we derive from it. 2. The calling of which we are partakers. 3. The avowal which we have made concerning Him. Cultivate the habit of fixed calm meditation on Christ.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Two Terms for the One Mediator.—Such passages as 1 Tim. ii. 5, Gal. iii. 20, set forth the position of Christ as Mediator. A mediator must sustain a twofold relation—a relation to each party between whom he mediates. He may do a twofold work—that of interpreter, and that of reconciler. In the case of Christ this twofold relation and twofold work will come out if we consider—

I. Christ as God's Apostle to men.—Christ is *God* in respect of wisdom; as High Priest He is *man*, in order to be true representative. To unfold the idea of apostle take two analogies: 1. Moses, as an apostle in the distinct sense of interpreter. 2. The twelve apostles, in the distinct sense of teachers. Show how both involved also the idea of *ruling*, and point out the relations of Moses to God and the apostles to Christ. The *ruling* will take up the later Jewish idea of ἀπόστολος, as *curator*.

II. Christ as man's High Priest to God.—Bring in the second idea of mediator, viz. reconcilement and intercession. 1. The high priest was commissioned by the people to go into the Holy of Holies for them; so Christ is commissioned by us to go, as our Representative, into the eternal Holy of Holies. 2. The high priest not only went as the first representative, but he took with him the terms on which he asked for reconciliation; and so Christ took with Him into the eternal Holy of Holies the terms on which He pleaded for reconciliation. 3. The high priest had himself pre-

viously prepared these terms; and so Christ Himself prepared the terms, and was indeed in Himself the terms on the ground of which He asked acceptance. 4. The high priest, having gained acceptance, asked of the propitious and reconciled God the supply of blessings to the people; and so Christ, having gained acceptance for men, becomes their Intercessor.

The Heavenly Calling.—Heavenly is placed in contrast with *earthly.* It precisely answers to the contrast *spiritual* and *material.* The heavenly temple represents the spiritual worship of God. The heavenly world is that in which the spiritual life is lived. And so the "heavenly calling" is that call of God to live a life of spiritual relations with Him which has come to us through Jesus Christ. Response to the call is possible with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ our Apostle and High Priest. —Consider the offices and relations of Christ Jesus. That is precisely the work that we should do in preparing our hearts for our sacramental service. The text seems to brace up our attention, in view of some unusually important subject that is to be considered. The writer has already presented two subjects. He has shown the contrast between Christ as the Son and angels as servants, as ministering spirits. His primary and essential relation to God is altogether unique. None in heaven and none on earth can ever stand in precisely His relation. And he has dwelt on the humanity of Christ, bringing Him out of the realms of mystery, and making clear His brotherhood with us in the human limitations and infirmities. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part in the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Now the writer proceeds to deal with the superiority and the exceeding glory of His offices in relation to God and man, comparing them with the highest offices in the Old Testament economy. He calls attention by addressing his readers as "holy brethren." Saints, brethren in faith and feeling, as consecrated with him to Christ and to Christ's service. By "heavenly calling" he figuratively describes the more spiritual blessings to which men were introduced by Christ Jesus. And Christ being the very centre of this new spiritual dispensation, deserves special attention and consideration; we cannot too resolutely fix eye and heart on Him. "Apostle" and "High Priest" are terms that explain the more general and comprehensive word "Mediator." That is a characteristic term used by the apostle Paul. Writing to the Galatians, he says, "The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (Gal. iii. 19, 20). Writing to Timothy, he says, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). Now a mediator sustains a twofold relationship—a relation to each of the parties between whom he mediates. It is this twofold work that is brought out by the terms used in our text. A mediator may do a twofold work—he may be an interpreter, and he may be a reconciler. This will come out clearly to view in relation to Christ if we put it in this way: Jesus Christ is God's Apostle to man, and Jesus Christ is man's High Priest to God. You will easily see how these terms conserve the truths of which we are so supremely jealous. Christ is God revealing Himself to man; He is God's Representative. And Christ is man entering into communion with God—man's Representative. So we have freshly suggested to us the dual truth of the Deity and humanity of Christ.

I. Christ is God's Apostle to man.—The word "apostle" simply means

"one sent," a person under commission—one who is entrusted with some duty to discharge for another. Every ambassador is an apostle; every missionary is an apostle; every prophet is an apostle. The term has been especially applied to twelve of our Lord's disciples because they were the first persons to receive His commission, and to be sent out as preachers of His gospel. But the term was subsequently applied to Silas and Barnabas and Paul. We need not think of any special authority belonging to the so-called apostles; they were simply men entrusted with a Divine message and mission for men; they were the prophets or preachers of the new dispensation. Their office was in no sense restricted to themselves. They were what their Master was; and we are what both they and their Master was. We are all God's sent ones, God's ambassadors, God's apostles to our fellows. 1. Moses was an apostle in the distinct sense of being an interpreter. The writer of this epistle had Moses in his mind, for he immediately refers to him, saying of Christ the Apostle, "Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." The inspiration of Moses to his work came out of the conviction that he was a sent one, Divinely commissioned; and his authority with the people followed upon their belief that he was Divinely sent. He had been arrested of God that day when he was compelled to turn aside and see that great sight, the bush that burned and yet was not consumed. That day God made Moses an apostle, and this was his commission: "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I *will send* thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt." His work is usually put into the word "mediator." He was the "go-between." And as such the people fully accepted him; for when God's great thunder-voice, proclaiming the law from Sinai, filled the people with alarm, they made this their prayer to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." As apostle, or mediator, or ambassador, we may look at the work of Moses from three sides: (1) He was to reveal God's will. This he could only do as the will was revealed to him; and that he might be fitted to receive it, he spent those long days in communion with God. It was not that what Moses received would take forty days to tell: it was that only after prolonged abstraction and devotion could Moses be spiritually fitted to receive the revelation. When it did come to him, it proved to be ten clear-cut sentences. They embodied God's will for the people, and that will Moses was commissioned to reveal *to* the people. It may be said that the tables of the law could have been handed to Moses in an hour. And so they could, but in that case Moses would not have so entered into the soul of them, gained such sympathy with them, or felt the applications of them, as would enable him rightly to reveal them to the people. On his revealing work had to rest the impress of his own soul-culture and soul-sympathies. (2) For it must be borne in mind that Moses had not only to reveal God's will, but also to interpret the revelation. It is now known to all Bible scholars that the elaborations and details of Levitical law given to us in later Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, were worked out by Moses after his time on Sinai, and in the power of the inspiration he there received. His apostolic service was in part working out the great principles of the Sinaitic law into all the relations and duties of life. And that was the work of years. (3) And the writer of the Hebrews points out another feature of Moses' apostleship: he was to preside over and rule his house, or dispensation; for he who reveals and interprets the Divine will cannot help gaining supreme influence and authority in so doing.

But the only healthy authority over men is that which comes, not by any form of personal claim, but by virtue of the commission entrusted to us. We have dwelt for a moment on the apostleship of Moses because he helps us to understand the sense in which Christ was an Apostle—"the Apostle of our profession." To us He is the Sent One who reveals to us God. If I were required to put the mission of Christ into a sentence, and were allowed only one sentence in which to put it, I would say this, "He came to show us God." "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God." And He revealed this concerning God--you will never apprehend God aright until you take your human father-idea at its best, and apply it to Him. Ask me what is the very essence of Christ's Apostleship, the one all-controlling purpose for which He was sent. I answer, "To reveal the Fatherliness of God." I prefer to answer, "To *show* the Fatherliness of God." But He is our Apostle in a further sense, for He interprets to us the will of God. When He has told us and shown us what God is, He proceeds to tells us and to show us what God wishes. The Son interprets the Father. And just as Moses elaborated the great principles of the Sinaitic revelation, so our Lord Jesus elaborates and applies to all the duties and relations of our lives the mind and will of our Father. And as in the case of Moses authority was seen to grow out of commission, so with the Apostle of our profession, Christ Jesus, He is become the Head of all those who love and serve God—"Head over all things to His Church"; and this office and relation we give Him with all our hearts. He is our Moses, God's Sent One to us, who reveals to us God, interprets to us His will, and takes, what we lovingly and gratefully give Him, supreme lordship and rule over our hearts and lives. 2. The twelve disciples of Christ were apostles in the distinct sense of being *teachers*. This is an advance on the idea of an apostle as interpreter, and adapts the figure to more settled and continuous relations. We occasionally want revealers and interpreters; we always want teachers. In this sense the disciples had only a tentative apostleship while Christ lived. That was their preparation-time for the teaching-work of the future—the time when they were being taught to teach. After the ascension of their Divine Lord, we can clearly see what was their office and their work. Christ sent them forth in His name, as His witnesses, His ambassadors. They were to tell men anything and everything that they knew about Him, what He had been, what He had said, and what He had done. If they began to do this, they would realise that they were sent to *preach*. If they continued to do this, they would realise that they were sent to *teach*. And out of this teaching of those who accepted Jesus as their Saviour would surely grow their work of forming and *guiding* the assemblies, or Churches. But in all this those apostles were but repeating what Christ Himself had been, and exhibiting what Christ *is* in the higher sense, in His present spiritual relations with His Church. He is still the Apostle of our profession, the present Teacher of His Church, in the working of His Holy Spirit. He alone has the right to teach, to reveal truth and duty, and to rule in His Church; and we may not let any conceptions of a past and completed Mediatorship keep us from realising that He is to-day the Apostle of our profession, the Teacher who, by His Spirit, still to-day, leadeth us into all truth. It is the present actual, effective relation of the Lord Jesus to our soul-life and culture that comes into our view when, in the presence of the sacramental emblems, we *consider* the Apostle of our profession. It is of that living relation we need to be supremely jealous.

II. **Christ is man's High Priest with God.**—Now the essential idea of the high priest was representation. He stood for the people; he represented them in all dealings with God. The

more important features of his work were reconcilement and intercession. 1. The high priest went on behalf of the people into the Holy of Holies. The incidents of the great Day of Atonement set forth the work of the high priest very vividly. His every-day work is seen in the light of that one day's work. "The priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service. But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year." And so Christ our High Priest has gone, not once for the year, but once for all, into the heavenlies, heaven itself, the region of spiritual and eternal realities; "Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come," enters a "greater and more perfect tabernacle, one not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." Our interests with God absolutely and entirely stand in Christ our High Priest, who is for us in the world of spiritual and Divine realities. 2. The high priest not only went into the Holy of Holies, he took with him the terms of acceptance; "not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." The blood that he took represented the devoted life of a creature on whom the sins of the people had been confessed. That creature represented the humble, penitent reconsecration of the people, the fresh giving of themselves in love and obedience to Jehovah; it was the blood, or life, of the creature that symbolised that purposed complete obedience which the high priest took into the Holy of Holies as the plea and the ground of acceptance. And so Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our profession, took into the spiritual Holy of Holies His own proved and perfected obedience, sealed in His life-blood, which carries with it, and pledges, ours as the plea and the ground on which He claims acceptance for us. "By His own blood [or, with His own blood] He entered in once for all into the holy place, obtaining thus eternal redemption for us. . . . How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" 3. Now we come to a point which is of great importance, and yet can only with difficulty be presented. It may be easy to grip in a formal way; it is hard to reach in that spiritual manner in which we always seek to apprehend truth. The high priest had himself prepared the terms on which he sought the people's acceptance. He was to put his hands on the living creature; he was, as his own act, to take the life of the living creature; he was to take the blood with him, as if it were a part of himself, into the holy place. He went in at once a priest and a sacrifice, in both representing the people. They went, *in him*, seeking Divine acceptance. It is the foreshadowing, the solemn picturing of the spiritual mystery of the union we find in Christ. He prepared, as our High Priest, His own sacrifice. It was Himself. It was His own surrender. It was His own yielded life. It was His own obedience unto death. He went into the spiritual Holy of Holies with His sacrifice, at once our Priest and our Offering. His redemptive work was His alone. And He is, Himself, now, in the presence of God, our Sacrifice, the ground of our acceptance, and our Priest pleading for our acceptance on the ground of His sacrifice. The truth is embodied for us in a striking symbol. Before the eternal throne is seen the Mediator of the new covenant; but behold Him! Is it not a surprise that suggests inquiry? He is a "Lamb as it had been slain." Once again: 4. The high priest, having gained acceptance, sought blessings for the people. While the high priest was within the veil, on that great Atonement Day, the vast company of Jews crowded the outer courts, and watched most anxiously for the moving of the outer veil of the tabernacle, and the first sight of the returning priest. If he were delayed, the intense excitement moved those people to press nearer in

their anxious watching; and when at last he came forth, and the light of acceptance was on his face, we can picture to ourselves how every heart thrilled with thankful joy, and how every head was bowed, as he stood and breathed forth the benedictions he had won for them from their God. We do not wait expecting to see our great High Priest come forth from the heavenlies, to speak in human words the forgiveness and acceptance He has won for us; but we do expect Him to come in spiritual fashion to our waiting souls, with Divine comfortings and assurances. We think of Him as entered once into the holy place, there to abide for ever; always there, the "Lamb as it had been slain," the ground of our acceptance; always there, the "Angel of the covenant," waving the golden censer wherein are the prayers of the saints; always there, the Medium whence comes to us every spiritual good; always there representing us. There where one day we hope to be beside Him. He is at once our Moses and our Aaron joined in one—Moses as God's Apostle, Aaron as our High Priest with God. What then do we need for the strengthening and comforting and satisfying of our souls? A steadier setting of eye on Jesus Christ. Consider Him. Consider His mission, His work, His offices, His relations. Consider what He is to God. Consider what He is to us. More and more it is being pressed on attention that Christ Himself is the centre of the Christ-revelation. Christianity is no organised force of doctrines and demands. It always was, though men have overlaid it—it is to-day, though men crowd creeds and rites into it—the living power, to convict, convert, redeem, comfort, teach, and sanctify, of the living Lord Jesus Christ Himself. My Sacrifice for sin—it is Christ Himself. My ground of acceptance with God—it is Jesus Himself. My Advocate with the Father—it is Jesus Himself. My one only and all-sufficient Teacher—it is Jesus Himself. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession"—our Alpha and our Omega—our All in all, it is the ever-living, glorified, spiritual, Divine Lord Jesus.

Ver. 2. *Faithfulness is independent of the Nature of our Trust.*—Two persons are introduced here for the sake of a comparison which is to be made between them. But first of all it must be seen that in character they are one. Both good men, and both faithful men. Their trusts differ. The relations in which they stand to their work differ. But no disadvantage, in personal character, attaches to either. Jesus was "faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also was Moses in all his house." Faithfulness is a virtue. It includes the purpose of the will. A man must mean to be faithful, or there can be no moral value in his faithfulness. Faithful by natural disposition, and faithful by accident, have no moral quality in them. But the purpose of the will must be matched by the endeavour of the life. For will is only virtuous when it finds fitting expression in conduct and relations. Faithfulness implies the recognition of dependence, the sense of responsibility, the clear knowledge of what ought to be done, and the personal interest and pleasure of a man in the doing. The term "faith-*ful*" suggests the carrying out of the work entrusted *thoroughly*; going beyond the limits of bare necessity to do the work even over-efficiently, if that be possible, the thoroughness indicating that the heart is wholly in it. With such views of faithfulness read the life-work both of Moses and of the Lord Jesus.

I. **Faithfulness is not dependent on ability.**—The man who has the trust of ten talents has no better possibility of faithfulness than the man who has the trust of one. It may be that the men of marked ability get the recognition of faithfulness from their *fellow-men.* The faithful man who has no special ability is absolutely secure of the recognition of God.

And "there are last which shall be first."

II. **Faithfulness is not dependent on trusts.**—As there are all sorts of persons to make up a world, so there are all sorts of missions for meeting the world's needs. Everybody cannot have what men call high and honourable trusts. Some must have the lowly ones, even what men think the unlovely ones. In them they can be as faithful as the favoured few.

III. **Faithfulness is not dependent on success.**—A grave mistake is often made in relation to this. We think those are proved to be faithful who succeed. God knows His faithful ones who fail. We are not bound to succeed. Succeed or fail, we are bound to be *faithful*, and that we *can be.*

Ver. 4. *The House and its Builder.*—Had the house a builder, or did it build itself? This is a question which is occupying many minds, many tongues, many pens, just now, one to which various answers are given, though only two of them seem worth considering. If we say, "The house built itself," that clearly is a straightforward answer to the question, however unsatisfactory it may prove on examination. And if we say, "The house was built by God," that again is clearly an answer to the question, and an answer which seems at once to commend itself to our common sense, however disputable it may be. But if we have nothing more to say than "We do not know," clearly we do not answer the question at all; we do not even show it to be unanswerable; we simply admit our incapacity to answer it; and though that may be a sufficiently interesting fact to us, it has no interest for the world at large, which cares very little for us, but cares a great deal for the question we have raised. —*S. Cox, D.D.*

The Relativity of Christ and Moses to their Dispensations.—The term "house" here properly suits the idea of building, but the writer is referring to the "dispensations," or religious systems, which are associated with the names of Moses and of Christ. In some sense both were the founders and organisers of their dispensation. But not in the same sense. And the writer suggests that the differences are of greater importance than the similarities. The earlier is not properly called the Mosaic dispensation; it should be called the Jehovah dispensation; for Jehovah was the founder of it, and the Jehovah revelation is the very heart of it. And Moses was no more than the earth-ministrant of it, who must stand *beside* but never *before* Jehovah. The later is not properly called the Christian dispensation; it should be called the Father dispensation. But Christ stands in an altogether unique relation to it. He does not minister it; He embodies it. It is His Sonship, and what His Sonship did, does, and can do for men.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—19.

The Warning of Ancient Failures.—This passage is hortatory. It is an earnest appeal and warning breaking in upon the course of argument, after the manner of this writer. What is its special point of view? The times of Moses have been prominent in the writer's thought. They were times which there was a strong disposition to unduly magnify. It was easy to slip over the painful things in the older history. But they were there, and were there for the permanent warning of God's people. The evils, and especially the great evil of unbelief, which broke relations with Jehovah, prevented many from realising the fulfilment of God's promise, and delayed the fulfilment for many years, were evils still working; and they would prove as effective as ever in delaying or

removing the spiritual blessings of the new covenant. Apostasy is always the bad fruitage of cherished unbelief.

I. **The responsibility of self rests upon self.**—"Harden not your hearts." A man has control of, power of influence upon, his own heart for good or for evil. He can deal with, restrain, check, qualify, resist, the influences which rest upon his own heart. Therefore it is said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Every man is responsible for himself to himself, as well as to God. And this is true in relation to unbelief. Negligence of spiritual culture, injudicious reading, unsuitable associations, and other things, tend to nourish unbelief; but these are all within a man's own control. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

II. **The responsibility for each rests on the other.**—"But exhort one another day by day . . . lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." It is true that each man must "bear his own burden"; but it is also true that each must bear the other's burden; the strong bear the infirmities of the weak. We *can* come into each other's lives as gracious remedial forces; and this is especially true when mischievous teachers are exerting injurious influence, and the young, or those of receptive or sceptical dispositions, are placed in special temptation. We can "exhort one another."

III. **Our anxiety should concern the subtlety of sin and temptation.**—Unbelief begins in secret questionings and doubtings: it easily grows into a fatal habit. The tempter keeps up the subtlety of Eden by suggesting suspicions,—"Yea, hath God said." But the kind of subtlety indicated here is the exaggeration of a lower truth so as to push a higher one out of thought. The magnifying of Moses was intended to push out of thought the spiritual claims of Christ.

IV. **The direction in which evil works is generally towards unbelief.**—Trust is the element in which spiritual life thrives. Therefore the main effort of evil is to disturb that trust. Suspicion, doubt, unbelief, are the elements in which evil thrives. This is illustrated in the experience of the Israelites during their forty years of desert experience. It is the experience of religious life to-day. An age of criticism is an age of enfeebled spiritual life.

V. **Unbelief always means hindrance from blessing.**—It *did*, when those who came out of Egypt with Moses died in the wilderness (save the two men of faith, Caleb and Joshua). It did, when it kept the nation back from Canaan for eight-and-thirty years. It *does*, for God can make no response where there is doubt or unbelief. He cannot, because His response could be no blessing to men who were in such a mood of mind. God's ever-working law of blessing is succinctly given by the Lord Jesus thus, "According to your faith be it unto you." The good *man* always responds to trust. He can do anything for those who commit their interests wholly to him. And the good God is checked from blessing by nothing else as He is by distrust. The saddest thing is said concerning the towns beside the Lake of Galilee, in relation to the Lord Jesus, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Do we ask anything of God? His first word in response always is, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?"

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 7. *The Holy Ghost in the Old Testament.*—"Even as the Holy Ghost saith," in the book of psalms. God the Spirit bears relation to man the spirit. For man *is* a spirit. The great Spirit can overshadow, hallow, help, purify,

teach, us dependent spirits. Luther illustrates the relation of the Divine Spirit to the human spirit by the effect of fire in heating, and in some respects changing the character of, water, so that under the power of the fire the water can do what of itself it could not do. The great fire-spirit can penetrate and influence the water-spirit. God, as a Spirit, must always have borne relations to the human spirit, and this superadding and in-working of God's Spirit must always have been the secret source of all moral goodness. The inspirings of God are not the exclusive privilege of any one age. Illustrate this from—

I. **The patriarchal period.**—We cannot expect to find much respecting a subject which is the burden of God's last and highest revelation in this primitive age. We may, however, look for some hints that would indicate, even then, the apprehension of God as working for man, not only externally in nature and providence, but in the very heart of things, and upon the mind or spirit of men. We ought not, however, to be surprised if we also meet with some confusion between man's spiritual nature and the Spirit of God, or the spiritual working of God. As specimens of the references that may be found, turn to three passages: 1. Gen. i. 2: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The Spirit is evidently apprehended as the great quickening principle, bearing intimate relation to life, and so dealing with the inward, secret heart of things. 2. Gen. vi. 3: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." The reference may be either to the Holy Spirit, or to the spiritual as opposed to the animal principle in man. Whichever meaning we prefer, the passage indicates discernment of the relation God bears to the inner, spiritual nature of man. 3. Gen. xli. 38: "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Without pressing unduly the meaning of Pharaoh in his use of the term "Spirit of God," we have here also the indication of the same idea on the part even of the idolatrous peoples. Besides such passages as these we have many suggestions of God's inwardly helping men in those days. At first we have only *external* relations with Adam and Noah, excepting perhaps the hint of internal relations afforded by the terms in which Enoch is spoken of: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Passing thus into the spiritual world seems to suggest Divine culture of the spiritual nature. But by-and-by we come to *visions*, *dreams*, *inward voices*, seen and heard by Abraham and Jacob. These reveal personal and individual relations of God with men, and His immediate communication with man's mind and spirit. These visions, dreams, and inward voices are the proper beginnings and foreshadowings of the spiritual impulses, the inner workings of the Holy Spirit, which we know. And observe how exactly Abraham's faith was like ours. He believed an inward voice which could not be absolutely verified, even as by our faith we now lay hold of the unprovable. "Blessed," said Christ, "are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." It is said in relation to the offering of his son God did *tempt* Abraham. This tempting, testing, trying of Abraham was manifestly God spiritually dealing with Abraham's spiritual nature. And the same remark may be applied to the scene at Jabbok: it was the wrestling together of the Divine Spirit and the human spirit of Jacob.

II. **The Mosaic period.**—This was coincident with a more extensive and exact outward revelation of God. The prominent thing is minute and elaborate ceremonial: the entire outward life of the people in its social, political, and religious phases coming under Divine regulation. We may, however, reasonably expect clearer signs of the recognition of the inward workings of God on the part of those who, within the ceremonial, cultured their inner,

spiritual nature. We find a number of passages in which the skill, talents, power to prophesy, and to deliver the country, are traced to the inworking of the Spirit of God. As specimens, refer to Exod. xxxi. 2, 3: "I have called Bezaleel . . . and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding," etc. Bezaleel's talents, genius, are directly traced to the inspiration of God. The same applies to Balaam's power of prophesying. See Num. xxiv. 2: "And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him." See also in reference to the judges:—Judg. iii. 10: Othniel—"The Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel and went out to war." Judg. vi. 34: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." So of Saul and Saul's messengers. 1 Sam. x. 10: "A company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." 1 Sam. xix. 20: "The Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied." There is an exceedingly interesting passage in Num. xi. 17, etc. Moses felt oppressively the burden of his charge in the ruling and judging of so great a people. God graciously arranged for the appointment of seventy elders to relieve him of part of the burden. In connection with this arrangement God said, "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them." See ver. 25: "When the spirit rested on them they prophesied, and did not cease." Compare ver. 29. Here we have very distinctly presented Moses' own spirit, and the Spirit of God overshadowing and inspiring it. God is called the God of the *spirits* of all flesh in Num. xvi. 22, and xxvii. 16, 17. And we have the hardening of the hearts of men traced to the operation of God's Spirit, as in Deut. ii. 30: "But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate."

III. **The Davidic period.**—Here one or two passages will suffice to remind of more familiar ones. Turn to Ps. li. 10-12: "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy *Holy Spirit* from me." Here you observe that repentance was bringing up to light some of the deepest feelings and convictions of David's soul; it was making him intensely spiritual: so he came to realise his inner dependence on the teachings and movings of God's Spirit, and was led to express his fear lest at any time he should be left without the succour of the Spirit. See also Ps. cxliii. 10: "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." But even in this period it is evident that the externality of God, the things God does *for* us, still occupy chief attention. God is rock, refuge, fortress, deliverer. The inward inspirations of God are clearly recognised, and lovingly dwelt upon, only in the intenser, more spiritual moments of life.

IV. **The prophetic period.**—And what may we expect in this prophetic age? Its characteristic feature is a struggle to bring to its proper light and influence the inward claims and workings of God. The prophets do not, however, fully deal with the *nature* of this inward working of God. That would have been to anticipate Pentecostal times. They assume, assert, and vindicate the fact, and then proceed to urge the duty of man's offering spiritual response to the fact. They were, as prophets, inwardly, Divinely moved men. Not really different from others, only the prominent examples of inspiration which every heart open to God might surely know. So their very presence asserted God's spiritual relations with spirit. In the histories of the prophetic period we have the continuation of the idea on which we have dwelt: that talent, especially prophetic, is due to the working of God's Spirit. Elisha desires a first-born's portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings ii. 9, 15). Pul and Tiglath-pileser are said to be stirred

up to war by the Spirit, as we have seen Sihon was hardened. And the captives of Babylon were roused up by the Spirit to return to their own land (Ezra i. 5). In the actual prophecies we have again and again the formula, "The word of the Lord came unto me," implying operation of God on the spirit. Nehemiah says in his prayer, "Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testified against them by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets." Isaiah speaks of the wanderings of Israel in the desert in this way:—Isa. lxiii. 10, 11: "But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?" Ezekiel often speaks of the inner impulses of the Spirit. Zechariah, speaking of the former time, says (vii. 12), "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in His Spirit by the former prophets." Enough has been said to show that throughout all ages of the world men have, with more or less distinctness, recognised the relation between God the Spirit and man's spirit; with more or less clearness men have seen, as one text expresses it, that "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." But it will be suggested to your minds to inquire: Have we any reason for identifying this work of the Spirit in Old Testament times with the work of the Holy Ghost in this our Christian dispensation? Is the *Spirit of God* spoken of in the old age to be identified with the *Holy Ghost* of the new? If it is not, then we shall have to face the difficulty of *two* senses in which the Spirit of God is spoken of in Scripture, and to deal with the confusion of imagining there has been no *unity* in the Divine dealings with our race. All thought of God's education of the world must be put away, and we must think of His ways with us as a number of abrupt and unconnected dealings, fashioned for adaptation to peculiar and unexpected circumstances. "The God of the whole earth" He can hardly "be called." Turn to two passages in the epistles of Peter (1 Pet. i. 10, 11): "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow." Now the spirit of the prophets is declared to have been the *Spirit of Christ.* The Spirit of Christ is none other than the *Holy Ghost*: for in 2 Pet. i. 21 it is said, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We may therefore say that, apprehended in its most simple form, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Trinity, may be conceived of as God acting upon man's spirit, inspiring, moving, leading him to the apprehension of all moral truth, and the expression in conduct of all moral goodness. "There is a spirit in man, and the Spirit of God influences it, giving to it understanding and impulse."

Ver. 10. *Can God suffer?*—Is there any sensibility in God that can suffer? Is He ever wrenched by suffering? Nothing is more certain. He could not be good, having evil in His dominions, without suffering even according to His goodness. For what is goodness but a perfect feeling? And what is a perfect feeling but that which feels towards every wrong and misery according to its nature? And thus it is that we freely impute to Him, whether we observe it or not, every sort of painful sensibility that is related to bad and suffering subjects.

We conceive of Him as feeling displeasure, which is the opposite of pleasure. We ascribe it as one of His perfections that He compassionates, which means that He suffers with the fallen. We conceive that He loathes what is disgusting, hates what is cruel, suffers long what is perverse, grieves, burns, bears, forbears, and is even afflicted for His people, as the Scripture expressly declares. All which are varieties of suffering. We also ascribe it to God, as one of His perfections, that He is impassible; but here, if we understand ourselves, we mean that He is physically impassible, not that He is morally so. Moral impassibility is really to have no sensibilities of character, which is as far as possible from being any perfection. Indeed there is a whole class of what are called passive virtues that cannot, in this view, belong to God at all, and His perfection culminates without including more than half the excellencies demanded even of us, in the range of our humble, finite capacity. There is then some true sense in which even God's perfection required Him to be a suffering God—not a God unhappy, or less than perfectly, infinitely blessed; for though there be many subtractions from His blessedness, there is never any diminution; because the consciousness of suffering will bring with it, in every case and everlastingly, a compensation which, by a great law of equilibrium in His and all spiritual natures, fully repays the loss; just as Christ, assailed by so many throes of suffering sensibility—in the temptation, in His ministry, in the garden—still speaks of His joy, and bequeaths it as a gift most real and sublime to His followers. It is this suffering sensibility of God that most needed to be revealed, and brought nigh to human feeling, in the incarnate mission of Jesus.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

Ver. 12. *Good Unbelief and Bad.*—"An evil heart of unbelief." A head of unbelief may be good; a heart of unbelief must be bad. Doubt may be a condition of mental growth; suspicion and mistrust spoil all moral relations. It is said of the Berœans, "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." But their superior nobility consisted in their taking an attitude of interested doubt. They listened well, but would not believe until they had removed their reasonable hesitation by full inquiry. It may even be said that a man cannot be capable of faith if he is incapable of unbelief. A mere uninquiring recipiency indicates a very undeveloped moral nature. A man is not manly unless he is able to say, "I can doubt, but I do believe." Doubt is the impulse to inquiry and search; and therefore absolute certainty is not attainable by man in relation to anything in which he is interested. He is always under inspiration to "prove all things." Unbelief of the *head* then may be good. Intelligence involves doubting. He who receives everything thinks about nothing, and receives only as a sponge does. All mental attainments are battles with unbelief. "I am not sure about it"; then, "I must satisfy myself about it." Intelligent men go through doubt to faith. Unbelief of the *heart* is bad. That is the unbelief which is so sternly rebuked in the Scriptures. A man may doubt, but want to believe if he can. A man may doubt, and want to find excuse for not believing if he can. The one is good, and the other is evil. The Israelites of the wilderness did not fail by reason of intellectual unbelief, but by reason of failure in heart-trust: their sin was an "evil heart of unbelief." Capernaum and the cities of Galilee were not condemned for intellectual unbelief, but for heart-resistance of the claims of the great Teacher. The unbelief that imperils is not opinion, but feeling, mood, bias. It is a resistance of the will, a moral condition which makes evidence ineffective, and persuasion helpless.

When the heart influences the head, unbelief becomes ruinous.

Ver. 13. *The Deceitfulness of Sin.*—The most marked characteristic of sin is indicated in its first personification, when it was set in relation to man's moral fall. "Now the serpent was *more subtle* than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Subtlety, secret movement, insincerities, and deceptions, are essentials in the working of sin. That they must be so is seen at once when we apprehend that sin is no creative agency, but a disturbing and upsetting agency. If a man is going to do something, he can be open and above-board; but if he is going to upset something, he will have to work in secret and practise deceptions. The enemy who sowed tares in the wheat-field had to do it secretly and deceptively while men slept. The special deceitfulness of sin referred to here is its way of affecting a man's will and purpose and heart in relation to the religious life. Its agency is self-interest. In the saved man the self-interest is dethroned, and the Christ-interest enthroned. The work of evil is the subtle endeavour to revive the self-interest. The man finds himself growingly interesting to himself, and before he is aware he finds his heart self-hardened against Christ through the deceitful workings of sin.

Our Only Possession—To-day.—In what sense can a man be said to *possess* anything? Strictly speaking a man has nothing but the *use* of things. As the old satirist expresses it, the man who sits down to a loaded table of luxuries really *has* no more than the little that he can eat. The farmer thought he possessed goods and time. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." He had power to hold no handful of the goods and no day of time. We speak of what we will do on the morrow, and no man has any to-morrow until God gives it to him, and then he has to call it "to-day."

"To-morrow, Lord, is Thine,
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand."

A man has one thing only—the present hour. To-day—that is our only actual possession. Everything else save the thing of the hour, and every coming hour, is God's possession, not ours; He will give it to us if it pleases Him so to do.

Ver. 14. *Safety in continuing.*—"If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." St. Paul expresses the same truth in commending "patient continuance in well-doing." And the risen and living Lord bade His Church be "faithful unto death." Older Scriptures present the same truth, "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord."

I. **There is no safety in beginning a Christian profession.**—There might be, if we were translated as soon as we had planted our first footstep on the Christian highway. There is not, because that first step does but start a pilgrimage, which is a serious testing of that beginning. The teaching which exaggerates the safety of an act of beginning is mischievous.

II. **There is no safety in spasmodic experiences.**—Such as are provided for Christians in times of religious excitement. Many think they are safe because they have felt intense feelings occasionally.

III. **There is only safety in continuance and persistency.**—Because the Christian life is a moral cult, an advancing sanctification, a man only keeps right by keeping on.

Ver. 16. *Relief of a Dark Picture.*—The story of the murmuring, distrustfulness, and self-interested rebelliousness of ancient Israel in the wilderness is a sad, dark story. It never ceases to surprise and pain us; and we never feel that the excuses offered for them are sufficient to relieve the darkness. They were the chosen people of Jehovah, brought out of a stern bondage by magnificent displays of

Divine power which ought to have inspired absolute confidence—provided for in every way, every recurring need graciously met, every foe held off, and a plain way made for the possession of the Promised Land. And yet persistent rebellion at last reached a climax, and the judgment went forth that doomed every man who had come out of Egypt to find a grave in the wilderness. It was the doom of those who could not take God at His word, and trust Him fully. There is a relief to the almost too dark picture. Two men stand out to view. They will be spared. They will enter the Promised Land. And what is there peculiar in their case? They kept their trust in God. They "followed the Lord fully." God always honours full trust.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1. *The Moral Influence of a Leader.*—There is a touching fact related in history of a Highland chief, of the noble house of MacGregor, who fell wounded by two balls at the battle of Prestonpans. Seeing their chief fall, the clan wavered, and gave the enemy an advantage. The old chieftain, beholding the effects of his disaster, raised himself up on his elbow, while the blood gushed in streams from his wounds, and cried aloud, "I am not dead, my children; I am looking at you to see you do your duty." These words revived the sinking courage of the brave Highlanders. There was a charm in the fact that they still fought under the eye of their chief. It roused them to put forth their mightiest energies, and they did all that human strength could do to turn and stem the dreadful tide of battle.

Ver. 4. *God in Nature.*—See here; I hold a Bible in my hand, and you see the cover, the leaves, the letters, the words, but you do not see the writers, or the printer, the letter-founder, the ink-maker, the paper-maker, or the binder. You never did see them, you never will see them, and yet there is not one of you who will think of disputing or denying the being of these men. I go further; I affirm that you see the very souls of these men in seeing this book, and you feel yourselves obliged to allow that, by their contrivance, design, memory, fancy, reason, and so on, the book was made. In the same manner, if you see a picture, you judge there was a painter; if you see a house, you judge there was a builder of it; and if you see one room contrived for this purpose and another for that, a door to enter, a window to admit light, and a chimney to hold fire, you conclude that the builder was a person of skill and forecast, who formed the house with a view to the accommodation of its inhabitants. In this manner examine the world, and pity the man who, when he sees the sign of a wheatsheaf, hath sense enough to know that there is a joiner, and somewhere a painter, but who, when he sees the wheatsheaf itself, is so stupid as not to say to himself, "This had a wise and good Creator."—*R. Robinson.*

Ver. 13. *The Power of Habits.*—"Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The longer you sit under the gospel and continue in sin, the more easily you can hear it without alarm. If a person were obliged to sleep near a waterfall, he would not be able for the first few weeks to sleep soundly for the noise, but in a very short time he would hardly be able to sleep without it. I have seen in Scotland a dog, during the blacksmith's labour at the anvil, sleeping soundly with the shower of live sparks falling around him.—*Dr. Cumming.*

So used to it.—You may observe, in travelling on a railroad, how the young cattle run away in terror from the engine, while those that have often seen it pass go on quietly grazing and do not regard it; so one who has been accustomed to be a "hearer of the word, and not a doer," will acquire more and more of the same kind of familiarity. Suppose that there is in your neighbourhood a loud bell, that is ringing very early every morning to call the labourer to some great manufactory. At first and for some time your rest will be broken by it; but if you accustom yourself to be still, and try to compose yourself, you will become in a few days *so used to it* that it will not even wake you. But any one who makes a point of rising immediately at the call will become *so used to it*, in the opposite way, that the sound will never fail to rouse him from the deepest sleep. Both will have been accustomed to the same bell, but will have formed opposite habits from their contrary modes of action. Of sporting dogs there are some, such as the greyhound, that are trained to pursue hares; and others which are trained to stand motionless when they come upon a hare, even though they see it running before them. Now both are accustomed to hares, and both have

originally the same instincts—all dogs having an instinctive tendency to pursue game. But the one kind has always been accustomed to run after a hare, and the other has always been chastised if it attempted to do so, and has been trained to stand still.—*Whately.*

Perilous Beginnings.—You remember the old story of the prisoner in his tower, delivered by his friend, who sent a beetle to crawl up the wall, fastening a silken thread to it, which had a thread a little heavier attached to the end of that, and so on, and so on, each thickening in diameter until they got to a cable. That is the way in which the devil has got hold of a great many of us. He weaves round us silken threads to begin with, slight, as if we could break them with a touch of our fingers, and they draw after them, as certainly as destiny, at each remove, a thickening chain, until at last we are tied and bound, and our captor laughs at our mad plunges for freedom, which are as vain as a wild bull's in the hunter's nets.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

CHAPTER IV.

SOUL-REST.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THIS chapter should not have been separated from the previous one, as it is a continuation of the hortatory passage. There is, however, a break in the treatment of the subject. In the clause vers. 1-13 the writer has in mind possible objections to his mode of treating Old Testament Scriptures. It might be said (1) that the "rest" spoken of was merely quiet possession of an earthly inheritance, and had no deeper spiritual applications. Or it might be said (2) that the exclusion of the Israelites from Canaan was based on their murmuring and rebellion rather than on their unbelief; and so the case did not properly sustain the writer's exhortation. He therefore dwells more fully on the point. Really, the "rest" that was offered to believers in the olden time is the "rest" proffered to believers now; and they still may lose the rest through *unbelief.* The rest really offered, then and now, is spiritual; it is the "rest" of trust in and obedience to Jehovah.

Ver. 1. **Fear.**—Not in the sense of "be afraid of something happening," but meaning, "let us take care; be on the alert as those who are in the midst of dangers; act watchfully." **Left us.**—Or, "since a promise still remains unrealised." The usual sense of the word is "neglect." Lest by neglect of the promise made to us. *Stuart* prefers "left behind," "is still extant." Then the idea is, that "the promise which was implicity made to believers among the ancient people of God is still in being, and is made to us, Christians." **His rest.**—Said to enlarge our ideas of its character. It is *His* rest, and, like Him, it is spiritual. **Come short of it.**—Fail of obtaining it: see Heb. xii. 15; Rom. iii. 23; 1 Cor. i. 7. The point here is the Christian share in the deeper meanings of the Old Testament promises of rest. To the writers of the New Testament the Old Testament glowed in the Christian light.

Ver. 2. **Gospel preached.**—Not the evangelical doctrines, but the goodness of a promised rest. **Not profit them.**—Because the condition on their side was lacking. That condition was faith, expressed in trust and obedience.

Ver. 3. **Do enter into rest.**—The clauses of the verse need rearranging. "But yet the works were finished from the foundation of the world, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest"; or, "they shall not enter." The quotation is made for the sake of the words "My rest," to indicate that the reference was to God's own rest, His spiritual heavenly rest, and not merely to a material, physical, or national rest of God's *providing.* God's rest after work is the suggestion and figure of spiritual rest. "The immense stress of meaning laid on incidental Scriptural expressions, such as 'My rest,' and 'to-day,' was one of the features of Rabbinic as well as Alexandrian exegesis" (*Farrar*).

Vers. 4, 5.—These quotations are introduced to prove that the promise did not merely concern the Canaan rest. The passage in Genesis could not refer to Canaan, nor could the passage taken from Psalm xcv., seeing that it was penned long after the Canaan rest had been won.

Ver. 6. **Some must enter.**—The promise is still open. We cannot think that God makes and renews His promises in vain. Evidently a clause is omitted here, either by accident or designedly for rhetorical purposes. We may supply from ver. 1, "Let us fear lest we

also come short." **Unbelief.**—Here ἀπείθειαν, the disobedience which is the sign and expression of unbelief.

Ver. 7.—Reference again to the quotation from the psalm, in order to show that the promise was renewed long after Canaan was gained, and that the rest could always be had "to-day." It must therefore be a *spiritual* rest. The statement "in David" is equivalent to "in the book of Psalms," which went under David's name. But in the LXX. Version Psalm xcv. is actually ascribed to David.

Ver. 8. **Jesus.**—The Greek form of the Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, Joshua. Compare Acts vii. 45, in which the Greek reads Ἰησοῦ. The name is an interesting one. At first Hoshea, it became Hoshua, or the Helper; then the Divine name was prefixed, and it became Je-hoshua, contracted Joshua, God the Helper. The R.V. gives the name in this verse as Joshua.

Ver. 9. **Remaineth.**—Or the promise clearly lies open for *us*. "Few things are more striking in the epistle than the constant presentation of the thought that Scripture language is permanent, and at all times present. The implied promise, therefore, repeated whenever the 'to-day' is heard, must have its fulfilment" (*Moulton*). **People of God.**—The spiritual Israel of every age.

Ver. 11.—The point of this exhortation is, that we have One to deal with who will discern, and will surely punish, the most secret disobedience, the most inner apostasy. **Labour.**—Be zealous; give all diligence; make every due endeavour. See 2 Pet. i. 10, 11; Phil. iii. 14.

Ver. 12. **Word of God.**—Either (1) the personal Word, the Λόγος; or (2) the revealed word, to which the writer has been appealing; or (3) the spoken word of God, which may come to men through human agents now. Probably the second is the more preferable explanation, because to this writer Scripture is constantly thought of as a *direct* Divine utterance. It is not simply the written word, but that word as the voice for every age of the living God. **Quick.**—Alive, active. **Soul.**—ψυχή, the animal soul, spirit; πνεῦμα, that part of our nature in which the Divine Spirit works. Not a separating of these things from one another, but a dividing so as to lay them both bare to view. "The awakening and alarming of the conscience, the felt opening up, the dissection of the ultimate principles of the moral and spiritual life, is the effect of the word here intended" (*Webster and Wilkinson*). For the sword-figure see Isa. xlix. 2; Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16; and Wisd. xviii. 15, 16. **Joints and marrow.**—A very strong figure. Dividing the joints or limbs from the body, and piercing through the very bone to the marrow. "The divine commination is of the most deadly punitive efficacy."

Ver. 13. **Naked.**—Or laid bare; as the throat of a victim is bared for sacrifice; Greek, "to take by the neck," as do wrestlers. Perhaps the better meaning is "fully exposed to view." No self-deceptions can hide the truth from God. *Farrar* suggests that the figure may be taken from the anatomic examination of victims by the priests, which was called *momoskopia*, since it was necessary that every victim should be "without blemish." But he prefers the usage of Philo, which decides the meaning to be "laid prostrate" for examination. R.V. "naked and laid open."

Vers. 14-16 should be regarded as a transition. The Priesthood of Christ had been referred to in chaps. ii. 17, iii. 1. In fact, all the points previously made are recalled to mind in vers. 14, 15. The High Priest: His exaltation (chaps. i. 3, iv. 13, ii. 9); His Divine Sonship (chaps. i., iii. 6); His compassion (chap. ii. 11-18).

Ver. 14. **Great High Priest.**—At the time of the writer the term "high priest" was applied to more than one person. "Great" separates "Priest" from all others. **Into the heavens.**—Lit. "through the heavens" (διεληλυθότα), as the high priest of the old economy "through the vail." In the Hebrew idiom, God dwells above the firmament, Christ is represented as passing through it.

Ver. 15. **Touched.**—With the sympathy of a fellow-experience. **Infirmities.**—Not sufferings, not sins, but distinctly the frailties which made peril of apostasy. **Tempted.**—There is no sin in being subject to temptation. If Jesus could not be tempted, He was not a *man*; if He yielded to temptation, He could not be a Saviour **Without sin.**—This is not difficult to understand when we recognise that sin is a thing of the *will*—that is, of ourselves, of our souls.

Ver. 16. **Boldly**—Lit. "with freedom of speech." **Time of need.**—*Stuart*, "timely assistance." *Alford*, "for help in time, while yet open to us."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—11.

God's Rest for His People in Every Age.—In this passage there is a looking *back* to the rest of Canaan, promised to the fathers, but missed by them through unbelief. There is a looking *on* to the yet unrealised rest of the heavenly, in order to gain an impulse to new zeal in Christian service. But the rest which

more especially comes to view, and has present application to the people of God, is that *rest of the soul* which waits on steadfast faith—the true Sabbatic rest, of which the rest of Canaan was but a poor and imperfect type. That rest of soul is an unexhausted and inexhaustible good. The promise of it lies open and unfulfilled yet.

I. **What is God's rest?**—Reference is made in this chapter to the Sabbatic rest of creation, regarded as God ceasing from His active labours. This may serve to *illustrate* the rest of God; it cannot be the very rest which He promises His people. Reference is also made to the rest which Israel found, as a nation, in the land of Canaan, after long bondage in Egypt, and long wandering in the desert of Arabia. This, too, may serve for illustration; but even for the people of Israel it was not the true rest of God. His promise to them was larger far than any bodily contentments, any easy, prosperous circumstances. Neither the Sabbath nor Canaan are more than symbols of the true rest of God. This may be said about that rest. Since God provides it for His creatures, it must be (1) like Himself; (2) adapted to the deepest and the best in them. 1. If God's rest is like Himself, it must stand related to *character*, not to conditions, and not to attributes. The war in heaven, of which Milton sings, may not be thought of as disturbing the eternal rest of God. But the infinite peace of God should not be so described as to separate Him from human interests, and produce the impression that the varied states of His creatures never move Him to pity or sympathy or grief. God is ever at rest, because the changes of circumstance never imperil the basis principles of His character. Round about Him are ever-hanging "clouds and darkness"; laving His very footstool may be the ever-restless sea; but "justice and judgment" are the habitation of His throne. We are "restless, unquiet sprites," as Keble calls us, not because we are in the midst of variable conditions and circumstances, or because these affect our feeling; but because these varying circumstances put in peril the principles of our character. We are not centred, settled, fixed for ever, in our trust and goodness, and so we are driven with every wind and tossed. If a Christian man comes into trouble, he begins at once to question the foundation of his hope. We may think of God as having eternal rest, because even if "the elements melted with fervent heat, and the earth, and all therein," were burned up, God could never question the righteousness of His being, or the principles of His eternal rule. We must think thus of Him if He is the eternally *Good One*. Or it may be put in this way: Rest comes from the dominion of one faculty in us; under its rule all the various powers of our nature fall into order, take their place, and keep the peace. War may be a thing of the soul as well as of the circumstances; and the inward war consists in the conflict of motives. Mind and will and judgment and affections, when out of harmony, make war in the soul. Now we can conceive of nothing like that in God. He is at rest because, in His Divine nature, there is the order and harmony that follow the rule of the highest faculty—and that in God can only be *love*. The law works for us also. We must give the dominion to *our* highest faculty—and for the creature that is *trust*. 2. God's rest provided for man must be *adapted to man*, to the deepest and best that is in him. Man, as man, is ever seeking rest. The Bible presents him to us as striving to win back a lost Paradise. Poetry rings out a melancholy wail over the "Golden Age" that is gone, and bids us gain rest in tender memories, and lofty imaginations, and beautiful thoughts, thus raising ourselves up above the stern, hard, iron age of the present. Man, as a sinner, is ever seeking rest. Who shall roll away the burden? Man, as redeemed, is still seeking rest. Rest for *minds*, in the great agitation of conflicting theories. Rest for *wills* amidst the claims of opposing duties. We differ so much from each other that what may be rest for one of us would be

no rest for another. Yet for all there is the one law—rest never comes by *knowing*, always by *trusting*. God's rest begins within us, in the faith we set on God. It spreads out through all the forces and expressions of our being, and ensures the rest of settled, established character. It reaches to our circumstances, influencing them, modifying them, bringing them into its obedience; and so it grows from being the rest of the soul to become the eternal rest of heaven.

II. **Who may hope to gain this present rest of God?**—As the rest of faith it must be for those who believe. But faith is not the merely intellectual acceptance of a sentence embodied in a creed. It is the spirit of trust. It is reliance, dependence. It is the yielding of the *self* to God. It is the staying of the heart on God. It is the personal confidence of the Father's love. It is the heart's grasp of the Divine righteousness and goodness, as revealed in Jesus Christ. But the believing that brings rest is not a single act, or even a state once reached. The Greek language had an advantage over ours. It could express, by the form of the verb, the idea of having begun, and continuing still. It is not "we have believed," but "we have begun to believe, and we are keeping on the trust." And because the trust is maintained day by day, the rest of the soul is renewed day by day.

III. **How far may this "rest of God" be a present, conscious possession?**—It is a mistake to assume that all the facts and processes of the religious life must come into *conscious recognition*. All the finest things in soul-growth elude observation. The best violets are usually hidden away under the leaves. The most delicate graces cannot bear a look or a touch. So "rest" may be the possession of a soul, and the mind may not be laying the fact before itself for consideration. And rest will never be gained by directly seeking for it. It will be gained by simply doing our duty; by keeping up that trusting which finds its best expression in obedience; by living for Christ; by growing into His likeness; by perfecting our sympathy with the great and beneficent purposes of God; by perseverance in well-doing; by "holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering." "Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and it will be evident enough that you have reached the soul-rest of God. We must wait for the *fulness* of our rest; none of us need wait for the *beginnings* of our rest. If we cannot have the *fruition*, we can have the *foretaste*. We can receive now the "end of our faith," even the "salvation of our souls."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *The Rest of Sonship.*—Rest for any man can only come out of finding the Father in heaven. No one can find the Father until he gets the Spirit of the Son into his heart.

I. **Rest for man.**—There is (1) rest from the burden of ceremonial rites; (2) rest from the burden of the sorrows of life; (3) rest from the burden of the slavery of sin; (4) rest of body; (5) rest of mind; (6) rest of conscience; (7) rest of death; (8) rest of heaven. But men want rest *from* their troubles, and the only worthy rest is rest *in* our trouble. Rest from a burdened conscience men want; the higher rest of a changed and renewed nature they little value. There is a better rest possible of attainment: rest in trouble; rest in submitting; rest in the sanctified effect of the trouble. The spirit of a son, that is the secret of rest.

II. **Rest for Christ and in Christ for man.**—Christ had no rest from earthly troubles, but He had heart-rest in the midst of troubles. But for that inward soul-rest the human life

of Christ could not have been lived through. Rest came from the willingness with which He bore the burdens that His Father laid upon Him. It was the rest of submission, of cross-bearing, of sacrifice, of meekness and lowliness of heart, of cherished obedient sonship. To find rest we are directed to Christ Himself. In Him we may find the rest of (1) an all-satisfying *love*, (2) an all-sufficient *wisdom*, (3) an almighty *power*. When we ask how this rest of soul in Christ becomes ours amidst the duties and anxieties and sorrows of life, then we are directed to Christ's yoke and yoke-bearing. We may gain rest by bearing the same yoke, and by bearing it in the same way. Christ bore His yoke in the *spirit of a son*. Let Him teach you the glory of being a child, a son. If only you were son-like in spirit, satisfied, at home with God, loving a Father's will, you would find that sin was gone from its power; and as the yoke of life rested on you, you would feel how true were the Saviour's words, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Ver. 2. *The Causes of Unprofitable Hearing.*—The censure here passed by the apostle upon certain hearers who failed to profit by the preaching of the word refers more immediately to the Israelites under Moses in the desert. The unprofitableness of preaching has throughout Christendom been the subject of complaint to some and of lamentation to others. Hearers say the word preached is unprofitable, not from their want of faith or piety, but want of zeal, ability, discretion, energy, originality of the preacher. It may be, however, through perverseness, inattention, or unbelief in the hearers.

I. **Unprofitable hearing is the result of irregular attendance at the house of God.**—Frequent absence from the services of the sanctuary can never be compatible with edification. The services are frequent, regular; the invitations to hear audible and intelligible. Health, pleasures, business, study, are the excuses. The grace of God is not to be expected by the irregular worshipper.

II. **Another fault in hearers: those who, by being absent in mind and spirit, make their bodily presence of no avail.**—It is possible for the mind to be so entirely abstracted from any subject under discussion as scarcely to be sensible that a discourse is preached. Others intend to listen, but their attention is easily diverted to other objects. The light-minded hearers are particularly subject to this tendency; but those professing more solidity of character are often not less guilty of imperfect and wavering attention.

III. **Another fault in hearers: those who attend with improper dispositions either with regard to the minister or to their fellow-hearers.**—Those who criticise the preacher in an arbitrary and dictatorial manner, and to other hearers, are apt to be censorious in their application of the truth or duty inculcated. They criticise the doctrines delivered, or the arrangement of the subject, or the style of the composition. Whatever variety may be permitted in our discourses must be found only in our application of doctrine, and never in the doctrine itself. We may occasionally venture on new illustrations, but never new discoveries.

IV. **Those who aim the shafts of their criticism not so much at the preacher as at their fellow-hearers.**—Every practical, edifying discourse holds up vice to shame and reprobation, and commends and enforces virtue; by the threatenings of God it warns sin, unbelief, and spiritual instability, and by His promises it encourages faith, piety, and persevering holiness. The censorious hearer of these praises and denunciations applies the former to himself and the latter to his neighbour. Uncharitableness is an undoubted sign of unbelief. Let us pray for faith, that we may be willing to receive instruction without insisting arbitrarily on favourite methods of our own as indispensable to justification, and that we may be preserved from censoriousness; and that, being desirous of im-

provement to ourselves as well as of being charitable to others, we may, before presuming to remove the mote out of our brother's eye, consider the beam that is in our own.—*William Sinclair, D.D.*

Mixed with Faith.—The attempts which are continually made to gauge the word of God by other standards than that of faith leave men in doubt as to its Divine origin. The conflict of science and revelation, how does this happen? By applying the same test to both. The astronomer and the chemist—observation by the one, laws of combination by the other.

I. **Mixed with faith on account of the Divine nature of the word, yea, it might be said the Diviner nature of the word.**—A piece of workmanship, when examined, will afford much information respecting the worker—wisdom, power, etc.; but the person is out of sight until you meet him. So with God; His works reveal His attributes, but not Himself—instance Job. "Oh that I knew," etc. (Job xxiii. 2-9). But a moment's reflection on the method of revelation will lead to the belief that God has revealed Himself in the dream, the vision, the sacrifice, inspiration, etc. We must take these paths, we must fall into these grooves, become saturated with this spirit in order that the word may profit us. Faith, then, is that sympathy with spiritual things which enables us to distinguish between them. It is our common experience that to be in the *spirit of the thing* is necessary either to its discharge or enjoyment. How much more so in the higher branches of life—genius, art, æsthetics. John in the Spirit in Patmos, etc.

II. **Mixed also with faith, for this is the only entrance into our inner life.**—There are three classes of observations. The common, as when one's attention is drawn to an object to observe it. The second is the looking for that object, in order to a deeper acquaintance with it. The third is the assimilation of the object and ourselves. So there are three classes of hearers—the *accidental*, the *honest*, and the *earnest*. In the case of the latter the dream, the vision, the sacrifice, the inspiration, become our own. See with a prophet's eye, feel with a priest's heart, handle with an apostle's touch. If we take one comparison—the union of the vine and the branches—that union is Divine, mysterious, communicative, complete. The sap travels along the various ducts to every part, even the twig and the leaf. Look at this, and you will perceive that faith is the union of the soul to Christ, whereby all that He is to us as a Saviour flows into our experience. There cannot be an entrance if the door is not opened. There cannot be life unless the food is assimilated. There cannot be salvation unless the heart is in sympathy with Christ. Israelites were buried in the wilderness. Sinners die at the cross.

III. **Mixed with faith also, as the stage is a preliminary one—one not of actual possession, but of trust and expectancy.**—Faith is occupied with foundations, beginnings, preliminaries, plans, and materials. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." The life which God prescribed—the collecting of materials for the new Jerusalem. Prophets, priests, and kings lived that life, expectancy inspiring action to prepare. The same Divine plan exists again in the life of the believer: "For we have no continuing city here, we look for *one to come*." The grand time is to *come*. Let us look at it. Above doubt or fear, free from sin, delivered from the influences of circumstances, raised into close communion with God, and into the fellowship of His Son. In view of that period faith says, "*Let us be ready.*" More prayer, more trust, more of His word in the heart: "According to your faith be it unto you."—*Anon.*

Promises prove larger than Performances through Man's Weaknesses.—It sometimes seems as if God's promises were unfulfilled; and we are even

tempted to say that they were too large ever to be fulfilled. But we must beware of admitting the idea that God ever leads on His people with promises and hopes which He never *intends* to fulfil. The promises of God always represent what He would do if He could; but seeing God deals with moral beings, to whom He has committed the trust of effective, but limited, free wills, no promise that God ever makes can be absolute; it must be *conditioned*, and the condition affects man. The promise cannot be fulfilled unless man is in such a state that the promise can do for him what God intended it to do. Man alone spoils the complete fulfilment of everything God has promised.

Ver. 4. *The First Seventh-day Rest.*—If God intended us to keep the Sabbath holy, why did He not from the very first give to man a more definite and emphatic command concerning it? It may be answered, that God designed keeping Sabbath to be a moral act of willinghood, loyalty, and holy imitation; it was not to be a matter of mere forced obedience. If our first parents had kept their communion with God, it would have been their joyous endeavour to be like Him in all things. Example is a higher and more universal force than commandment. Commands we give to mere children. Examples are the inspiration of men. At first God dealt with His creatures as moral beings who were made in His own image, and were capable of enjoying His fellowship. When man became deteriorated, God graciously accommodated Himself to his low, ignorant, and childish condition, and gave him commands. The example of God means that His abiding presence with us is apprehended, and is the joy and power of our lives. And all to whom that Divine presence is a reality will feel that nothing can possibly make the Sabbath so sacred to them as the example of Him who rested from His work on the seventh day, sanctified and hallowed it. God put aside His relation to material things as their Creator, and occupied Himself in the world of spirit; and that was His resting. Our putting aside our relation to common life-work, and occupation of thought and heart with spirit-things, unseen and eternal things, would be our human imitation of the Divine example, and our resting. St. Augustine says: "God rested—not as if He were wearied. No, the 'Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary'; but He saw what He had made was good, and contemplated His own works, and rejoiced in them; and thus commended to us the state of contemplation as higher than that of labour, and as a state to be attained by labour."

Ver. 7. *The Present.*—We do well to look back, that by seeing our past blessings we may be grateful for them; by seeing past errors we may be humbled; by observing their consequences we may be warned. We ought to look forwards to measure our own strength, refresh our spirits, and to see the light shining on the distant hills. Our true life—only life we can count upon—is *now*.

I. **Each day has its own gifts.**—All good gifts are exactly what we make of them. Pray that God will teach us rightly to use the gifts of every day.

II. **Each day has also its immediate opportunities.**—Slight it may be, but full of possibility of blessing. Many spend their days in doing unkindnesses, in light criticisms, jealous depreciations—women whose whole lives dwindle into some acrid rivulet of gossip, slander, and spite. How often do better spirits lose precious opportunities of pleasing God by performing nameless acts of kindness. A word spoken in due season, how good it is. "Time is money." That is the least thing it is—for time is eternity.

III. **Also its own stores of pure and innocent happiness.**—To those who walk through the world with open eyes every day reveals something

beautiful—in nature, in city-life, in home-life. In idle repinings, in discontented selfishness, we lose everything. Our best hopes, our richest treasures, our destiny on earth, yea heaven itself, lie not in the visionary future, but in the *here* and *now*.

IV. **Every day has its duties.**—Riches may fly away, fame may vanish, friends may die, but duty never ceases. Are we happy? Let us work. Unhappy? Action is the best of solaces. Bitterly disappointed? If we cannot build upon the foundations, let us build upon the ruins. Is the future uncertain? Whatever it is to be, it will come. There is always something to be done. Each day has its duty. After the Resurrection the apostles found Christ in faithful work.

V. **Every day has also its supreme duty—the duty of repentance, of getting nearer to God, and seeing His face.**—If this duty be neglected, no other duty can be a substitute for it. There is one thing needful. We "know not what a day or an hour may bring forth." "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

VI. **Every day has its gracious help.**—There is One of infinite help always at hand. God is our help and strength. He loves us, and will not forsake us. He who gave His own Son for our sins, shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Jesus our Intercessor. The Holy Spirit our Helper. The golden ladder between earth and heaven is prayer. Let us ask Jesus to take us by the hand, and then whatever the future may have in store for us we shall be able to face it with man's inalienable dignity and unconquerable will.—*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*

Ver. 7. *Man's Power over his Own Heart.*—"Harden not your heart." The counsel is worthless unless it is in the power of man to harden his heart. That he can do so receives its most striking proof and illustration from the Biblical account of Pharaoh Menephthah. Calamities which do not subdue the heart harden it. The hardening itself is judicial and just, when it is a consequence of previously formed habits.

I. **Man has power over his heart through his intellect.**—He can reject—refuse to receive or believe—the things which would act persuasively on his heart.

II. **Man has power over his heart through his will.**—He can refuse to let the heart yield to softening and subduing influences.

III. **Man has power over his heart through his self-interests.**—He can make them crush the tenderest susceptibilities.

IV. **Man has power over his heart through his habits.**—He can make them effect a life-bondage which the intensest emotions will be powerless to break. So a man can harden his own heart.

Ver. 8. *An Outward and Temporary Mission.*—Joshua is especially interesting when viewed from one point. His mission was not, in the usually accepted sense, religious. It was national; it concerned external relations and material things. And that was for Joshua religion, his religious mission. We are constantly erring by making unnecessary distinctions between the secular and the sacred, and putting superior honour on life-missions which we class as sacred. But if a man *works for God* his work ceases to be secular; it becomes sacred. The division is altogether lost. Joshua's material and outward work of war, settling, organising, dividing, was every whit as sacred as Moses' work in revelation and religion. What makes a life-mission sacred is the cherished spirit and purpose of the man who carries it out. And the spirit which ennobled and sanctified Joshua's outward and temporary mission is fully revealed in his declaration, "As for me and my house, we will *serve* the Lord."

Ver. 9. *Soul-rest for To-day.*—The

word "therefore" introduces the conclusion and application of an argument. This conclusion throws light on the Old Testament revelation, and gives us the right to use the old promises for our strengthening and comforting. God's promises are never given as mere accidents; they come on special occasions, but they rest upon Divine reasonings and judgments; they may precisely fit one particular circumstance, but the circumstance is illustrative of other circumstances, and the promise is found to fit the ever-recurring similar need. Human experiences are strangely repeated through the ages; and moral and spiritual experiences are also strangely alike. The promises of God are adapted to the ordinary outworking of natural, social, intellectual, moral laws—laws which are permanently, unchangeably, and irresistibly working. The promises of God translate themselves afresh for application to each new generation, the old words ever taking on a new and living meaning. The promise made to Abraham—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"—was a special promise to him and to his particular race. But it stands true to-day; for all the families of the earth *are* blessed in the witness of every man who lives such a life of faith as Abraham lived. The men of faith are to-day the saviours of society. No material promise that God has ever made can be exhausted in any providential circumstances. Each one of them has its spiritual counterpart, which carries its continuous applications. God has promised "rest" to His people. At first it meant the rest of a settled, cultivated land, after long years of weary wilderness-wandering. But it could not exhaust itself with that. The promise is not outworn. God has fulfilled it, in various senses, over and over again. But it keeps still its old freshness and its old fulness, and it is rich with meanings and applications for us all to-day. There "remaineth" a rest. It is still the Divine provision. It is always available, always just before us, the inspiration of all true workers. There is indeed a sense in which that rest may be and is reached even now. "We which have believed *do* enter into rest." There is a sense in which that rest is always held just before us, just out of grasp, the cheer and inspiration of every endeavour. God's promise to His people in every age will go into one word—"rest." But we must put more and better meaning into the term than mere lying down in weariness and idleness. That is but the rest which frail and feeble bodies may need. For souls attainment is rest, the completion of labour is rest, the contemplation of the results of anxious and arduous endeavour is rest. The schoolboy gains rest when he rises above the anxious strain of dealing with first principles and difficulties. It is rest to be able to do one's work easily. The man in middle age gains rest as he finds business established, income regular and steady, and a good sum put by against the "rainy day." The old man finds rest in the Land of Beulah, where he may sit awhile, and gratefully think over a useful, earnest, and devoted life, in all whose scenes the grace of God has been abundantly magnified. Rest—the true rest—it is not *sleep*; that is but an image of it, and an image of only one feature of it. It is not *death*; we only call that rest when our sufferer has so intensely suffered, and the strain on the dying and on the watchers has been so great, that death is welcome as a release from well-nigh unbearable agony and distress. It is not *heaven*, unless we are able to think of heaven as a state rather than a place, and can enter into the spiritual things materially figured for us in pearly gates, and golden streets, and many mansions. Rest is a soul-condition, which makes its own surroundings. Heaven *is* around us when heavenliness is within us. "Heavenly-mindedness" is the "rest that remaineth for the people of God," and we can have it and keep it *now*.

To dwell on this more fully in detail, we may see that the fulfilment of God's promise of rest is—

I. **Adapted to conditions.**—Look out over life, and see how various are the ideas of rest that are entertained under pressure of the various circumstances of the life. Take a single life, and notice how changeful are the ideas of rest men have at different times, and when overmastered by varying cares. The traveller longs for the rest of home; the student longs for the rest of attainment. The critical-minded man longs for the rest of simple faith. The tempted long for the rest of security. The over-worked worker longs for the rest of limitation. The feeble long for the rest of health. The sufferer longs for the rest of sleep. The old man, left alone in the midst of the graves of his beloved, oftentimes sighs for rest, and finds his soul bursting forth and saying, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away, and be at rest." It is curious to note how conceptions of heaven match condition. It is carried indeed too far by those who make heaven the spiritual counterpart of the earthly, and then say that whatsoever a man desires most here, and cannot attain here, he shall have fully supplied there. The Old Testament promise of rest was partly fulfilled in the provision of the *Sabbath* rest—that weekly putting aside of the toils and cares of ordinary life which has been the beatitude of all the generations, the weekly foretaste and suggestion of heaven. For the Jewish people it was fulfilled when *Joshua* divided among them the fields and cities of the conquered Canaanites, and the weary wilderness wanderers settled down in homes of their own. It was fulfilled for the *Jewish nation* when they came out of the struggle and strain of a formative time into the rest and peace of the Davidic rule. In a way it was fulfilled for David himself when, with great rejoicings of heart, he succeeded in bringing the sacred Ark to Zion. In a small sense it was fulfilled when that little band of returning exiles entered the city of their fathers, though the city was but a ruin, the Temple destroyed, the walls broken down, and the gates burned. They tried to think it was home and rest—it was poor home and no rest. "There remaineth a rest." It is for the people of God to-day. But it is dependent on their condition; it varies to them according to their varying condition. Are we carnally-minded? Our heaven will match our condition. Are we spiritually-minded? Our heaven will match our condition. Are we young, and looking out on life with large eyes of hope? Then our heaven, our thought of rest, will match our condition. Are we old, is life almost all behind us, and are our beloved only just *over there*, on the further shore? Then our heaven will match our condition. Are we poor, struggling almost in vain to keep a place and win daily bread? Then rest and heaven will be fashioned for us by our daily struggles. Are we rich, so that the needs of the hour are fully met? Then our heaven will take shape from our condition, and seem to be a continuity and permanence of present privileges. But is it not full of comfort to be assured, that the promise of God can come into such direct adaptation to each one of us, and be the satisfaction of the deepest and best in every individual? God's rest is to us as we are to it. Improve our moral and spiritual condition, and the rest grows nobler, fills with richer meaning, and gains more inspiring force. It loses its material envelope, and appears as what it is—the soul's rest in God, which includes everything. *Faber* expresses the soul's eternal rest in God in poetical and mystical language, when he says,—

> "Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
> And ever gaze on Thee."

II. **The fulfilment of God's promise of rest depends on our preparations.**—Why is the fulfilment often so disappointing? Because the rest has merely been longed for; it has not been prepared for. Many a man

leaves business—retires, as it is called—and expects to enjoy a few years of delightful rest, and he is wofully disappointed. He cannot rest: he is bored to death with the dulness of having nothing to do; he frets daily with wishing that he could put the harness on again. The fact is that, though he wanted the rest, he never thought of preparing himself for it. And a man can no more enjoy the time of retirement without preparation for it, than a man can win the power to retire, through efficiency in business, without an apprenticeship of preparation. God did not let Israel enter its land of rest until after long discipline in Egypt and long testings in the wilderness. Think of the heavenly rest remaining for the people of God, and we may be reminded that all life, in the Divine leading, is preparation for it. What we fear concerning ourselves and concerning others is, that the daily life we are living is no fitting or adequate preparation. Not for one moment would we suggest that the preparation for *heaven* is something different from, or distinct from, the preparation for *life*, daily life. Heaven is established righteousness; but then it is precisely that righteousness which gets established *here*—that righteousness which we who bear Christ's name should be at work to culture every day. Prepare to *live*—in so doing you prepare to *die*, and in so doing you prepare for *heaven*. Heaven is life fruitened. Think of the rest sought by the people of God as *heart-rest* from care—the rest which comes now, and which a man keeps in the very midst of his troubles and distresses. "We have all heard the experience of long-continued sufferers from bodily pain. They have told us how they chafed and fretted to be free, when first the yoke of life-long helplessness and anguish was laid upon them; they wore their hearts sore against the yoke. But they learned of Christ to submit, not to chafe and fret, to bear—as Keble so exquisitely expresses it, 'Wishing, no longer struggling to be free.' And in their calm faces and deep thoughtful eyes you may read their heart-rest—'the rest that remaineth for the people of God.'" But the realisation of that heart-rest depends on culture and preparation—preparation oftentimes in the providential discipline of God, responded to by the heart-culture of him who longs to enter into this present rest. God cannot give some of us *present rest*, because we have not got ourselves ready for it. God has to keep some of us a long time in the shadows of the earthly, because we do not get on with our preparations for the heavenly.

III. **The fulfilment of any one of God's promises of rest opens the way to new longings for rest.**—For no rest God gives must ever be confounded with *satisfaction*, with the end of enterprise and hope. If so, we may as well cease to be creatures, moral beings which should have a boundless possibility in them. Attainment opens up the prospect of attainment. The mountain-climber reaches one peak only to see the peaks rising high above him. It is thus with "learning," and it is thus with "art." Robert Buchanan cries out thus to his poet-friend in heaven, David Gray,—

> "Must it last for ever,
> The passionate endeavour,
> Ay, have you, there in heaven, hearts to throb and still aspire?
> In the life you know now,
> Render'd white as snow now,
> Doth a fresh mountain-range arise, and beckon higher—higher?
> Are you dreaming, dreaming,
> Is your soul still roaming,
> Still gazing upward as we gazed, of old, in the autumn gloaming?"

All earthly resting-places are but *arbours* in the "Hill Difficulty," that rises steeply, up and up, to the everlasting gates. Into the arbours God lets us pass for a while; but there is no making tent or tabernacle, and abiding there. Onward, upward; ever onward, ever upward, until the white cloud wraps us round, and we too are away with God. The seeking soul may enter into the rest of the full surrender. And such a soul never forgets the

Divine peace that comes when the last self-hold is loosened, the eye is fixed on the crucified and risen One, and the love goes wholly forth in one sublime self-yielding and sacrifice. The sincere and earnest soul longs to gain the arbour of the full and entire trust. He would have the first passionate act of first love pass into the restful habit of reliance, that keeps the soul in peace. The great impulse sometimes comes upon us, and we long for the rest of holiness—the rest of an abiding, easy mastery of sinful inclination. And then the soul is set upon longing for the rest of heaven; which is but this—holiness set in holy surroundings. The rest of heaven is the rest that an earnest, spiritually-minded Christian wants; it is the rest of unhindered goodness, the "crown of righteousness." Our life goes by stages. Attainment is rest *and a stage*. The material is ever leading on to the spiritual, and the spiritual is ever opening into the heavenly. Our present limit of conception is the heavenly rest; but that can only be some new kind of toil; and away, in advance of it, must be the inspiration of some yet higher rest for the toilers then, as this heaven is the rest for the toilers now. This we may say for the assuring of our hearts—He who so anxiously provides *rest* for the weary surely provides *grace* for the toiler; and life now is the rest of His service. And this we may say—the secret of all rest is rest of heart. And *that* we may all have now. It is the rest of faith. We—yes, we—the sons of toil and care and fear, who are often so weary of earth's worries and weaknesses and misunderstandings that we can wail with Marianna of the Moated Grange, and say,—

"I'm aweary, I'm aweary;
Would God that I were dead!"—

we—even we—may enter now, and possess now, the "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

Two Words for Rest.—In ver. 8 "rest" signifies rest from weariness. The "rest" in ver. 9 is another word—nobler, and more exalted. It signifies the rest of a soul made perfect. It is the inward peace of the Sabbath. It is not the rest of *insensibility*, the rest of the sleeper, unconscious of the presence of good or evil agencies around him. The rest of God is not the rest of *inactivity*. The things of God come to perfection. Perfection means fruit-bearing, and fruit-bearing means work. There is no idleness even in heaven. God's rest is perfect, nothing can disturb it. Years ago our fleet was shattered by a violent gale. It was found, however, that some ships were unaffected by its violence. They were in what mariners call "the eye of the storm." While all around was desolation, they were safe. So Jehovah's children find that amid the turbulent billows of life's tempest "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." Why cannot we have perfect rest on earth? You lack knowledge. There is nothing more terrible than suspense. You are waiting for information—you cannot rest. Not only knowledge is imperfect here, everything is imperfect. Therefore we cannot rest. Selfishness produces restlessness. Fear is a great cause of it. "Perfect love casteth out fear." When you know, as St. John knew, that you have found the bosom of God, and that He has all power in heaven and earth, you are at rest.—*Hawthorn Homilies.*

God's Rest.—

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness His rest.

E. B. Browning.

Vers. 9, 10. *Entrance into God's Rest.*—The truth taught here is that Faith, and not Death, is the gate to participation in Christ's rest—that the rest remained over after Moses and Judaism, but came into possession under and by Christ. The old system had in it, for its very heart, a promise of rest; but it had only a *promise*. It

could not *give* the thing that it held forth. It could not, by the nature of the system. The psalmist represents the entrance into that rest as a privilege not yet realised, but waiting to be grasped by the men of his day whose hearts were softened to hear God's voice. That rest was only a fair vision, and this writer says it remains unpossessed as yet, but to be possessed. God's word has been pledged. The Divine mercy will not be baulked of its purposes by the unbelief of the Jews: the rest *remains* for all who believe to partake of. The position that the rest promised to the Jew remains to be inherited by the Christian is established on a second ground. Christ our Lord has entered into His rest—parallel with the Divine tranquillity after creation. And seeing that He possesses it, certainly we shall possess it if only we hold fast by Him.

I. **This Divine rest, God's and Christ's.**—The writer is drawing a parallel between God's ceasing from His creative work and entering into that Sabbath rest when He "saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good," and Christ's ceasing from the work of redemption and passing into the skies to the Sabbath of His everlasting repose. The "rest of God" is difficult to understand. It belongs necessarily to the Divine nature. It is the deep tranquillity of a nature self-sufficing in its infinite beauty, calm in its everlasting strength, placid in its deepest joy, still in its mightiest energy; loving without passion, willing without decision or change, acting without effort; quiet, and moving everything; making all things new, and itself everlasting; creating, and knowing no diminution by the act; annihilating, and knowing no loss though the universe were barren and unpeopled. God is, God is everywhere, God is everywhere the same, God is everywhere the same infinite love, and the same infinite self-sufficiency; therefore His very being is *rest*. The rest of Christ is like the rest of God, even in respect of this Divine and infinite nature. Besides this repose that belongs to the Divine nature, there is the rest which is God's tranquil ceasing from His work, because God has perfected His work. God does not rest as weary, but as having done what He meant to do. The rest of God is the expression of the perfect Divine complacency in the perfect Divine work. And so Christ is said to rest when His redemption work was completed. Further, the Divine tranquillity is a rest that is full of work. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And Christ's work of redemption, finished upon the cross, is perpetually going on. Christ's glorious repose is full of energy for His people. He intercedes above. He works on them; He works through them; He works for them. The rest of God, the Divine tranquillity, is full of work.

II. **The rest of God and of Christ is the pattern of what our earthly life may become.**—We can come to be like Him—like Him in the substance of our souls; like Him—copy of His perfections; like Him—shadow and resemblance of some of His attributes. And here lies the foundation for the belief that we can "enter into His rest." Faith, which is the means of entering into rest, will make life no unworthy resemblance of His who, triumphant above, works for us, and, working for us, rests from all His toil. Trust Christ! and a great benediction of tranquil repose comes down upon the calm mind and settled heart.

III. **This Divine rest is a prophecy of what our heavenly life shall surely be.**—Heaven is the earthly life of a believer glorified and perfected. If here we by faith enter into the beginning of rest yonder, through death with faith we shall enter into the perfection of it.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 11. *The Heavenly Rest.*—These words illustrate the truth that the whole history of the Jewish Church was one long prophecy and type of the Christian Church in every age. The rest of Canaan typified the higher and

nobler "rest of heaven," and we are warned in the text that unbelief will surely exclude from that rest.

I. The gospel revelation meets all the deepest needs of man.—It holds out to him, weary with the conflict of life, the hope of an eternal life. In the fulness of early vigour the promise of rest may be passed by as a thing little cared for; but as the years go by we welcome the thought of perfect rest, as the weary traveller welcomes the sight of home.

II. The gospel revelation promises a "rest" compatible with the noblest and highest activity of all the powers man possesses.—After a time of perfect rest, our natures would begin to yearn for a "renewal of youth," for fresh endeavours and attainments. The hope is held out to us of exchanging a frail body for one "raised in glory" and "in power," with capacities of exertion and endurance unimaginable here; and the soul, for ever freed from its limitations of knowledge and from its sin, shall rise to unknown heights of intellectual and spiritual elevation. To be possessors of "eternal life," when all the powers of our nature are being exerted to their full capacity of energy in achievement and service, and yet to have all the peace and repose that "rest" means, this is a heaven which alone fully satisfies man, and this is the future the gospel reveals. Heaven is often carnalised into a place of sensuous ease and selfish enjoyment; but the gospel is not responsible for our perversions of its revelation.

III. Faith is the necessary condition of this spiritual life.—Life in God on this side of the grave is the condition of life in God on the other. That life is "hid with Christ in God," and we can only live it as we live "by faith, not by sight." The warning from the exclusion of Israel from the land of promise through unbelief comes to us: "Let us labour to enter into rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."—*G. S. Barrett, B.A., D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12, 13.

The Searching Power of the Living Word.—This passage asserts the searching, testing power of the Word of God. Observe the connection in which it stands. Beware of falling from the Christian profession. Beware of unbelief and presumption. Your dangers are many and great. The Divine observations and testings are most exact and searching. "Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off." "Quick," with either the idea of enduring or of activity. The Word is in actual operation; it is not a thing of mere possibilities. "Sharper than two-edged sword"; the Bible idea of keenness—perfect discrimination. "Soul and spirit"; material and spiritual life. "Joints and marrow," or bone and marrow; metaphor from the bodily frame. "Thoughts and intents"; mere ideas, and ideas when formed into resolves; metaphor from the intellectual life. Notice the impression of present, perfect, subtle searching which is produced by the terms of the text. No language could have been more effective.

I. What is this Word of God.—Divest the mind of the idea that the Scriptures are chiefly or only referred to. That is the common use of the text as quoted in extempore Christian prayers. At one time the term *Word* was a much more important expression than it is now. To the early Christians, and in early Church philosophy, the term *Word*, or *Logos*, had its own special significance. We know how much St. John makes of it in the prologue of his gospel; and he wrote at a time when a half-Jewish and half-pagan philosophy was getting influence in the Church. As it is used in Scripture the term includes: 1. The conditions under which our first parents had their rights to

Paradise. The Word of God given to Adam. The mode of communication we cannot now know. Somehow the thought and will of God were intelligently conveyed to their minds. 2. The manifestations of God and His will to men in the patriarchal age. The modes of communication being visions, dreams, angelic appearances, living voices—all being Words of God. Illustrate by the Jewish idea of the Memra, as the Second Person of the Trinity. 3. The special disclosure of the Divine mind concerning a particular people. The modes of communication being by a mediator, Moses, and by a ceremonial worship. 4. The human life on earth of the Son of God, whom we call the Incarnate Word. This is, in the very highest sense, *the* Word of God. 5. The active energy of the Divine Spirit working in the hearts of men. So far as it is revealing and teaching it becomes the Word of God. 6. The Written Word, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Through printing and education this has come to be the most effective form of the Word. From this sketch of the forms of the Word, it may be shown that it is essentially this: the manifestation of God to men; the communication of the thought and will of God to men; the translation of the mind of God into some form of language that men can understand. It is affirmed of nature, "There is no speech nor language, (yet) their line is gone out into all the earth." There are more or less perfect degrees in which words utter thoughts. They serve both to convey and to conceal our meaning. So in God's Word there are different degrees of clearness. We find it given under a variety of conditions, and in forms appropriate to each condition. The Word in Christ, and taught by His Spirit, represents the highest form of Divine communication.

II. **How does the Word of God search and try men?**—The Word, we have seen, is God bringing Himself into such relations with men as men can realise. The Word is God. It is essential to God that He must be a searching power wherever He comes. This is affirmed in Scripture, and by the experience of believers. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." What is true of God Himself is true of all modes of His Word. 1. The Written Word. It searches by the force of its commands, examples, counsels, warnings—wonderfully fitting into all the circumstances of life. Sinning man dreads the Scriptures. 2. The Incarnate Word. Searches by the contact of His purity and perfection. No man can fail to admit the moral perfection of Christ. A man feels it. All the power is exerted which attends on putting the standard, the model, beside the copy. Jesus is the one and only model of a man who reached heaven by His own goodness. 3. The Living Word, or Holy Spirit. This is declared to be the effect of His inworking—He "convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment"; and this is His constant operation in the Christian soul. This searching quality ought to attach to the preached Word: it does whenever it is really the Word of God.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 12, 13. *The Divine Thought-reader.*—"All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Much is now made of the skill in thought-reading which seems to be the special endowment of particular persons. The assertion is made that God is, in an absolute and unqualified sense, the "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If we can explain man's thought-reading power, the explanation will help us to understand the perfect thought-reading power of God.

I. If thought-reading be an unusual gift or endowment, a particular form of human genius, it is a Divine

bestowment, or rather trust; and God cannot give what He does not possess: **what God possesses constitutes Him what He is.** He has this genius of thought-reading in a perfection of which man's limited power can give no adequate idea. Man's power is in body limitations.

II. If thought-reading be dependent on sympathy, it must be a **Divine attribute.** Familiar to men long before "thought-reading" was heard of was the power of persons in close sympathy—as friends, or husbands and wives—to understand each other without the use of words. Sympathetic friends constantly know what friends are thinking. With God we associate the revelations of a perfect sympathy.

III. If thought-reading be **a result of knowledge** of mental laws, God has the perfect knowledge. Thinking is entirely in the control of laws. And every man's thoughts are the strict operation of laws, which always work as they do in any one case. God knows what we think, for He knows all the working of the thought-laws.

The Testing-power of the Logos.—Show how the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart is ascribed to God. That such discerning is characteristic of the Incarnate Word, or Gospel; of the Written Word, or Scriptures; and of the Living Word, or Spirit. It ought to be a marked characteristic of the preached Word, or ministry.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14---16

The Divine-human High Priest.—This passage introduces the consideration of the priesthood of Christ, to which brief reference is made in chap. iii. 1. Three things are argued: 1. His extraordinary dignity. 2. His perfect character. 3. His glorious work. The high priest was the prominent man, the example, of the Old Testament dispensation. There is an important distinction between a *model* and an *example*, which needs to be kept in view. F. W. Robertson skilfully explains that distinction. "You copy the outline of a model; you imitate the spirit of an example. Christ is our Example, not our Model. You might copy the life of Christ, make Him a model in every act, and yet you might not be one whit more of a Christian than before. You might wash the feet of poor fishermen as He did, and live a wandering life, with nowhere to lay your head. You might go about teaching, and never use any words but His words, never express religious truth except in Bible language; have no home, and mix with publicans and sinners. Then Christ would be your *Model*; you would have copied His life like a picture, line for line, and shadow for shadow, and yet you may not be Christ-like. On the other hand, you might imitate Christ, get His Spirit, breathe the atmosphere of thought that He breathed, do not one single act which He did, but every act in His Spirit; you might be rich, whereas He was poor; never teach, whereas He was teaching always; lead a life in all outward particulars the very contrast and opposite of His; and yet the spirit of His self-devotion might have saturated your whole being, and penetrated into the life of every act, and the essence of every thought. Then Christ would have become your Example; for we can only imitate that of which we have caught the spirit." But if we make Christ our Example two things need to be carefully explained. 1. He must be *in our plane*, or we cannot hope to follow Him or to be like Him. 2. He must be *out of our plane*, He must belong to a higher plane, or we cannot be satisfied with Him. Fixing thought on Him figured as our High Priest, observe—

I. **Christ was one with men.**—In the records left us of His life there is a more evident effort to convince us of His veritable humanity than of His Divinity. It is as though men were sure to light on the idea of His being

extraordinary, and it needed to be proved that He was really *man*. In his first epistle St. John does not argue or assert that Christ was God. That seems to have been believed. St. John demands belief in Christ as having "come in the flesh." Illustrate: 1. The significancy of our Lord's living so long a time as thirty years of common and ordinary human life, fully recognised during that time as a *man* among men. 2. The distinct apprehension of His ordinary manhood by His brethren, and by the people of Nazareth. 3. The perfect humanness of the habits and exhibited feelings of Christ's life. Sensitiveness to suffering, bodily and mental. He was humanly affected towards the character and conduct of others. He was weary, hungry, sleepy. 4. The simple human character of our Lord's death. One might expect such a Being to die in some sublime way. But, physically, our Lord's was just a common and usual man's death; and, morally, it was remarkable as a good man's innocent death. With the idea of the humanness of Christ before us, we cannot but feel that His character is the expression, the outliving, of our *ideal* of humanity; it is the realised perfect character for a man.

II. **Christ was distinct from sinners.**—It is important to estimate clearly the distinction between a *man* and a *sinner*. The condition of our world would be hopeless if the two terms were convertible. All that belongs to *man* was in Christ, but nothing that belongs to the *sinner*. But Christ was not distinct from sinners because His *nature* was imperfect, incomplete, on any side. It was a whole. Some may only be separate from sinners in some points, because they have no capacities for certain particular sins. There is no virtue in their sinlessness, any more than there is honesty in a thief whose hands have been cut off. This sense of our Lord's distinctness was produced on all who came in contact with Him. Illustrate: The disciples—as in the call of Matthew. People—"speaks with authority, and not as the scribes." Enemies and indifferent—see money-changers in Temple-courts. "Never man spake like this man." His judge and the Roman soldiers—see the awe of Pilate, and the exclamation of the centurion. The same truth is borne in on us by the record. As we study the *man* we feel that He is *more* than man, *other* than man. There are two aspects in which His distinctness from sinners is impressively shown. 1. His acts are never *doubtful*. There has never been a merely human life without some incidents of questionable truth and virtue. In Christ's life there is no record of any, but a distinct impression is left on us that there were none to record. This is a coin that you need not ring twice. 2. His acts were never *selfish*. This is largely characteristic of human acts; it is too constantly the "fly" in the best pots of ointment. Christ's acts were all done under a profound sense of duty, and under a sublime impulse of love. The acts were right *in form*, and the life and feeling that inspired them were right also.

III. **The Divine-human High Priest exerts the most ennobling and sanctifying power upon us.**—Precisely what man needed was salvation by God through man, through manhood; what he needed was a moral redemption. The Saviour of the world must be a Divine man. Only such a Saviour—1. Could demonstrate the distinction between *man* and *sin*. 2. Could bring to light the higher possibilities that are in human nature as God designed it. 3. Could exhibit the ennobling influence of the two great principles of our nature—dependence, and the sense of duty. Ever near to God, ever doing the will of God, these are the essentials of true manhood. 4. Could show the charm which character, moral excellence, can put on all the relations of life. 5. And could reveal a sublime future for the race: as High Priest, working until all whom He represents have become like Him in fact. Then we are to be the people belonging to this great High Priest, the Son of God. What made men disciples of Christ while He was on earth? *That* makes men disciples now.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 14-16. *Safety through the Great High Priest.*—The epistle to the Hebrews is an argument against apostasy. Everywhere, throughout this epistle, the signal-lights of danger are swung out along the Christian track. The fear which sometimes startled the steadfast and heroic heart of Paul—lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway—is declared to be, in this epistle, for every Christian a reasonable and substantial fear (chap. vi. 4-6). Against the too common tendency of putting the *main stress* of the Christian life upon its *beginning*, of reckoning upon heaven because one imagines himself once to *have been* in Christian mood and spirit, though he certainly is not now, this epistle is a prolonged Divine warning. "Let us hold fast our profession," or, as the original has it, "let us be strong in holding fast to it"—that is the solemn and strenuous exhortation of this epistle. And in order to make its warning real and sure, the epistle falls back upon the ancient Scripture, and brings forward a clear instance of a good beginning and a bad ending (chap. iv. 11). The Hebrews *started* well. But the experiences of the wilderness were too much for them. They never enjoyed the Canaan rest. They were unworthy and apostate. Their carcasses mouldered in the wilderness. Now these later Hebrews to whom this epistle was addressed had begun well. They had acknowledged Jesus as their spiritual Moses—the Messiah of promise and of prophecy. Under His leading they had begun their march out of the spiritual Egypt, through this worldly wilderness, to the spiritual Canaan—to heaven, the home and rest of those who believe in and follow Christ. But the worldly wilderness was full of difficulties, and these Hebrew Christians showed signs of faltering. The Hebrew nation was against them; the resplendent and still standing Temple was against them; worldly success and the chance for livelihood were against them; bitter scorn and contumely were against them. Yet this epistle assures them there is no safety in apostasy; there is safety only in steadfastness. Apostasy is destruction. Still must they hold fast their profession (chap. iv. 1; also ver. 11).—*Homiletic Review.*

Holding fast our Profession.—Now the question comes, "Can we hold fast our profession?" Yes, and our great High Priest is the reason and the power. We are not left on a lonely pilgrimage. We are not left to a single-handed conflict. 1. Since He is High Priest, He has made atonement for us. 2. Since He is High Priest, He now makes intercession for us. 3. His atonement is accepted, and His intercession is worthy, for His resurrection has set triumphant seal upon them. "He has passed into the heavens." 4. He has Himself been tried, "tempted in all points like as we are." So He is athrill with sympathy. 5. He knows temptation, yet He has vanquished it; He is without sin. Herein is help peculiar—the help of a victorious strength.

Ver. 15. *Christ's Sympathy with the Infirm.*—How many are burdened with a sense of deficiency, with their unlikeness to others—their inability to do what others can, or perhaps what they could once; how many see others come to the house of God, and are distressed that through weakness they cannot; how many feel themselves a burden to others, who would rather that others should burden them; how many mourn that their lives are useless and inactive! They want one who will take their part, comfort them by his tenderness, sustain them with his arm. In the text is such an one.

I. Consider the fact of the sympathy of the Lord Jesus. It is assured

by—1. His personal human experience. 2. His perfect knowledge and love. 3. His vital union with His people.

II. Consider this sympathy in its connection with His high-priestly work. 1. As High Priest He has direct intercourse with us. 2. He prays for the supply of our need. 3. He brings us to the Father.

III. Consider that this sympathy with infirmity is the pattern for His people. 1. It rebukes our hardness. 2. It shows one of the great needs of the world. 3. It suggests a recompense for suffering. He suffered that He might sympathise with sufferers; that is why *we* suffer.—*Charles New.*

Tempted, not overcome by Temptation.—"In all points tempted" must not be taken as meaning in all points sharing our experience in dealing with the temptation. Christ did not share anybody's experience of yielding to temptation. He was never overcome by temptation. But that was not essential to *human* experience. That was *fallen* man's experience. And Christ was *man*, not fallen man. Find what is essential to man. Christ experienced *that.*

Vers. 15, 16. *The Sympathy of Christ.*—According to these verses the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is based upon the perfection of His humanity; and that implies that He was possessed of a human soul as well as a human body. 1. Accordingly in the life of Christ we find two distinct classes of feeling. When He hungered in the wilderness, etc., He experienced sensations which belong to the bodily department of human nature. But His grief, friendship, fear, etc., were the affections of an acutely sensitive human soul, alive to all the tenderness and hopes and anguish with which human life is filled, qualifying Him to be "tempted in all points like as we are." 2. The Redeemer not only *was* but *is* man. It is imagined that in the history of Jesus' existence, once, for a limited period and for definite purposes, He took part in frail humanity; but that when these purposes were accomplished the man for ever perished, and the spirit reascended, to unite again with pure, unmixed Deity. But our Lord's resurrection life should be the corrective of this notion. And this suggests the truth of the human heart of God. Man resembles God. Love does not mean one thing to man and another thing to God. The present manhood of Christ conveys this deeply important truth, that the Divine heart is human in its sympathies. 3. There is a connection between what Jesus was and what Jesus is. He can be touched now *because* He was tempted then. His past experience has left certain effects durable in His nature as it is now. It has endued Him with certain qualifications and certain susceptibilities which He would not have had but for that experience.

I. **The Redeemer's preparations for His Priesthood.**—The preparation consisted in being tempted. But temptation as applied to a Being perfectly free from tendencies to evil is not easy to understand. Temptation has two senses: it means test or probation; it means also trial, involving the idea of pain or danger. Trial placed before a sinless Being is intelligible enough in a sense of probation; it is a test of excellence. And Scripture plainly asserts this as the character of Christ's temptation. Not only test, but trial. There was not merely test in the temptation, but there was also painfulness in the victory. How could this be without any tendency to evil? Analyse sin. In every act of sin there are two distinct steps: there is a rising of a desire which is natural, and, being natural, is not wrong; and there is the indulgence of that desire in forbidden circumstances, and that is sin. Sin does not consist in having *strong* desires or passions: in the strongest and highest natures, all, including the desires, is strong. Sin is not a real *thing.* It is rather the absence of

something, the will to do right. Sin is not in the appetites, but in the absence of a controlling will. There were in Christ all the natural appetites of mind and body. Conceive then a case in which the gratification of any one of these inclinations was inconsistent with His Father's will. At one moment it was unlawful to eat, though hungry: and without one tendency to disobey, did fasting cease to be severe? Christ suffered from the force of desire. Though there was no hesitation whether to obey or not, no strife in the will, in the act of mastery there was pain. There was self-denial; there was obedience at the expense of tortured feeling. Not by the reluctancy of a sinful sensation, but by the quivering and the anguish of natural feeling when it is trampled upon by lofty will, Jesus *suffered*, being tempted. His *soul* was tempted.

II. **The Redeemer's Priesthood.**—By Priesthood is meant that office by which He is the medium of union between man and God. The capacity for this has been indelibly engraven on His nature by His experience here. All this capacity is based on His sympathy. We are scarcely aware how much the sum of human happiness in the world is indebted to this one feeling—sympathy. Of this sympathy Christ, in its fulness, was susceptible. The sympathy of Christ was not merely love of men in masses; He had also discriminating, special sympathy with individuals. The priestly powers conveyed by this faculty of sympathising are two: 1. The power of mercy. 2. The power of having grace to help. There are two who are unfit for showing mercy: he who has never been tried; and he who, having been tempted, has fallen under temptation. The qualification in the text, "without sin," is very remarkable; for it is the one we least should think of. Unthinkingly we should say that to have erred would make a man lenient; but it is not so. He alone is fit for showing manly mercy who has, like His Master, felt the power of temptation in its might, and come scathless through the trial. We must not make too much of sympathy as mere feeling. Feeling with Christ led to this, "He went about doing good." Sympathy with Him was this, "Grace to help in time of need." The sympathy of the Divine-human! He knows what strength is needed.

In conclusion, draw two inferences: 1. He who would sympathise must be content to be tried and tempted; he must be content to pay the price of the costly education. But it is being tempted in all points, *yet without sin*, that makes sympathy real, manly, perfect, instead of a mere sentimental tenderness. 2. It is this same human sympathy which qualifies Christ for judgment. The Father hath committed all judgment to Him, *because* He is the Son of man. The sympathy of Christ extends to the frailties of human nature, not to its hardened guilt; He is "touched with the feeling of our *infirmities*."—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 16. *Boldness at the Throne of Grace.*—The throne of grace is the reality figured in the mercy-seat, or propitiatory, or cover of the Ark, that was in the Holy of Holies. As the high priest in the old dispensation went in once a year with the incense and the blood, and brought blessings for the people from that throne of grace, so Jesus, as the great High Priest of the race, went into the spiritual Holy of Holies, and gained blessings for us from the "throne of grace." Only there is this distinction: the old priest came out; Christ, our Priest, stays in,—the veil is never closed behind Him, and we can go in; the way is open for us to go and ask for blessings, and we can go boldly because He is there, to be the ground of our acceptance, and to plead for us.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1. *Spiritual Shipwreck.*—A few years since a noble ship left the shores of England for a distant colony. She had a valuable freight of emigrants, forced from their fatherland by the decrees of a bitter fate—brides whose bosoms glowed with the glorious enthusiasm of youthful love—children also returning to the bosom of fond parents, whom long years had separated. The ship sailed majestically along, and methinks I hear now the music and the dancing on the decks during the calm moonlit evenings. At length, "Land ahead!" is shouted from a hundred lips. Their adopted country looms in the distance. They hasten to prepare for the landing. Only another night need be passed on the sea, but it is their last in this world. The thick darkness gathers around them like a funeral pall, the winds rise as if to sing their dying requiem, and in one fatal moment that noble vessel splits on the rocks! And now wild shrieks of despair struggle with the howl of the tempest, and soon all is over, as the whole of that ship's company, save one, sink into a watery grave. The ship becomes a wreck in sight of port! A man may go very far towards religion and yet be lost.—*Henry Gill.*

Ver. 3. *The Rest of Trusting the Living Christ.*—An aged Christian, when spoken to about his hope, was accustomed at once to advert to the date of his conversion, and only showed anxiety to be sure that his first act of faith was a saving one. He went to visit a young Christian woman who lay dying of consumption. Her faculties were all clear, and her heart was full of the "rest of God," the rest of simple trust. That aged Christian feared for her, because she showed no anxiety about her first act of faith. In answer to him she said, "Why should I trouble about such things? Does it not say, 'The blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* from all sin'? It is not only 'has cleansed'; it is this, 'is cleansing' me every day. I am in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and surely I may leave that altogether with Him."

True Rest.—

Rest is not quitting the busy career;
Rest is the fitting of self to the sphere;
'Tis the brook's motion, clear without strife,
Fleeing to ocean, after its life.
Deeper devotion nowhere hath knelt,
Fuller emotion heart never felt;
'Tis loving and serving the highest and best,
'Tis onwards, unswerving, and that is true rest.

T. Sullivan Dwight.

Rest after Toil.—

Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life, does greatly please.—*Spenser's "Faerie Queen."*

Ver. 7. *Procrastination.*—Few examples can be found in history which more strikingly illustrate the danger of procrastination than that of the "tragedy of Glencoe"; and though at this day nearly two centuries have elapsed since the dreadful tale first struck terror upon the minds of those who heard it, even yet it speaks to us with a voice of warning. The early part of the reign of King William III. was much disturbed by discontent and rebellion among the turbulent tribes in the north of Scotland. Proud and fierce they were by nature, and their habits of life, which were not unlike those of some of the Bedouin tribes of Arabia (for their chief subsistence was by plunder and theft), made them peculiarly untractable when King William attempted to place them under the wholesome laws to which their more peaceable neighbours in the south were already subject. Various means were tried to conciliate them, and large sums of money offered as compensation for any loss which they might sustain by the new rule, but without effect, and it was found necessary to appeal to the strong arm of the law. William, therefore, issued a proclamation, which he had duly circulated amongst the rebel chiefs, that all were to repair to a given spot on or before December 31st, and there sign a declaration, and take oath of allegiance to the king. All who neglected to comply with this command by the time given were to be treated as outlaws, and be liable to death as traitors to the Crown. It was, of course, useless for any of these rebel chiefs, with their handful of followers, or, indeed, for them all combined, to have attempted resistance to William's well-trained and powerful army. So that one might have reasonably supposed that all the chiefs would have immediately hastened to comply with the command; but it was a severe blow to their pride, and for a long time many of them refused to sign. At length, as the time drew near, one by one they gave way, and by December 31st all had affixed their names to the paper, and had taken the oaths, excepting one chief. Mac Ian was the leader of the smallest but haughtiest of the tribes, and it was no light source of gratification to him to see one and another of his more powerful neighbours submit to the king, while he alone held aloof. Not that he intended, for a moment, to finally resist; he knew that with the small force at his command (not above two hundred souls in all) this was impossible, but he did hope to be the last of the Scottish chiefs to submit, and thus be accounted most brave of them all. A day or two before the 31st he set out for Dunbar, but a heavy fall of

snow had rendered the roads almost impassable, and so impeded his progress that though he made most desperate efforts he did not arrive till nearly a week after the time, when he found the king's messenger had left for London, and without his signature. It happened that the three men in whose hands it lay to execute the king's threat of vengeance on those who neglected to comply with his command were deadly enemies of Mac Ian's, and only rejoiced to see that his foolish delay had placed him in a position where he was liable to be treated as a traitor, and on the arrival of the messenger in London hastened to execute judgment on the offender. A band of soldiers was at once raised and commissioned to hasten to Glencoe, the little valley where Mac Ian and his followers dwelt, to surround every outlet by which they might escape, and put all to the sword. On a given night the onslaught was made, and Mac Ian and many of his followers fell victims to the soldiery, who spared neither old man nor maiden, but slaughtered all who came in the way. Many, indeed, escaped by hiding in the rocks, though of these not a few perished with cold, and exposure to the frost, and by hunger. There was doubtless much cruelty in so rigorously carrying out the king's command, especially as the chief had been willing to submit; but the lesson most forcibly taught is, "Put not off till to-morrow what should be done to-day." How many a foolish one throughout this land now hazards his soul as Mac Ian hazarded his life, by delaying to make his peace with the great King of kings! who now proffers mercy to all who will repent, and submit to His gracious rule, but who will one day close the book, and then all whose names are not inscribed within its blessed pages will be for ever exposed to His just wrath and indignation.

Ver. 12. *The Double-edged Knife.*—The Jewish priest required a strong and skilful hand to do the ordinary work of his holy calling. It needed both strength and skill to lay the victim on the altar, to guide the sharp two-edged sacrificial knife straight through the carcass, till the very backbone was severed, the whole laid bare, and the very joints and marrow exposed and separated. For this reason (as well as because he was a type of Him who is perfect), because such persons ordinarily are deficient in bodily strength, no deformed person could be high priest, he could not do the work required of him. There is a knife sharper than that two-edged sword, and a hand to guide its blade and apply its edges and point stronger and surer than the Jewish priest's. That knife is the word of God: it is a "living" word; it has a power to lay open hearts far greater than that sacrificial knife had to lay bare the bodies of the sacrifice; its edge is sharper than that of the two-edged sword; and when driven home and directed by the hand of the Almighty Spirit, "it pierces even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, the soul and spirit," and lays bare "the thoughts and intents of the heart."—*W. W. Champneys, M.A.*

The Force of Conscience.—A man who was remarkable for his ignorance and wickedness was visiting some of his relations on the last day that our mission-tent was used. They tried to persuade him to come to our closing meeting; but finding their entreaties prevailed nothing, one of them asked if he would go, provided some one would give him a sum of money. He answered, "Yes, he would do anything for money." "Would he go for a shilling?" "Would he go for a meal's victuals?" "Yes." "Then I will give you one." A loaf was then broken in two, and one half of it, with some butter and cheese, was deposited at a cottage near the tent, it being understood that the man was to have it immediately the service was over. This being done, the man came to the tent. My sermon, being founded upon "The end of all things is at hand," etc., turned a good deal upon the future judgment, and made way for some remarks from Mr. Pocock, in the course of which he described the Judge descending, the judgment set, and the books opened; and then remarking that every word, and every work, and every secret thing would then be exposed, he exclaimed, "Who was it at such a time opened his neighbour's potato-pit, and deprived a poor family of their stock of winter provisions? There he is; bring him forward —what! is that he?" etc. Conscience now smote this man; he had been guilty of this very crime, and, filled with alarm, went home without his victuals. The next morning he went to the woman whose potato-pit he had robbed, and confessed his crime, adding, "Mr. Pocock wouldn't ha' knawed I, but my hankercher weren't tied like anybody else's!" What is specially remarkable in this case is, that Mr. Pocock knew nothing of the man, nor had he ever heard of such a circumstance as a potato-pit being opened and robbed in the neighbourhood; but he simply hit upon the observation as involving a general thing, without the slightest idea of any individual case. Surely there was something more than chance in all this. Who can tell but this very occurrence saved this poor fellow from the gallows?—*Memoirs of the Rev. John Pyer.*

Ver. 13. *Examining the Entrails.*—The Greek word here is taken from the practices

that accompanied the offering of animals in sacrifices. It is said that, in ancient nations, when the animal that was to be sacrificed had been killed, the priest examined microscopically all the entrails and bowels, and watched certain spots or symptoms, from which he argued success or misfortune in the enterprise in which the offerer was embarked; and therefore the apostle says, that all things are as clearly noted by God as the entrails of the victim were laid bare and examined by the priest. —*Dr. Cumming.*

Ver. 15. *The Help of our Lord's Human Experiences.*—They tell us that in some trackless lands, when one friend passes through the pathless forests, he breaks a twig ever and anon as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces of his having been there, and may know that they are not out of the road. Oh, when we are journeying through the murky night, and the dark woods of affliction and sorrow, it is something to find here and there a spray broken, or a leafy stem bent down with the tread of His foot and the brush of His hand as He passed, and to remember that the path He trod He has hallowed, and that there are lingering fragrances and hidden strengths in the remembrance, "in all points tempted as we are," bearing grief *for* us, bearing grief *with* us, bearing grief *like* us. —*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

CHAPTER V.

CHARACTER-FITNESS FOR HIGH-PRIESTLY WORK.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THE writer now fixes attention on the high-priesthood, shows what are its characteristic and essential features, and makes comparisons with, and in part contrasts with, the high-priesthood of Christ. His points are: 1. The priest was appointed for men; on behalf of, to superintend and direct the concerns which men have with God. 2. The priest, by reason of his own personal experiences of human infirmity, must be able to sympathise. 3. The priest could only be constituted such by Divine appointment. In showing that Christ is an abiding and all-sufficient High Priest and Saviour, the writer is led to speak of deep and difficult things, involving a very full and spiritual knowledge of the sacred word. He therefore stops in his argument to reprove the slowness and dulness of the spiritual understanding of those to whom he writes.

Ver. 1. **Taken from among men.**—Or, "since he is taken." There is no suggestion that Christ was *not* so taken. The expression simply means, "inasmuch as taken from men." To this condition the eternal Word conformed by becoming incarnate. **For men.**—On men's behalf; for the benefit of men (*ὑπέρ*). Not meaning "instead of." **Things.**—*τὰ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν*: men's religious concerns; such of them at least as deal with ceremonial relations, worship, and sacrifice. **Gifts and sacrifices.**—*δῶρα καὶ θυσίας*, thank-offerings, and sin- and trespass-offerings, the latter differing from the former in involving the life of a victim. In classical Greek the word "sacrifices" is only used to mean "slain beasts." In Old Testament usage the term "gifts" included both unbloody and bloody offerings. All forms of offering had to be presented by the priest. So all forms of *spiritual* gift and sacrifice have to be presented by Christ as the great High Priest.

Ver. 2. **Have compassion.**—*μετριοπαθεῖν*. The classical usage of this word is thus explained: The Stoics said man should be *ἀπαθής*, not subject to passions. The Platonists said man should be *μετριοπαθής*, moderate in affections, and not *ἀπαθής*. The use of the verb is peculiar to the New Testament. The leading idea of the word is to be moderate in our feelings and passions; here wisely restrained in dealing with those who err through ignorance. The word is found both in Philo and Josephus. Margin, "reasonably bear with"; R.V. "bear gently with." **Ignorant . . . out of the way.**—R.V. "ignorant and erring." Those whose burdens are sins of frailty, and those whose burdens are sins of wilfulness. Both classes seek and need the sympathy of the high priest. **Himself also.**—A frail man. Fellow-experience is the condition of all true help given to others. Those who have not themselves erred are proverbially harsh: *ἀσθένεια* here means moral infirmity, not the natural frailty of the *physical* system.

Ver. 3. **Reason hereof.**—By reason of his own moral infirmity, which involves his own sin. Reference may be intended to the particular ceremonies of the Day of Atonement,

(In chap. vii. 26-28 the difference in this respect between the old high priest and Christ is presented.) **He ought.**—"He is bound not merely as a legal duty, but as a moral necessity."

Ver. 4. **Unto himself.**—The jealousy with which the high-priesthood was kept in the God-appointed family of Aaron is a remarkable feature of the old economy. *Farrar* quotes the following sentence from one of the Jewish Midrashim: "Moses says to Korah, 'If Aaron, my brother, had *taken upon himself* the priesthood, ye would be excused for murmuring against him; but God gave it to him.'" See Num. xvi.-xviii. R.V. gives the verse precisely, "And no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, as was Aaron."

Ver. 5. **Glorified.**—Did not claim honour for Himself (John viii. 54; Rom. xi. 13). **Begotten Thee.**—As applied to an office, this means "exalted."

Ver. 7.—This and the two following verses illustrate ver. 2 in reference to Christ. "I have shown you that a priest must have experience and fellow-feeling; our great High Priest has." **Days of His flesh.**—As distinguished from His present day of glory. The special scene in the mind of the writer appears to be the agony in Gethsemane. That scene should be read in the light of this text. There can be no question about Christ's having an actual experience of man's inward soul-troubles. The difficulty of the verse is connected with the sentence, "and was heard in that He feared," ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας; R.V. "having been heard for His godly fear"; "because of His reverential awe." The words may mean, "because of His fear"; or, "on account of His fear"; or, "in respect of that which He feared." *Stuart* prefers, "was delivered from that which He feared."

Ver. 8. **Learned He.**—Or, "He was subjected, though so exalted a personage, to learn experimentally, what it is to obey in the midst of sufferings."

Ver. 9. **Made perfect.**—In the sense of being adequately fitted for His work, and entirely competent to undertake it. **Eternal salvation.**—In the sense of being a continuous, abiding, perpetual, ever-working power to save and sanctify. The word "eternal" in the New Testament is often used as equivalent to "spiritual." And the spiritual is necessarily the permanent.

Ver. 11. **Hard to be uttered.**—R.V. "hard of interpretation." But the difficulty was mainly due to the spiritual incapacity of those to whom the epistle was written. **Dull of hearing.**—Not of listening, but of apprehending.

Ver. 12. **First principles.**—Rudiments; lit. "rudiments of the beginning." **Oracles of God.**—Not the Old Testament Scriptures, but the truths and doctrines which God has revealed under the gospel. **Need of milk.**—*Farrar* says young students or neophytes in the Rabbinic schools were called *thînokoth*, "sucklings."

Ver. 13. **Unskilful.**—Or, "one who has not that skill or experience in regard to anything which is requisite to a due apprehension and consideration of it." **Word of righteousness**—which cultures, builds up, the life of righteousness. **Babe.**—For Pauline use of this figure see Gal. iv. 3; 1 Cor. ii. 6; Eph. iv. 13, 14; and also 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

Ver. 14. **Full age.**—R.V. "full-grown men." τέλειον, "grown up"; "matured." **Senses.**—Here, spiritual faculties; the internal senses of Christians, αἰσθητήρια. The word is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. **Good and evil.**—Not mere right and wrong, but the value or worthlessness of the forms and aspects in which the Christian truth might be presented to them by different teachers.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—10.

Qualifications of Priesthood.—The subject which mainly occupies the attention of this writer is introduced in chap. iv. 14-16, which should properly begin chap. v. The references to the Divine nature of Christ in chap. i., and to the human nature of Christ in chap. ii., were introductory to the full consideration of the relation in which this Divine-human person stood to men, and of the office which He held in order to accomplish man's full redemption. He was writing to Jews, who were not only familiar with the priestly system, but were hindered by their interest in its *formality* from apprehending its *spiritual* fulfilment in Christ. As the writer had both compared and contrasted Moses and Christ, giving all honour to Moses that was due to him, but giving the greater honour to Christ, so now he both compares and contrasts the older formal high priest and the new spiritual High Priest, giving honour to the old, while showing that, having fruitened in the new, it may be allowed to pass away. In the passage chap. iv. 14-16 what is involved in the humanity and

sinless experience in a sinful world of the new High Priest is stated in a general way. In the passage now before us the qualifications of the new High Priest are given more in detail, and with the qualifications of the Jewish priests in mind. The comparison of the Aaronical priesthood, as to dignity, duties, office, and utility, with that of Christ, and of their functions with His, makes up the body of the epistle, extending to chap. x. 18. *Stuart* gives the comparisons of the passage now before us thus: "1. Every priest is appointed on behalf of men, in order that he may superintend and direct the concerns which men have with God, and may present their oblations and sacrifices before Him. 2. Every priest being himself 'compassed with infirmity,' is prepared by his own experience to sympathise with others in like condition; and because of his own sins and imperfections, it becomes his duty to offer expiatory sacrifices for himself as well as for them. 3. No priest appoints himself to the sacred office; his appointment is by Divine direction." But the comparison may be somewhat more fully elaborated.

I. **A necessary qualification of priesthood is a Divine call.**—"No man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, as was Aaron." This is an appeal to the sentiment of the stricter Jews, who regarded with extreme jealousy the exclusive rights of the Aaronic priesthood. It *alone* was the appointment of God. It was an easy thing for an objector to distress the Jewish Christians by urging on their attention that Christ could have no claims to the high-priesthood, seeing that He belonged to the tribe of Judah, not to the tribe of Levi, and not in any sense to the Aaronic family. The answer is as simple as it is satisfactory. True, God appointed Aaron. True, no one can alter the appointment but He who made it. But God is not imprisoned in His own appointments. He can alter them if He wills so to do. His fresh appointments are as valid as His earlier ones. He has superseded the Aaronic priesthood. He has called Jesus to a permanent spiritual priesthood; and this the Scriptures plainly testify. Two passages are given, and these, according to Jewish principles of interpretation, would be regarded as fully satisfactory evidence. We should pay more heed to the evidence of the Incarnation, and of the Divine voice of attestation at our Lord's baptism and transfiguration.

II. **A necessary qualification of priesthood is gracious character.**—The high priest ought always to have been the ideal good man of his generation—"who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Our almost exclusive attention to the sacrificial side of priestly work has prevented our giving due heed to the priestly example and moral influence. A side-light is thrown upon it by the narrative of Hannah's visit to the tabernacle. The high priest Eli noticed her, and felt it to be a part of his duty to reprove what seemed to be a fault in her. There can be no doubt that the high priests were the moral and religious advisers of the people. It was not only that the people inquired of God through the high priest, who had the oracle, they also sought advice from him in the difficulties and perplexities of their commonplace, everyday effort to live the godly life. It was absolutely essential therefore that he should have (1) a gracious natural disposition; (2) a wisely trained and cultured character; and (3) the discipline of personal experience of the sorrows of human life. Grant this, and it may easily be shown that the Lord Jesus, as the spiritual High Priest, altogether surpasses any previous priest in this threefold qualification. In Him there was unusual natural power of sympathy; complete, all-round culture of character; and very full discipline through experience of suffering. "Having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author of eternal salvation." Christ's character is power.

III. **A necessary qualification of priesthood is the discipline of experience.**—

Mention has been made of this in its relation to character; now we see it in relation to *official duties*. A man must know life, as it can only be known, by passing through its varied experiences, if he is to advise, convict, aid, or comfort his fellows. The tone on a man's work is strangely changed when he has come through suffering. The older priests lived a family life through a great part of the year, and so shared common human experiences. If the veil were lifted from the first thirty years of our Lord's life, we should probably be surprised to see how severe was the discipline of experience that He passed through. Two things are prominent in this passage: 1. Our Lord's experience of *prayer* (ver. 7). 2. Our Lord's experience of *suffering* (ver. 8).

IV. **A necessary qualification of priesthood is a Divinely appointed order.**—"Named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek." A man called of God is not to be regarded as an independent man, who may carry out his priesthood in his own ways. He belongs to some order. But God has more than one order. All we have to be anxious about is, that the man should be in one of *God's* orders. He has temporary orders, such as that of Levi; and He has permanent orders, like that of Melchizedek. He has hereditary orders, and orders of personal Divine call. This subject is treated more fully in a later chapter of the epistle.

In application show that the qualifications of priesthood are the qualifications of all who engage in the sacred ministry, and indeed of all who are endeavouring to serve others in the name of Christ.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 1-10. *Fitness of the High Priest.*—The general idea of this passage has been thus given: "For as every human high priest shares the nature of those on behalf of whom he appears before God, and thus can be compassionate towards them; and, moreover, can only receive his appointment from God; so Christ is God-appointed. He has learned His obedience through sufferings, and, thus made perfect, is declared by God High Priest for ever."

The Essence of Christianity.—Christianity is obedience to a Person, a Master, a Lord. Submission to Christ characterises the first act and the whole action of the spiritual life. Hence the necessary connection between faith and obedience. Whatever may have been the moral character previously, this is the uniform mark of those who are heirs of salvation, that they obey Christ with a direct conscious intention.

Ver. 2. *The Compassion of a Priest.*—*Farrar* gives the following note, which is both suggestive and illustrative: "The word μετριοπαθεῖν means properly 'to show moderate emotions.' All men are liable to emotions and passions (πάθη). The Stoics held that these should be absolutely crushed, and that 'apathy' (ἀπάθεια) was the only fit condition for a philosopher. The Peripatetics, on the other hand, —the school of Aristotle—held that the philosopher should not aim at apathy, because no man can be absolutely passionless without doing extreme violence to nature; but that he should acquire *metriopathy*—that is, a spirit of 'moderated emotion' and self-control. The word is found both in Philo and Josephus. In common usage it meant 'moderate *compassion*,' since the Stoics held 'pity' to be not only a weakness but a vice. The Stoic ἀπάθεια would have utterly disqualified any one for true priesthood. Our Lord yielded to human emotions, such as pity, sorrow, and just anger; and that He did so and could do so, 'yet without sin,' is expressly recorded for our instruction."

Ver. 7. *The Divine-human Model of Prayer.*—R.V. "And having been heard for His godly fear." There can be no doubt that the writer had chiefly in mind the scene of Gethsemane. But while the agonising prayer of our Divine Lord on that occasion is a model of some kinds of Christian prayer, it cannot be taken as a model of all kinds. It was a model of the prayer by the aid of which man brings his will into full accord with the Divine will; and so it was a prayer of preparation for doing high-priestly service. And this seems to be indicated by the form of the sentence given in the Revised Version. God's recognition rested on the character of the suppliant, as shown in His supreme anxiety concerning God's will, and in His readiness to undergo suffering in order to carry out, and so to glorify, the Divine will. "Having been heard for His *godly fear*." That is the one feature of the scene of Gethsemane on which the writer fixes for his present purpose; and it is precisely to his point. He is dealing with the importance of character in a high priest, and with the sublime way in which the character of Jesus gave Him high-priestly power. A man's intercession can be no mere perfunctory, official duty. It is the power of the man; it is the acceptableness—the representative acceptableness—of personal and gracious character. Gethsemane teaches us that a man must be in right mind-moods, and right heart-moods, if his prayer is to be heard and answered. And while this is true of man's prayers for personal blessings, it is even more true of his intercessions. It is not merely a submissive mood that he must cherish. The Divine-human Model in Gethsemane has a more searching appeal to us than that. It is a submission which is seen to involve personal suffering and sacrifice. That alone reveals such a character, such a godly fear, as will ensure an intercessor's prayers being heard. The character and quality of prayer is often dwelt on. We may "ask amiss." But the character and right mood of him who prays is not so often commended to our attention. And just *that* is the gist of the example of intercessory prayer of our Divine-human Lord. He *was* what ensured the answer to His plea.

Vers. 8, 9. *Learning the Obedience of Sonship.*—An abstract relationship is of little interest apart from the fulfilment of those duties that are involved in the relationship. It is a comparatively unimportant thing that Christ stood in relation to God as a Son. It is a most important thing, a most powerful, effective, persuasive thing, that He showed and proved His Sonship in a life of obedience, which was fully tested by suffering.

I. **This absolute fact about Christ—He is "the Son."**—"Though He were a Son." That appears to be a fact of extreme plainness and simplicity; and yet the fiercest theological battles have raged around it. Is the Son-relation of Christ to God a relation that involves equality with God or subordination to Him? Must we think of His Sonship as an eternal relation which He sustained towards the Father before all worlds? or is it only the mode of His revelation to men, the aspect under which His mediatorship is presented, the relation demanded by the exigencies of human redemption? Such grave questions interest theologians, but if we could settle them we should not be satisfied. The Divine voice said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We turn to the Man who was thus addressed; we watch His life; we observe His spirit and conduct, in order to find out the charms that lay in His Sonship. There is no term of relationship which can surpass in interest that of sons. God takes to represent Himself the highest, tenderest, and most affecting relationship into which His creatures can come. We do not read aright the story of Christ's life on the earth, save as we discern, in it *all*, the

exhibition and illustration of His Sonship, the obedience of the child, the devotion of the Son. This is the fact concerning Christ, He is a Son. But this fact must not stand alone. The Sonship must come out to view; it must be shown, tested, proved.

II. **The trial, or proof, of His Sonship.**—"Learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." If this trial is to be of interest to us, and morally effective on us, it must be made in this our earthly sphere, and under our human conditions. If He be only the eternal Son, then there may have been expressions and testings of that Sonship in the "heavenly places"; but we could not apprehend those forms of testing, and we could feel but little impulse from their revelation to us. The whole fascination gathers round Christ, because He alone shows us perfect, Divine Sonship, lived out in human scenes, and under human conditions. Each relationship in which men stand has some one thing which is its essential feature and characteristic. The essential of kingship is the spirit of judgment; of fatherhood, loving authority; of motherhood, sacrificing affection; of sisterhood, thoughtfulness for others; and of sonship, obedience. We have no right to the name of son save as we obey. We take the life of the Lord Jesus, and search it, seeking for signs of that which we know to be the very essence of sonship, and we receive surprising impressions of the perfectness and Divine beauty of His obedience. He spoke the Father's words; He did the Father's works; He showed the Father's spirit; He fulfilled the Father's mission; He glorified the Father's name. Watching that life of earnest, cheerful, hearty, loving obedience, who of us does not say, "We know now what sonship to God means, we feel now its transcendent charm and beauty"? But the obedience of sonship is no mere series of acts. It is that series of acts only as they are instinct with the spirit of obedience, done in the freeness of the will, under the impulse of the affection of the heart. A life full of obedient acts will never make or glorify a sonship, any more than a wealth of apples, tied on, can make a fruitful tree. They must be the utterances of the soul's life in God. And the great charm of our Saviour's life is this—His acts suffice to open and reveal to us a loving, devoted, obedient soul. But was that Sonship never tested or tried? Was it easy for Jesus to be good? Did He never know trial or temptation? Did His ship sail over the ocean of life all in fair weather? Did never one black cloud skirt the horizon for Him? Did never one storm-wind raise the tossing waves? If we had to say that Jesus knew no testings, then almost all the glory of Christ would, for us, fade away. His nearness, His brotherhood, would be gone. But suffering, tried, and tempted as He was, He is infinitely attractive to suffering, tried, and tempted men. How is it that suffering, here on earth, becomes such a testing and proving of obedience? In this—suffering provides a scene in which a conflict can be carried on between self-will and God's will. Every scene of suffering in our life is really this—God providing a battle-ground in which the *son* in us may win a victory over the *self*. All suffering-times are represented in Gethsemane. Suffering of any kind is never pleasing to self. We shrink from it, resist it, mourn over it. Natural inclination never helps us to bear it. But the question is put to the *son*, "Can you bear this as duty? Can you master your own feeling, and bear it as your Father's will?" The perfect Son, and all who catch His Spirit, answer "Yes," and are obedient even unto death.

III. **The proved, tested Sonship of Jesus becomes a mighty moral power on human hearts.**—1. There is nothing touches our hopefulness like it. 2. We soon get bewildered and agitated, wanting *guidance* as to what shall constitute the spirit and life of a son. Then we look to Christ, and see what sonship means; practically

and plainly we discern how it works out in common life, how it acts even under the test of suffering. 3. It glorifies service, submission, obedience, ministry. Christ changes the very ground of our estimate of moral qualities; sets that first which was last, and that last which was first. The world-despised virtues of meekness, patience, dependence, submission, and obedience are lifted into the *first* place in our esteem; we see them to be the elements of a true and noble *sonship*; and the world-praised qualities of valour, and courage, and energy, and wisdom, and genius go for evermore into a *second* place; they are only the elements of a true and *noble* manhood. 4. And the proved Sonship, shown in obedience, tested in suffering, is a secret of our Lord's saving power—His power to deliver men from their sins, their sin, and their self: His own beautiful Sonship touching, quickening theirs; finding them out in their wandering, prodigal misery, and wakening in their lost souls the cry of the child, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Shown to be obedient, even through suffering, He, "being made perfect, becomes the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Ver. 9. *Eternal Salvation.*—It is not possible to limit the meaning of the word "eternal" to the *time* figure that is in it, and then intelligently apply the word to the various things to which the Scripture writers apply it. Putting their references and associations before us, we cannot but be impressed by the necessity for finding some less limited connotation for the term. It will increasingly come to us that *we* use the term "spiritual" very much as Scripture writers used "eternal." They spoke of "heaven" and the "heavenly," and we understand them to mean the other, unseen, spiritual world. We know they did not mean a place, a local habitation. In the same way they spoke of "eternal" things, and we know that they meant "otherwise" things, immaterial things, spiritual things, things related to the real life of the souls that we *are*. Thus we find the following associations of the word "eternal" (there are more if we take the answering word "everlasting"): "Eternal God," "eternal excellency," "eternal condemnation," "eternal sin" (R.V.), "eternal power," "eternal weight," "eternal house," "eternal purpose," "eternal King," "eternal glory," "eternal salvation," "eternal judgment," "eternal redemption," "eternal Spirit," "eternal inheritance," "eternal fire," "eternal life." In many cases it is absolutely necessary to put some special meaning to the term, if the *time* limitation is in any way to be preserved. Take two illustrative cases. Sin is an act, and in its very nature temporary. To say "eternal sin" must be made to mean a continuous and unchanging bad mood of man, a continuous state of sinfulness. But our Lord was speaking of an act, the act of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and that is a spiritual sin, a sin of our spirit, against the great Spirit. So with "eternal judgment." The word may be applied to the consequences of judgment, but the judgment as an act is temporary. So "eternal *salvation*" is not persistently continuous salvation. What Christ gained power to give us was *soul* salvation, *spiritual* salvation: that is continuous by its very nature.

Christ Perfect.—The Greek word translated "perfect" was used among the heathen in a specific sense: for instance, one thoroughly initiated into the arcana or other mysteries was called "a perfect man." The meaning was not morally or personally perfect, but thoroughly acquainted with all the facts and mysteries of the caste or service. Now Christ was made perfect by being made thoroughly acquainted with human nature in every point, even to its lowest depths, which needed thirty-three years of the Son of God to fathom it.—*Dr. Cumming.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—14.

A Hindrance to Advanced Teachers.—Those under Christian instruction ought to grow stage by stage, so as to be able to receive higher and fuller teachings. They are expected to "grow in grace," in everything that relates to Christian *character*; but also to grow "in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," in the mental apprehension of Divine and eternal things. It is necessary to point out that growth in Christian *knowledge* is in every way as important, as essential indeed, as growth in Christian *grace*. So often credit is claimed for keeping to first principles and Christian simplicities; it is a ground of reproach, not of credit. It is like grown men and women reading nothing but the picture-books of their childhood. The Christian teaching properly advances from the simplicities suited to the child-stage of religious life, to the philosophy and theology, and even what may be called "mysticism," suited to the full-grown stage of religious life. The milk of Christian truth is good, but it is good for *babes*. He is a poor Christian who keeps always to his milk. He does no honour to the grace that he has received. The hindrance this writer complains of is *failure to grow* under Christian instructions. But it may be unfolded so as to present its various applications. The hindrance may appear as—1. *Dulness of hearing*, as if the ear were stopped up with other, selfish, or worldly interests. 2. Lack of receptivity for truth. There is often great readiness for religious emotions and sensations; and these almost always go with a lack of interest in truth, other than the stock ideas of some sect. 3. Inability to deal with truth. "Senses not exercised to discern between good and evil." Either stubborn resistance of all truth that sounds new, or fatal readiness to take up with everything new. 4. Clinging to child-simplicities; forgetful that truth cannot be its full, best self for children, because it must be *qualified* and *adapted* to them. We think gospel simplicities are *the truth*; they are but the truth *for children*. We may be grown, yet only a *child* in Christ. We may be grown, and a *man* in Christ.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 12. *The Scriptures as Oracles of God.*—The term "oracles" may give us some right views of the Holy Scriptures, but there is grave danger of its giving us wrong ideas. It certainly will if we fail to see the radical distinctions between the oracles of heathenism and paganism, and the oracles of either the Old or the New Testament religion. Our Scriptures are *not* like pagan oracles, and the idea of Divine inspiration which is toned by those oracular associations is altogether false and unworthy. λογίων Θεοῦ means, "doctrines," "communications" of God; and the association of the word "oracle" belongs entirely to our English translation. No precise idea answering to it is found in the Greek word. Farrar thinks that the term is not intended to apply to the Old Testament at all, but belongs only to the Christian principles and doctrines which the writer so evidently has in mind. It seems, however, from allusions in Philo and other writers, that the term "oracles of God" was in those days commonly employed for the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The pagan idea of "oracles" may be wisely contrasted with the idea of Christian teachers who used the term "oracles" of the Scriptures. A pagan oracle was an answer to a question submitted to some god; the answer was a precise sentence, often of an enigmatical character, which could be adapted to the event that might happen, whatever

that event might be. The medium used in communicating the answer had no part (or was assumed to have no part) in shaping the answer. Often the oracle only came to a person who was in a state which permitted her taking no intelligent part in the communication she made. So uncertain was the meaning of the messages given that the word "oracle" has come to mean, "a grand sounding utterance which nobody can be ever quite sure that he understands." It is evident that none of these ideas can be associated with our Scriptures, which are Divine revelations through legend, biography, history, incident, rite, song, proverb, and prophecy, always assuming that the thought God puts into men, but the shaping of the thought is given by the men. Men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost who was in them.

Ver. 13. *Signs of Unskilfulness in Christian Teachers.*—"Unskilful in the word of righteousness." R.V. "without experience of the word of righteousness." Two distinct ideas are suggested by these two renderings, and yet the two are so closely associated that they are really but one. The A.V. suggests inefficiency, the R.V. inexperience; but it is at once evident that the inefficiency is the natural and necessary result of the inexperience. Skill comes by practice; and this is as true of Christian teaching as of other things.

I. **Skill for teaching comes by personal experience of the truth.**—A man can only teach what he himself has tasted and handled and felt of the word of life; and his power in teaching will depend on the measure of his tasting and handling. This especially applies to advanced truths, which can only be wisely dealt with when there is ripe experience.

II. **Skill for teaching comes by practice in teaching.**—And that will both compel a man, and enable a man, to advance in the range of his teaching subjects. The practised teacher cannot keep in the simplicities.

III. **The unskilful teacher is the man who can only keep in the lower range, who satisfies himself with the milk suitable for babes,** and will not see that if he would feed *grown men* he must have strong meat of truth suited for them.

Ver. 14. *Exercising the Moral Discernment.*—"Senses exercised to discern good and evil." We speak of the "moral sense." The senses of the body are taken to suggest the spiritual faculties (*αἰσθητήρια*). We have the bodily senses, eye, ear, touch, taste, smell, as faculties and possibilities. The mother anxiously watches her new-born babe, to see if all the sense-possibilities are there. But they have to be developed by exercise, training, and discipline, into actually operative life-forces, which will take the whole body and the whole life into their control. And so with the moral sense, the recognition of distinction between good and evil. We have it as a mere possibility. Let a man have no culture of the moral sense, or let the culture be a mere accident, and you have either a useless or a dangerous man. Every force that bears on the growing child is a force unto the culture of the moral sense. Parenthood is; teacherhood is; friendship is; religion is. And there is, as in all growth, unfolding in detail, differentiation. As in nature there is development in the ear, from a simple box to the complicated human organ, so with the moral sense, through exercise there is unfolding from simple discernment of the distinction between right and wrong to sensitive recognition of the true, the good, the beautiful, as the adapted right.

Soul-food adapted to Age and Capacity.—"But solid food is for full-grown men." *Body-life and soul-life, both depend on nourishment and food.* That is the law of all life other than the life of God Himself. Angels live on angels' food; souls live on appropriate souls' food; and bodies live

by meat and drink and air. Science tells us that bodily life, health, fatness, vigour, directly depend on the character and quantity and appropriateness of the food supplied. Given vitality, and freedom from active disease, and any bodily result that is desired can be obtained by giving flesh-forming or bone-forming or brain-making foods. But our farmers knew this experimentally long ago, though they were ignorant of scientific terms. The results which they can with certainty produce, in relation to beast or bird, can be just as certainly produced in man, so far as he is one of the animals; and medical science in modern times is in part devoted to the discovery of flesh-forming and health-nourishing foods. It is even found that a man's food must bear a direct relation, in quantity and quality, to the work which he is called to do. This was impressed upon us in a very striking way by the experience of our soldiers during the Crimean war. They were terribly exposed in the muddy trenches during that severe winter, and at first the mortality among them was frightful. But it was observed that the French soldiers, though exposed to the same toils and perils, did not suffer so much; and on inquiry the reason for the difference was found to be this —the French officers increased the quantity and improved the character of the rations when their men had to endure unusual exposure and fatigue, whereas our officers continued the regulation ration under all the circumstances. The mortality was soon checked when food was properly adjusted to work. The health, vigour, and work of our *soul's* life just as directly depend upon the food with which it is nourished. Would we get more work out of our souls, we must feed them better. Do we expose our souls to much peril? We must improve and increase their food. The real trouble so often is that we are under soul-fed, injudiciously soul-fed. So often our souls are really half starved; their voice is so weak; it is hardly more than a whisper; the soul-hands are so feeble that they cannot grasp Christian work. Even in the land of spiritual plenty we may fail to grow into strength. Classifications are quite unsatisfactory because they are incomplete, but still they do help to clear apprehensions. We may therefore speak of the soul's life as being *faith* and *love*, and as having for its natural expressions *worship* and *work*. Then the soul-food provided must bear, in the most direct and efficient way, on these four things. Here is a sublime but most practical problem for each one of us to solve: What will nourish into the fullest health and strength my soul's faith and my soul's love? What will strengthen my soul's brain and heart for holy worship, for prayer and praise, and my soul's muscle and nerve for holy work? And as circumstances arise making greater demands on the vigour of our souls, on our faith, our devotion, our love, or our hope, we must see to it that an adequate increase of spiritual food is made. God offered to the wearied Elijah angels' food *a second time*, as if one good meal were not enough, using this persuasion, "Arise, and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." And speaking of the putting-forth of miraculous and unusual spiritual energy, our Lord most impressively said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Here we all so sadly fail. We keep the soil so poor. We keep the plant indoors, and never let the nourishing rains fall on it. And yet we may be quite sure that there is this absolute law for all body-life and for all soul-life—if more is to be got out of body or out of soul, more and better food must be given to them.

Lost Interest in Higher Christian Truth.—Those who are addressed had lost interest in the deeper truths of Christianity, those truths which alone expressed and explained its proper

nature. Their temptation was apparently towards mingling a rudimentary Christian doctrine with the teaching of the synagogue. Yielding to this, they would lose all real knowledge of the very elements of Christian truth, and with this all true knowledge of the Old Testament itself. "Solid food belongs to full-grown men." If they occupied themselves with the rudiments alone, their spiritual senses could not be trained by use (or *habit*) in distinguishing between good and evil, truth and falsehood, in the various systems of teaching which men offered as the doctrine of Christ.—*W. F. Moulton, D.D.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1. *Sacrifice.*—Amidst the various elements of worship which were to be carried on in and around the tabernacle, the most conspicuous was, so far as we can judge, peculiarly fitted to the mind of an Arabian tribe. We may indulge in philosophical or theological speculations concerning the institution of sacrifice, but historically (and this is the only point of view in which we are now to consider it) we cannot overlook its adaptations to the peculiar period of the Israelites' existence in which we find it first described at length. Some of the forms are identical with those of Egypt and of India. But it is remarkable that the institution (taken in its most general aspect), after having perished everywhere else among the worshippers of one God, still lingers among that portion of the Semitic nations which more than any other represents the conditions of Israel at Sinai. Extinct almost entirely in the Jewish race itself, it is still an important part of the worship of the Bedouin Arabs. In the desert of Sinai itself sacrifice is almost the only form which Bedouin religion takes, at the chief sanctuary of the peninsula, the tomb of Sheykh Saleh, and on the summit of Serbal. When Burckhardt wished to penetrate into the then inaccessible fastness of Petra, the pretext which afforded him the greatest security was that of professing a desire to sacrifice a goat at the tomb of Aaron.—*Dean Stanley.*

Ver. 9. *Learning Obedience.*—An American writer tells a story of the veteran General Sumner at the battle of Antietam. His son, young Captain Sumner, a youth of twenty-one, was on his staff. The old man calmly stood amidst a storm of shot and shell, and turned to send him through a doubly raging fire upon a mission of duty. He might never see his boy again, but his country claimed his life; and, as he looked upon his young brow, he grasped his hand, encircled him in his arms, and fondly kissed him. "Good-bye, Sammy!" "Good-bye, father!" And the youth, mounting his horse, rode gaily on the message. He returned unharmed, and again his hand was grasped with a cordial, "How d'ye do, Sammy?" answered by a grasp of equal affection.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PERIL OF FAILING TO ADVANCE IN CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Therefore.**—διό, since only the τέλειοι, advanced ones, are capable of receiving advanced instruction, you may well seek to become such. *Stuart* reads, "Quitting the mere initial state of pupilage, advance forward to a maturer state of instruction and knowledge"; or, "make such advances that it shall be unnecessary to repeat *elementary* instruction in the principles of Christianity." The writer generously assumes that they are ready for, and would gladly receive, higher teachings. **Principles.**—Rudiments; first elements. Such simple verities as we can teach children. **Unto perfection.**—That completeness of Christian manhood which implies power to deal with abstruse and difficult subjects, such as that one which was at the time in the mind of the writer, viz. the Priesthood of Christ as belonging to the order of Melchizedek. "Let us—I, as your teacher, leading you on with me—press on to maturity of Christian knowledge." **Laying again.**—Foundations ought to require laying only once; first principles ought to require teaching only in the

first stages of the religious life. In failure to grow, mentally and spiritually, is always found the great peril of apostasy. Life of every kind, if it is to be kept in health, must *grow*. **Repentance.**—The first lesson of the gospel (Mark i. 15). **Dead works.**—See chap. ix. 14. Works in which there is no principle of life. Such as cause defilement, and require purification, because they are sinful (Gal. v. 19-21), and because their wages is death.

Ver. 2. **Baptisms.**—A plural form; therefore *Alford* thinks the Jewish washings must be meant. But the writer is clearly referring to the first principles of the distinctive *Christian* teachings. The Syriac Version has the singular here; and it is evident that no stress is to be laid on the plural form. If importance be attached to the plural, it may be regarded as including John's baptism and Christian baptism; and we know that some disciples underwent both baptisms. *βάπτισμα* is the proper word for Christian baptism, but the word here used is *βαπτισμῶν*. *Farrar* suggests that the word may imply the teaching which enabled Christian catechumens to discriminate between Jewish washings and Christian baptism. The order of first Christian principles given here may be illustrated from the Acts of the Apostles. 1. The doctrine of repentance, or sense of need; dead works being helpless in saving. 2. The doctrine of faith, or *out* looking for help. 3. The doctrine of baptisms, or public profession of faith. 4. The doctrine of laying on of hands, or sealing of the Holy Ghost. 5. The doctrines of resurrection and judgment, the inspiration of godly living. These are the two prominent truths taught by the apostle Paul, to whose school the writer belonged. All these doctrines are classed as rudimentary first principles.

Ver. 3. **This will we do.**—Not, "attend again to these first principles"; but "go on to deal with the higher things." The word "we" is here used theoretically. "Assuming your anxiety to grow, realising our dependence on Divine help; and remembering to what peril of falling the ignorant are exposed." Then the writer deals with a case "excepted by God Himself from all efforts of the Christian teacher; in this case, though nothing can avail except the laying of a new foundation of repentance, God has appointed no agencies by which such foundation can be laid" (*Moulton*).

Ver. 4. **Impossible.**—Either a strong word for "exceedingly difficult," or, more probably, "impossible under existing provisions and conditions." But this must not be thought of as involving "impossible under *any* provisions and conditions." What God *does* must not be thought of as limiting what God *may do*. Observe the use of the term in Mark x. 23-27. It is a favourite term with this writer: see chap. v. 18, x. 4, xi. 6. "The purport of the whole clause is to this effect—that the persons apostatising from the Christian profession, after they have had experience, so far as man can judge, of the power of Christianity, it is impossible by the ordinary means of grace to renew them to repentance, for they renounce the very considerations by which Divine power works on the minds of men" (*Barker*). **Enlightened.**—Simply instructed; the word does not imply having illumination. A man can never be the same man again after hearing of Christ the Saviour. He must come under new responsibility, and this may either save or crush him. **Tasted.**—Begun experimental acquaintance with. **Heavenly gift.**—The privileges and blessings of the gospel. Some think Christ Himself—the "unspeakable gift"—is meant. **Partakers of the Holy Ghost.**—See Acts xix. 1-6. Perhaps allusion may be to the "gifts" of the early Church, regarded as signs and sealings of the Spirit.

Ver. 5. **Good word of God.**—Enjoyed the consolations administered and the hopes excited by the Divine promises which the gospel proffers. **World to come.**—R.V. "age to come": the Christian, spiritual dispensation. Reference appears to be to the miraculous powers in the early Church. *Stuart* summarises the points of the paragraph (vers. 1-5) thus: "There is a regular gradation. 1. They had been taught the principles or doctrines of Christianity. 2. They had enjoyed the privileges, or means of grace, which the new religion afforded. 3. They had experienced, in general, various gifts and graces bestowed by the Spirit. 4. They had cherished the hopes which the promises of the gospel inspire. 5. They had witnessed, some of them may even have experienced, those special miraculous powers by which the gospel was fully shown to be a religion from God. They had the *fullest* evidence, internal and external, of the Divine origin and nature of the Christian religion. Consequently, if they apostatised from it, there remained no hope of their recovery."

Ver. 6. **Fall away.**—R.V. "and *then* fell away." The defection meant is a practical renunciation of Christianity, and return to Judaism. Many did thus fall back to formal Judaism in that time of persecution and danger. **Crucify to themselves.**—Acting as those did who actually crucified the Lord. His crucifixion was but the seal of their rejection of Him as Messiah. The case used is the "dative of disadvantage," to their own destruction. **Open shame.**—Expose Him to scorn, as one proved to be unworthy of trust or service. "By renouncing their adherence to Christianity, they would openly declare their belief that Christ was only an impostor, and, of course, that He suffered justly as a malefactor. By returning again to Judaism, they would approve of what the Jews had done, and thus they would, as it were, crucify Christ, and expose Him to be treated by unbelievers with scorn and contumely" (*Stuart*).

Ver. 7. **Herbs.**—*βοτάνην*. Hebraistic use, "any kind of vegetation"; classic use, "herbage," or "vegetation," not including bread-corn.

Ver. 8. **Burned.**—Not the land, but the worthless and mischievous produce. But see Isa. xliv. 15, and recall the fate of the Vale of Siddim. Point of illustration is: the earth is recipient of Divine favours; much depends on its response. What can be done more for that which yields a response of barrenness, or only bad growths, to the rains of God? It is a rhetorical illustration. In case of *land* it is a matter of *inability*; in case of *man* it is a matter of *will*.

Vers. 9, 10.—The writer now turns from warning to conciliation and encouragement. He urges steadfastness, diligence, and growth. **Better things.**—Than any such tendency to apostatise. **Accompany salvation.**—Full salvation is meant, which includes growth and sanctifying. *Farrar* renders, "that are akin to salvation": "near to, conjoined with, salvation." As apostates are *κατάρας ἐγγύς*, nigh unto a curse, so those who persevere in maintaining the true religion are *ἐχόμενοι σωτηρίας*, their salvation is at hand. **Labour of love.**—Christian service is ever the best Christian defence.

Ver. 11. **Same diligence.**—Continuing efforts until you have reached the very fulness of the stature of Christ. **Full assurance of hope.**—Indicating confirmed Christian stability, beyond all fear of falling away.

Ver. 12. **Slothful.**—Remiss in discharge of Christian duties, or in using all means of Christian culture. Always peril of Christian indifference. The word *νωθροί*, "tardy," is applied either to body or mind, to external actions or internal conceptions.

Ver. 13.—The connection of thought may be thus given: "Follow the godly, I say. Take one such for an instance. Abraham. See how graciously God met his steadfast goodness." But how does this illustrate the point? Thus God revealed Himself to Abraham, even as, in Christ, he has revealed Himself to you. Abraham believed. Abraham patiently continued. Abraham has long ago attained the promise. But, from this illustration it might be argued that Abraham had the advantage of a positive *oath* and *promise*: there was no uncertainty trying his faith. The writer replies, "Neither is there in Christianity." That is the new grace of Him who has proved Himself faithful. What then are the two immutable things? The promise and oath of God. Given for confirming our faith. *Stuart* says, "the oath that David should have a son, and the oath that Christ should be a priest after the order of Melchizedek."

Ver. 19. **Anchor of the soul.**—This is a figure of hope; it was a familiar emblem from very early days. It is the *hope*, not the *anchor*, which is thought of as entering within the veil, resting on the living, exalted, spiritual High Priest. It is not necessary to think of the anchor as holding *within* the veil. Hope holds there, not the mere emblem of the hope. The figure of heaven is borrowed from the Jewish sanctuary.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—8.

The Peril and Prevention of Apostasy.—The teaching of this passage is enforced, and in part explained, by an illustration taken from nature. Fixing attention on that illustration, we may be able to present the point of the teaching. The writer's mind is evidently full of the cases of apostasy from the faith in Christ which had occurred, and of the temptations to apostasy which seriously imperilled many who had professed the faith in Christ. What could be done? It seemed hopeless to try and recover the apostates. The case of such a man as Julian was beyond the reach of all human influences. But how could the wavering ones be steadied? and how could all the members of the Church be guarded? 1. The writer urges that safety lies in vigorous growing—growing in spiritual *life*, one chief agency of such growth being advance in knowledge of Christian truth. Full occupation of mind and heart with heavenly and Divine things is the best and healthiest defence against any—even the most subtle—attractions of error. This our Lord taught in His illustration of the evil spirit which went out of a man, and left him "empty, swept, and garnished." The man did not fill the empty spaces with good, so the evil spirit returned to the vacancy, and filled it full with others worse than himself. 2. And the writer warns, with extreme severity, of the hopeless condition into which wilful apostasy brings a man. It is the highest moral force that can act upon a man which persuades a man to be a Christian. If a man has felt that influence, and after experience of it

resolutely and wilfully puts it away from him, what can be done for such a man? You cannot expect any lower influences to act upon the man who has rejected the highest; and there is no other and superior influence that can act upon him. The apostate makes his own condition an altogether hopeless one. While a man is undecided, the Christian persuasions are working on him. When a man resists the Christian persuasions, there is yet hope that they may gain convincing power upon him. But when a man has yielded to the Christian persuasions, and made professions of faith in Christ, and come into a share of the Christian experiences, and then deliberately thrown it all up, and taken a stand of opposition to Christ, the persuasions have become wholly ineffective, and there are *no other that can possibly influence him.* The man must be left to himself. It is impossible to "renew him again to repentance." Take Julian, the apostate emperor of later days, as an example. To illustrate this the writer shows that there are conditions which make the husbandry of the earth hopeless and useless. His illustration is especially effective for Eastern lands, where, in ancient times, the natural characteristics of the surface soil were not changed by deep ploughing or chemically adapted manures. The ploughing was but surface scratching; and the land was left untilled that failed to reward the tiller, or that only brought forth "caltrops," thorns, and briars. The earth, or the land, or the fields are represented as receiving all needful blessing from God and from man. From *God*, in the frost that breaks up the clods, the snow that keeps the soil warm and supplies it with chemical elements, the rains that make all life in it to break forth; from *man*, in the work of the plough, the spade, and the harrow, and in the scattering of various seed. What could have been done to the fields more than God and man have done for them? Now what *may* be the response of the fields? And what will be a fitting estimate and treatment of the fields in view of their varying response? The Christian professor is as a field.

I. **The field may nourish a growth of plant life unto satisfactory fruitage.**—Compare the "good soil" of our Lord's parable of the "sower." It brings forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold. In the passage before us attention is fixed upon the fact that what comes forth out of good soil *keeps on growing*, until it has reached its perfection. Its health and its safety depend on and are declared by its *continuous growth.* That is the immediate point of the writer. Christians must *grow*, or they will not be safe. Nothing resists evil influences like healthy and vigorous growing. St. Peter is as clear on this point, for he gives this pressing advice to Christian disciples: "Beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. iii. 17, 18).

II. **The field may fail to nourish anything worth harvesting.**—It may be able to put no energy into anything that comes out of it. It can only grow leaves, or poor flowers that are not worth picking: only green stalks, on which stand small shrivelled ears, which even the insects have not cared to fructify. It is such poor, weak growth as this that is exposed to all kinds of peril. Frosts nip such blades. Fungus gets on such branches. Rains beat down such stalks. Rust gathers in such ears. And the like peril comes to men, when their response to the grace of God in Christ Jesus is of the same kind. They do not thrive; they do not grow; there is no vigour in their growing. The soil of their souls evidently needs nourishing, lest they should find their poor fruitage only fit for burning in the Day of God.

III. **The field may grow nothing but weeds.**—The farmer's labour is expended upon it, the gracious agencies of nature act upon it, and yet the farmer is wholly disappointed. It seems as if both God's work and his, which had been so freely received by the field, had all been rejected. He walks over the field,

watching for signs of plant life from his seeding; and there is nothing save thistle, and ragwort, and dock, and nettle, and tare. It bears nothing but thorns and briars. The farmer turns away in despair. The field is rejected; it is nigh unto cursing. Nothing can be done for it. By-and-by the thorns and briars must be cut down and burned. There is a point in God's husbandry of souls when it seems useless to do anything more. The utmost has been done, and resisted, and rejected, or turned to wrong uses, and made to nourish thorns and briars, not good plants. What can be done to the well-tended vineyard that only yields sour grapes? Thus righteously saith our God: "I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." What can be done for a wilful apostate? He "is nigh unto cursing." In the realm of motives there are none left which can persuade that man to repentance.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *The Peril of Keeping to Religious Simplicities.*—The peril lies in this—we cannot help growing (1) in body, (2) in mind, (3) in experience, (4) in moral power; and if we do not also grow in religion, we get our nature out of its harmonies; manliness and childishness vainly strive to dwell amicably together; and the result, sooner or later, is that the manliness cannot do with the childishness, but suggests all manner of doubts and difficulties, which are only too likely to upset the religious faith altogether. Picture-books are best for children, and picture-teaching for child-souls. But it is a pitiable thing to see a man clinging passionately to the picture-books of his infancy. Yet that is done by the men who, having reached Christian manhood, will hear of nothing, and think they can profit by nothing, save the first principles, the child-simplicities, of the Christian faith. We need to see that the simplicities are fully preserved in the advanced teachings. The flower and the seed contain those cotyledon lobes that first burst the soil; but how foolish the man would be who persisted in caring nothing for the flower or the seed, but everything for the cotyledon lobe. The peril is threefold. 1. The man puts his own nature out of harmony. 2. The simple things will not stand the application to them of his enlarged and cultivated power and experience. He is a man trying to get himself into a boy's jacket. 3. The lack of harmony between the man's mind and religion makes his example to others not only ineffective, but injurious; for he suggests that a man must degrade his mental manhood if he is to be religious. Only the man who grows on, body and mind and soul, towards perfection, can realise the Divine idea for him, or worthily bear the name of disciple of the "Man Christ Jesus."

The Christian First Principles.—For convenience and symmetry these may be arranged in three great pairs of truths.

I. **Revelation** of God through the written word; incarnation of God in the living Word.

II. **Expiation** of sin by blood of Christ; justification of the sinner by faith in Christ.

III. **Regeneration** of heart by the Holy Spirit; resurrection of body by the same Spirit.

Now observe the first pair concern God the Father; the second pair, God the Son; the third pair, God the Holy Ghost. Observe also that there is a threefold mediation: 1. The mediation of the word of God between God and human ignorance. 2. The mediation of the Christ between God and human guilt. 3. The mediation of the Spirit between God and human inability.—*Homiletic Review.*

Leaving First Principles.—We are to leave them as the scholar leaves the letters of the alphabet,—leaving them only to use them; leaving them that he may bring out all their powers, and employ them in startling combinations, as the instrument for acquiring or diffusing thought. We are to leave them as the plant leaves the root, when it towers into a majestic tree, leaving it only that it may the more depend upon it; and day by day drawing from it those fresh supplies of vital sap which it pours into the fresh leaves, fresh boughs, ever fresh and ever beautiful formations of that life which refreshes the hungry with its clusters, or the weary with its shade. We are to leave them as the builder leaves his foundation, that he may carry up the building, stone above stone, story above story, tower above tower, from the dusky basement to the sunlit pinnacle; always leaving the foundation, yet always on it, and on it with the most massive pressure and the most complete dependence when most he leaves it.—*Charles Stanford.*

The Double Meaning of "Repentance."—The word μετάνοια, which occurs in this verse, has here and in other places a wider meaning than "repentance," as we now understand it. In its full significance it serves equally to denote the turning away from what is opposed to God (Acts viii. 22), and also the turning to God (Acts xx. 20). In either instance the process is identical in result, though contemplated from different points of view. Its beginning is in the conscious individual spirit life, and the result is a distinct and powerful effect produced upon the will by means of Divine grace.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Jewish Christian Catechism.*—A catechism is supposed to confine itself to the primary truths and principles of the subject it treats, and to set them forth clearly and succinctly. What then, according to this writer, are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ? At first we are surprised at the list that he gives—as much surprised by what he *includes* as by what he *omits*. But the list must be examined as prepared for the Jewish Christian Churches of that particular time; and they were likely to have practices and ideas which have long since passed away. Some of their "simplicities" then have no application to us, and it is a mistake to *force* meanings, suitable to *us*, into "first principles," which had special meaning for *them*. The list contains six items. Repentance, faith, resurrection, and final judgment we can recognise as still "first principles" of the Christian faith. But what were the teachings in the Jewish Church concerning "laying on of hands," and "baptisms," or "washings," we can only guess. There was some particular *Jewish* feature about these, some retention of Jewish custom, which has quite faded out of our knowledge. The Christian associations of baptism and laying on of hands cannot with any certainty be identified with those of the early Jewish Christian Church. The "first principles" may therefore be thus divided: 1. *Two spiritual qualities*, absolutely essential to the entrance into and maintenance of Christian life at all—repentance and faith. Observe the sphere of the repentance—"from dead works"; and the sphere of the faith—"toward God." There is no specific mention made of faith *in Christ*. 2. *Two eschatological truths*—the Resurrection and the Judgment. These are, singularly enough, the only truths stated as being first principles; and these we reckon to be advanced truths, not simplicities. Probably they were prominent in the Jewish faith, and so became prominent, and took too exclusive attention, in the Jewish Christian Churches. 3. *Two symbolical acts*—washings and laying on of hands. These seem to have taught two things: (1) the absolute necessity for putting away all evil; (2) the certainty of the communications of Divine grace to those thus cleansed.

Ver. 4. *The Morally Impossible.*—

There is the physically impossible and the mentally impossible, and these help us to understand the morally impossible. The word "impossible" is constantly used as if it were some definite and absolute thing. We say, "It is an impossibility." But the impossible is always strictly relative to the being of whom it is spoken. Our Lord corrected the mistake when He spoke of two impossibilities, the impossible to man being possible with God; but God having his own impossibilities, relative to Himself. The physically impossible is simply that which is out of the range of powers that belong to a physical being. It is impossible for a hen to swim, or for an arm to do the work of an eye. It is possible for a duck to swim, and for an eye to do the work of an eye. In the same way the mentally impossible is simply that which is out of the range of the mental conditions, faculties, and laws. Given this as the condition of human thinking, two straight lines cannot enclose a space, and it is impossible for two lines ever to enclose a space—impossible so long as the mind attaches a particular meaning to the terms "straight line" and "space." Or let the condition of human thinking be that what it names "two" added to "two" shall make "four"; then it is impossible for two and two ever to make five. And the morally impossible is as relative to the moral being of whom it is spoken. A moral being is a limited being, he cannot act beyond his range. There is that which is consistent with its own nature, and it is impossible for it to be something other than it is. St. John helps us to understand this when he says that the man who is "born of God" cannot sin. It is morally impossible because it is contrary to his renewed nature. Apply this to God. Through His revelations to us, and relations with us, we have distinct conceptions of God. He is "righteous in all His works, and holy in all His ways." He is light and He is love; He is true; He is faithful. The morally impossible to God is anything and everything inconsistent with Himself. He cannot do the absurd; He cannot do the untrue; He cannot do the unkind, and so on. The impossible, to the infinitely good Being, is simply anything and everything that is inconsistent with Himself, with what He is, with what we know Him to be.

Vers. 4, 5. *First Tastings of Divine Things.*—"Tasted of the heavenly gift." "Tasted the good word of God." The word "taste" seems to have been carefully chosen, and with a view to a precise persuasion. The writer was anxious about those whom he addressed because they were satisfying themselves with the rudiments of Christian truth and the beginnings of Christian experience. They kept, as it were, just *tasting*; they did not *eat*, so as to get really nourished in the Christian truth and life. He points out the peril of that merely casual and partial relation. Those who only "taste" have no soul-strength to resist temptation and trial. Here another point is in his mind. That mere tasting brings with it solemn and awful responsibilities. If a man only begins the Christian life, if a man only accepts the rudiments of the Christian faith, if a man has only felt the first movings of the Divine Spirit, he has passed over a line, and can never go back to what he was. He has become a new man; he can never be the same man again. If he does not advance to the full possession and enjoyment of the new life, he will find himself one of the most miserable of men. He has broken away from the old relations, which did satisfy him, and he can never get really satisfied with them again. And his mere rudimentary relations to Christianity cannot satisfy him either.

Ver. 6. *Exhaustion of the Power of Renewal.*—To "taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come" is to be renewed; and the man must have been susceptible to influences of renewal, if he has that experience. Those influences of renewal

are the very highest that can act on a man. But if the man who has felt the power and persuasion of them falls back into the world, and the low life unto self and sin, those powers of renewal have become *powerless* on him. He has turned against them; he is no longer susceptible to their influence; there is nothing in him now on which they can work. He cannot be renewed again unto repentance, for there is nothing in him to respond to persuasion. It is a most solemn consideration that unless the early religious experiences are followed up by a healthy growth, there is the gravest peril of the exhaustion of the religious sensibility; and this is more especially the peril when the first tastings and the early experiences are connected with seasons and scenes of religious excitement and emotion. The over-strain of religious feeling is followed by the exhaustion of religious capacity.

Crucifying the Son of God afresh.—Various as have been God's dealings with the world, there is a terrible impartiality in His dispensations to His rational creatures. He can hear us all in the same court, and judge us out of the same books. He can see through the intricacies of His own diversified government. The whole world is under a moral government, though we alone are in a written covenant; all live to God, though we alone have professed "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." As a sort of equity is preserved in God's arrangements of the relation between His Church and the world, so doubtless there is something not unlike it in His arrangements of the ages and provinces of the Church itself. While the human nature of the Church is uniform, its trials must be nearly so. The probation God enforces is distributed pretty evenly through all ages and classes. If we are not asked to perish at the stake in one terrific trial of faith and fortitude, we *are* summoned to a life of hourly self-denial. Temptations may vary outwardly; but while the human nature on which they operate remains unchanged, they must be found in substance much the same. Of all the repetitions of trial from generation to generation, that expressed in this text is the most startling and fearful. The crucifixion of Christ, in its literal reality, stands alone in the history of man. It was the last and darkest depth of human criminality. Never surely is man, in all the possibilities of futurity, destined again to consummate a wickedness like this! But heaven has *not* spared us this trial. There is in man a continued capacity of "crucifying afresh the Son of God"—a power to act over again all the scene of His torture, to league with the malignant priests and the scoffing soldiers, to buffet the unresisting cheek, to bind on the crown of thorns. No doubt the crime is a peculiar one, not ordinarily exemplified. The writer speaks of deliberate apostasy from the faith of Jesus. But there is no one characteristic of direct and utter apostasy which does not, in its own degree, belong to those daily desertions of the cause of Jesus which ally the miserable votaries of the god of this world with the avowed enemies of Christ in every age. There are the apostasies of the social table, of the fireside and the market-place, the refined apostasies of our own modern and daily life, as real as the imperial treachery of a Julian, or the cold-blooded abandonment of a Demas. There is a test we can apply. Pass from what you *might* do if you but were as you never can be, to what you *are* doing in the position where God has placed you. Reflect on the frame and temper of mind, on the weakness and the wickedness, that made the chosen people of God the murderers of His Son, and try if you cannot catch some faint image of that treachery in your own hearts. Doubtless the accuracy of the image will vary in degree: here, through progressive sanctification, all but obliterated; here, through remaining worldliness, vivid and undeniable; here, through total

rejection of Christ, all but complete. Christ was a favourite with the mass of the people; and yet His people were the fierce invokers of His blood on them and their children. Is no parallel to this found in the Christian world around us? How many flock round Christ with enthusiasm, so long as He is made the standard-bearer of a party, professing boundless admiration, devotion, and love, who, when the true hour of trial comes, relinquish their short-lived discipleship, turn with the tide, and swell the torrent of the persecutors of the body of Christ! Or look at the wretched, wavering, timorous Pilate—willing to save, but afraid to resist, anxious to do right as long as virtue costs no trouble: has *this* crucifier of Christ no image among us? Are there no compounders between earth and heaven, who would have the best of this life and the life to come? Not far removed from this is the case of those rulers who struggled against their very faith, lest it should hazard their popularity. These poor dependants on human fame stand not alone in the world. Among the higher orders of society, especially, the verdict of society becomes of such tremendous consideration; it is vague and vast enough to hide God and His judgment altogether from our view. And what is peculiarly dangerous about this influence is the insidiousness of its advances. Religion is not proved to be absurd, but assumed to be so. There is deeper guilt than this. There is a Judas-like selling of the Master for paltry gain; there is the blasphemy that denies to Christ His Divine rights; there is the shame of preferring some Barabbas to Him; there is the hypocrisy of acknowledging Him only with the lip. When we are told that wilful rejection of Christ can still, in some sense, perpetuate His shame, who shall dare to set accurate limits to these awful revelations? Were it possible to renew in all its literal horrors the degradation and insult of Calvary, were each deliberate sin to disgrace Him as He was disgraced before, who among us could endure to risk such atrocious guilt? Yet, if there be truth in Scripture, such guilt, or guilt like this, is in effect yours, when, taught to approach a covenanted God in Christ, you turn with contempt from Him who loved and bought you.—*W. Archer Butler, M.A.*

Crucifying Christ Nowadays.—More people crucified Christ in the old days than the soldiers who fastened Him to the cross. Indeed, *they* were not His real crucifiers. They must bear the guilt of our Lord's death who *planned* to secure it. And they were the recognised religious people of the day. Their inspiration to their wicked deed was the self-seeking character of their so-called religion. Our Lord, with His spiritual teachings, opposed their self-interests, and disturbed their self-satisfactions, and therefore they resolved to be rid of Him, and with shameless schemes they accomplished their end. That conduct, with that inspiration, has been repeated in every age. The crucifiers of Christ to-day are not His open enemies, but His professed friends, whose self-interest and self-satisfaction are affected by His claims as a spiritual Saviour, who is to be served by submission, self-surrender, righteousness, and charity.

Putting Christ to Shame.—The shame of being *rejected after* being accepted and tried. Only a certain measure of shame can be regarded as attaching to a thing which has been carefully examined and then rejected. This measure of shame; the man who examines it decides that, in his judgment, it is not what it professes to be, and it cannot do what it professes to do. Submit the claims of Christ as Saviour from sin to the judgment of any man, and only a certain measure of shame attaches to Him, if the man rejects the claim. So far as the man is concerned Christ is not what He professes to be. But if a man, after consideration, accepts a thing, gives it fair trial, and has full experience and knowledge

of it, and *then* rejects it, the thing is utterly disgraced. It is put to shame before others; the man makes public declaration of its worthlessness. And when Christ's claims are accepted, and His service tried, and then He is rejected, and His service abandoned, He is put before all men to an open shame, He is declared to be one who has been "weighed in the balances" of actual experience and "found wanting."

A Moral State beyond Persuasion.—"It is impossible to renew them again to repentance." But the impossibility is not here treated from *God's* side, but from the apostate *man's* side. It is not a question what *God can do*, but what the man will *allow to be done.* The man has, by his own action, put himself into such a moral state that the Christian influences can no longer affect him. He has hardened his heart by wilful resistance until it has become like a trodden field-path, and the seeds will not sink in. So long as that wilful apostasy continues, there is no visible hope for the man. There is no getting through *self-inflicted hardness.* It may be shown that there is—1. A moral state which turns all *old* persuasions aside. It is the state of the man who, after having felt the persuasions of Christ, finally decides to resist them. It is of no use whatever to try those persuasions on the man any more. 2. It is the moral state which is unprepared to consider any *new* persuasions. Perfectly satisfied with his decision *against*, the man will not open the question again under any consideration. 3. It is the moral state of the man for whom there can really be no other persuasion, because he has come under and has felt the power of, the very highest that can move the heart and will of man.

Sin beyond Remedy.—The possibility of sinning beyond remedy is illustrated in the cases of nations and cities, and it is shown in cases of individuals.

I. **Nations that have sinned beyond hope of remedy.**—A group of small nations, of which Sodom and Gomorrah were the chief, was settled in the luxurious district of the Lower Jordan. But riches and idleness corrupted them quickly, the characteristic sins of the Canaanites flourished among them triumphantly, and the awful moral degradation into which they sunk is indicated in the story of wild night-rioting that is preserved for us in the book of Genesis, and in the fact that the most demoralising of human sins is permanently called after the name of Sodom. The cry of the cruelly wronged ones, the victims of lust and violence, rose up again and again into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; yet He bore with these sinners, inquired concerning them, and held back the judgments which their sins demanded. But it was at last made quite plain that they were sinners beyond remedy. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." "The guilt of Sodom stands confessed—guilt which fire only can purge. Her own mouth has proclaimed it. The awful sentence—the justice of which no one can question now—is forthwith written upon the dust of her city, announcing that she has been 'weighed in the balances, and found wanting,' and that her hours have been numbered and finished." For such sin there could be no remedy, and the fire of God fell. The Canaanite nations inhabiting Canaan at the time of the Israelite invasion are made the illustrations for the world of this fact, that sin may grow to be beyond remedy. Four hundred years later than the destruction of Sodom, those nations had become, in daring and utterly abominable iniquity, what Sodom had been. The utter destruction of them, as nations, was the inevitable judgment of God. Jericho, the first city utterly destroyed, was the local seat of the worship of Ashtoreth, the consort of Baal; and it represented all that was foulest and most revolting in the heathenism of the Canaanites. "The heathenism of Palestine and Syria was so foul

and degrading in every sense, that there is no state, even at this time, which would not put it down, if necessary, by the severest penalties." Here again the Divine forbearance tarried long, even until the sin had grown to be beyond remedy. The prophets of Israel and of Judah are called to present the examples of the Divine dealings with the neighbouring nations for the warning of Israel. Again and again they show the Divine judgments hanging over a people, restrained in the Divine long-suffering until the sin has plainly grown beyond remedy, and then descending and overwhelming them. But Israel failed to receive the warning or to learn the lesson, and so it must pass through similar experiences. Despising God's messengers, resisting God's prophets, going on in sin, at last it comes to this—there is no more hope of remedy, and ruin is at their gates.

II. **Cities that have sinned beyond hope of remedy.**—We are reminded at once of Nineveh, that great city to which the warning of coming doom was spoken by the prophet Jonah. Its "cup of iniquity" was full. But the doom was averted by a great act of national repentance. In Jonah's time the sin of Nineveh had not gone quite beyond remedy. But its goodness proved to be evanescent as the morning cloud. They fell back upon their sins, and at last sin grew beyond remedy, and Nineveh fell, and great was the fall of it. Capernaum, that city by the Lake of Galilee, was exalted unto heaven in privilege, for it was the abode of the Son of man, and the sphere of the great Teacher. But unbelief and indifference were its sins. They grew until they reached beyond remedy, and then even favoured Capernaum must be cast down to hell. There are *city* sins, in which we may share, which call down the righteous judgments of God. Let us most seriously concern ourselves with them, for they also may grow to be beyond remedy.

III. **Individuals that have sinned beyond remedy.**—Two figures rise at once into view—Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Saul, king of Israel. Pharaoh resisted persuasion and appeal. He would not be humbled, so the pride of Egypt must be broken by the death of the first-born, and by the disaster in the Red Sea. Saul would put his will against God's will. He was reproved, but he kept on in his self-willed ways, until there was no remedy, and the calamity of Gilboa must sweep away both him and his dynasty. The truth may come with some direct applications to ourselves. We have sins that easily beset us: sensual indulgences, self-pleasing luxuries—it may even be that some of us are knowingly and determinedly *living in sin*, and resisting all the gracious pleadings and warnings and persuadings of God's servants. Then let us look fairly at this most searching fact to-day. Our sin—yes, *our* sin—may get to be beyond remedy, beyond the reach of Divine correction, and then the judgments of God that overwhelm must fall—*even upon us.*

Ver. 7. *The Reward of Responsiveness.*—The case before the mind of the writer is that of the man who has made profession of Christian faith, and has come into the Church, and been subject to those gracious influences which should nourish Christly character, Christly service, and the Christly life. A man may respond to those influences, and thrive and grow into Christian perfection; and the perfection into which he grows will be the blessed reward of his responsiveness. Or a man may fail to respond to those influences. They may waste themselves upon him. He may remain in the rudimentary conditions, and fail to grow. He may grow nothing but the weeds and thorns that are characteristic of barren and worthless soils. And this will be the curse of his lack of responsiveness. The illustration is taken from the land. Some land is hungry; it will eat up everything that is put into it, but it will yield back nothing of value, only thorns and

weeds, thistles and ragwort, and docks and sorrel, that can give pleasure or food to nobody. It is unresponsive land; it is "nigh unto cursing"; its "end is to be burned." There is other land that is both receptive and responsive. It drinks in the rain and keeps it; it turns all good influences to living uses; it makes a fructifying seed-bed for the seeds and plants; it brings forth herbs to the abundant satisfaction of those who own it and toil in it; and that responsive land abundantly receives the blessing of God. Receptiveness to Christian influences is valuable and important. It may well be earnestly urged; it may well be wisely cultivated. But it is not enough; it is even perilous if it remain alone. There are some learned men who are simply receptive of knowledge. It goes in, any quantity goes in, and stays; *it is there*—that is all you can say about it. And so there are persons greedily receptive of Christian influences, who simply receive them, and make no response to them either in more gracious living, or in nobler and more devoted service. Responsiveness to Christian influences is the desirable thing, and upon it alone the reward and acceptance of God rests,—response in growth, in activity, in fruitage, in seeding; and in these responses the soul finds its ever-enlarging joy and satisfaction.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—12.

Blended Hopes and Fears.—The writer of this epistle evidently occupied a ministerial position in relation to the Churches he addressed. There is the union of recognised authority with personal interest and anxiety in his advice and reproofs. It may be at any time ministerial duty to say stern, severe, searching things, but they should never be said in a hard or harsh tone. Personal interest and affection should at once qualify the severity, and make it all the more severe. The spirit of Christian reproof is given in this sentence: "As my beloved sons, I warn you." The strong things this writer found it necessary to say concerning wilful apostasy might offend some, and might give many a wrong impression of the writer and of Christianity. He must make it plain that he was dealing with a *possible case*, and not assuming that *they* were in such a condition. It was necessary to point out what might be, in order to gain an influence over the evil things which might work out into such hopeless relations. To see where a road leads is often enough to convince us that it cannot be the right road. Every minister of Christ shares the experience of this writer concerning those entrusted to his charge.

I. **He has hope in some.**—The hope is based on recognised signs of Christian life. Hope is essential to the Christian ministry. There should be persistency in looking at the brighter side of things, quickness to discern every sign and possibility of good, and skill to nourish it into expression and strength. In many really good people, good has a way of hiding and almost disguising itself; and ministers need the wisdom of hopefulness in dealing with such persons. It may be that some in every Christian Church cause grave anxiety; it is almost always true that the many inspire confidence, win affection, and become to the minister his "joy and crown of rejoicing" in the day of God. He must never shrink from the duty of dealing with the careless, the inconsistent, and the wilful, but he can never do his work worthily unless he persistently *hopes for the best.* And the signs of healthy Christian life, which man may observe and God is sure not to forget, are summed up in this: "your work, and the love which ye shewed toward His name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and do minister." 1. *Your work;* activity and energy are satisfactory indications of vigorous and healthy life. 2. Love for Christ's name, seen in doing the service

which He did, and wants done. Christ's name is a synonym for service to others, ministry to others. There is something of Christliness in all self-denying ministry; the full true Christliness when the ministry is distinctly rendered for Christ, and as Christ's. Defection from the Christian spirit shows itself at once in failing ministry to others. Where soul-health flags there is no love of *service*.

II. **He has fears for some.**—And the fears find expression in anxious prayers on their behalf. Three things are objects of desire and prayer: 1. Where there is trembling and sign of weakness, the minister has his fears, and prays that these may be replaced by steadfastness, the firm tread, and upright pose of the man who feels the strength of good health. 2. Where there is flagging, through failing interest in Divine things, the minister has his fears, and prays that a new spirit of persistency may be given, and the aims of the Christian life become the inspiration of new and holier endeavour. 3. Where there is sluggishness, the dulness of stealthy spiritual disease, which saps the vital energy, and makes life a weariness, and lays the soul open to the attacks of spiritual disease, there the minister has his grave fears, and prays for grace to enable him to arouse and revive, by presenting in an inspiring way the example of them who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." What the minister wants for all his people is, that they should have two graces—faith and patience; that each should be in full vigour of health; that the two should harmoniously and helpfully blend together; and so blending, protect from all attacks of temptation, open or insidious,—faith ever looking toward higher things, and patience ever enduring while those higher things are being attained.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 9. *The Hopefulness of the Christian Teacher.*—"We are persuaded better things of you." A well-known and greatly honoured Christian preacher, in advising a younger minister, once said, "I would not care to preach, if the Christian religion were not a religion of hope." Whatever subject that good man dealt with, he persisted in seeing the hopeful side of it, though he bore the burden of a frail body, and was placed in circumstances of great strain and difficulty. In hopefulness concerning those to whom he ministers, the preacher gains his power. He has reason to nourish a spirit of hopefulness: (1) in view of the truths with which he has to deal; (2) in view of the presence of the Spirit with him, in doing the service of Christ; (3) in view of the inspiring power of hope on the human heart; (4) in view of the fact that just what the pressure of weekly life does for men is, take the hope out of them; (5) and in view of the fact, that Christianity holds out its best things as things *to come*. But the hopefulness of the Christian teacher is only sometimes a happy disposition. The nature of the minister's work tends to nourish depression. Hopefulness is usually a gracious disposition won out of fierce conflict, won for the sake of gaining efficiency in the service of men, and of rightly representing Him who saves us by kindling hope.

Ver. 10. *God's Observations and Remembrances.*—"God is not unrighteous to forget your work." When the Divine inspections are dealt with, the observation of our frailties, short-comings, and sins is usually commended to our attention. The Divine observation is made a ground for nourishing a holy *fear*. But we have lost much in fixing too close an attention on this side of the Divine observation. It ought to be made the means of nourishing a holy restfulness, and a holy joy. The inspection takes notice of everything that is good and hopeful in

us. The inspection always considers the good things in their *relation* to the capacities and possibilities of the individual who does them, and so calls things *very good* which the individual mourns over as sadly below his own standard. And it is of the essence of God's righteousness that He never *forgets* what He observes. His dealings with us are based on what He *remembers*, as well as what He *sees*.

Ver. 11. *Hope elevated into Full Assurance.*—"Full assurance of hope unto the end." R.V. "fulness of hope even to the end." Can human hope ever rise to "full assurance," to absolute confidence? Not in a strict sense. The element of human frailty, that necessarily involves uncertainty, must always be in it. It can never cease to be hope, because trust, which is the ground of hope, can never be removed from the *creature*, who is, and for ever must be, a dependent being. If hope then is to grow and enlarge, what can it grow into? The R.V. may help us. It can grow into "*fulness*," into maturity, into completeness, into its ideal, into itself at its best possible. The man who has nourished the grace of hope into its maturity has whatever is meant by "full assurance." And matured hope can do a most full and gracious work in the Christian life—especially in steadying it. Therefore the anchor is the symbol of hope, because it keeps the vessel steady when tides sway, currents draw, and winds drive. When the hold of Christian hope—its hold of the present realities of our Christian standing, and its hold of the exceeding great and precious promises, and its hold of God as the infinite satisfaction for our future—is firm and full and strong, then we can move calmly among the ever-changing, often trying, scenes of our mortal life. With the good hope of the heavenly Canaan, we can deal wisely with the wearying experiences of our "forty" long wilderness years. It is not, however, very frequently or very forcibly presented in Christian teachings, that Christian hope may and ought to grow *into* something, and that we are responsible for its nourishment and growth *into* something. It may be well therefore—1. To show what a passionate, but unintelligent, and sentimental thing—often utterly unworthy thing—hope is in the young Christian. Its value is not unfairly represented by the expectations of Pliable in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. 2. To show what a thing of mixed value hope is in the middle-aged Christian; often by no means cleared of its sordid and sentimental elements, and indeed often crushed down into silence, by the fierce strain, the wearying care, and the overwhelming disappointments of life. To the middle-aged Christian there is seldom any vision from Delectable Mountains, and Heaven seems "far to go." 3. To show how in days of Christian maturity hope comes out clear, gains its fulness, and anchors the soul in quietness, security, and peace.

Ver. 12. *The Peril of Slothfulness.*—"Be not slothful," R.V. "sluggish." Slow-blooded; showing no enterprise or energy. "Let us then be up and doing." In the religious life there is supreme peril in resting content with anything that has been attained. The *laissez-faire* principle must be stoutly resisted, if any attempt is made to apply it in the Christian life. Therefore the apostle Paul so vigorously describes his own resolve, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." And the living Lord sends His messages to His seven Churches, making His promises only to "him that overcometh," which must mean that he has kept up the fight even to the end.

I. **Under what circumstances is a spirit of slothfulness likely to creep over the professing Christian?**—1. It is a frequent attendant on certain natural dispositions. The man who is

slow-moving, sluggish, listless, in business affairs, is sure to carry his natural disposition into his religion. His life-work is correcting natural disposition. 2. It is associated with conditions of bodily health. There is lowered vitality where there is not active disease; and subtle diseases usually show themselves in languor, and flagging interest in things; and our bodily states affect the spirit in which our religious duties are done. 3. Slothfulness and indifference are often the rebounds from times of strained religious excitement and emotion. It should always be borne in mind that unusual religious emotion cannot be maintained, and the rebound from it is always serious. 4. Slothfulness in religious life may come with unusual business demands. A man may be compelled to give up his Christian work for a time, and then he has no interest in taking it again. 5. Slothfulness is sometimes a result of Christian jealousy. Others seem to be doing the work better than we are, and then we say, "Let them do it," and put ourselves out of the ranks of the workers.

II. **What perils lie in the path of those who give way to slothfulness?** —1. This peril—their own souls cease to grow, because they have no exercise. 2 This peril—temptation and religious disease secure their opportunity. 3. This peril—the final judgment of their Divine Master, who will surely be severe in dealing with those who "came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Slothfulness.—"Slothful"—a word which has quite passed out of common use. It may, however, be only the more suggestive to us for that reason. Sometimes our familiar employment of a word plucks out all vigour and force from its meanings. It is a strong old Saxon word, very little changed. The Saxon form is *slewdth*, from *slaw*, slow; and the idea of the word is tardiness, disinclination to action or labour; sluggishness, as represented by the level river in contrast with the fresh-flowing, hurrying, eddying mountain stream. It may even be dull, as the same word is translated in chap. v. 11: "Ye are dull, or slothful of hearing; take heed lest ye become dull altogether." This slothfulness was the characteristic sin of the civilised and effeminate times of the book of Proverbs. It is the great sin, in respect of religious things, of all highly civilised and luxurious ages and nations, and the great peril of all persons who are not placed under the stern necessity of working with hand or brain for their daily bread. But a more precise idea can be given to this term as it is used in this epistle. Slothfulness is action which has in it no energy; nothing of that essential characteristic of manliness—energy. The precise danger against which we are warned in the text is that of dropping down from the earnestness of our first love, to live a Christian life without energy. Such words as "energy" we know apply directly to success in business life, but it seems strange to apply such a term to Christian life and work. We dwell so often on the submissive, patient, and trustful sides of Christian duty, that we may profitably consider other sides which are, perhaps, too much neglected in religious teachings. If a religious life is to be worth anything at all, it must be a life in earnest. The epistle to the Hebrews we cannot affirm with certainty was written by Paul, but it is certainly Pauline in tone and doctrine; it belongs most closely to Paul's order of thought. It is more rhetorically constructed than any of Paul's known epistles. There is a balancing of sentences, a sense of artistic effect, a choice of language, and a wealth of elaborated illustration which we do not find in Paul's intenser writings; and there is a breaking up of the argument for the sake of introducing hortatory passages, which belongs to the public speaker rather than the logical writer. Paul has, indeed, passages of splendid eloquence; but they are specimens of the natural

eloquence to which an impassioned soul rises, rather than the eloquence which attends speaking gifts and elaborate education. Such an eloquent contrast as that given in the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews between the Mounts Sinai and Sion you feel is the result of study and care. The occasion of writing this epistle is evidently the observation, or the tidings, of flagging and relaxed energy marking the Christian life and work of the disciples, and putting them in peril of final apostasy from the Christian faith. They were caught in the downward current, and, though they discerned it not, Christian teachers knew that the rapids and the fatal falls were near. The cause of such slothfulness was partly the state and tone of society in that age, partly the enervating influence of a divided effort. The disciples could not rise wholly up out of Judaism, but painfully tried to blend Jewish observances with Christian spirituality. The corrective proposed is a worthier estimate of Christ and of Christianity, in contrast with the great Jewish officials and Judaism. Each stage in the contrast is relieved by passages of direct and intense personal application and persuasion. Our chapter is one of these digressions, partly persuasive, partly introductory to a difficult branch of the subject, viz. the deeper meaning of the Old Testament figure of Melchizedek. The writer urges that there ought to be kept up an exceeding interest in Christian growth—growth in intelligence, growth in activity, growth into the very fulness of the Christian manhood. Christians ought to respond to the various influences culturing growth, even as the earth ought to respond to the refreshing rains. What must become of earth that lies barren, or only brings forth thorns and briars, merely receiving all those quickening rains, and never worthily responding? Surely, "it is nigh unto cursing; its end is to be burned." But counsels couched in this reproachful tone tend only to depress; so he speaks brightly and hopefully, as indeed he well may, of the Church as a whole; there was a general desire for growth, and signs of the spirit of energy. But he was afraid of individuals, and of their hindering, repressive influence. He has a word of earnest persuasion for them. "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Show the same diligence. Be not slothful. Share all together in the Church energy, activity, and growth. Worthily follow the examples of those heroic men who, by daily faith that kept alive daily energy, and by daily patience that kept the energy from flagging, have obtained the promises. Remember Abraham, the father of the trustfully patient, and be quite sure that for you also the inspiring promises are pledged in the "immutability of God's counsel."

I. **The sin of slothfulness in the Christian life.**—The word does not mean mere "slowness of movement." That may be a characteristic of the natural disposition; it may belong to the firm, strong, but slow pulse, and may be quite compatible with a true energy. It is opposed to "diligence," so we may say that it is the taking up of a Christian profession weakly, manifesting in the Christian life no earnestness, easily permitting the claims it makes on us to be relaxed or denied for the sake of our self-indulgences. We know the sin and its ruinous consequences well enough in business life. We have often been wearied out with the kid-gloved young man, who counts business a bore, dawdles about, puts no soul into anything, drags through his day's work, and tries the patience of everybody that has to do with him. Can it possibly be that he represents the way in which, by our Christian slothfulness, we are wearying God and all good men? It must be a sin to live a listless, easyful Christian life: a sin like that of the soldier who hides among the stuff, or feigns a sickness, when the trumpet-blast is summoning all heroic

souls to the front. It must be sin in view of those all-absorbing claims of King Jesus under which we come. He demands body, soul, and spirit, life, time, powers, all. No man can be truly His without being wholly His. It must be sin in view of the consecration vow which we have made, yielding ourselves up as living sacrifices, like the whole burnt-offering, given over, body, and fat, and skin, and blood, and life, for a whole consuming on the Lord's altar. It must be sin in view of that great work in the world which has yet to be done ere Christ shall "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." It must be the sin of the most shameful ingratitude when we remember how He bought us with His precious blood, giving Himself unto the death for us. Think, I beseech you, what manner of persons we ought to be who profess to live with the "love of Christ constraining us." And yet what a frequent sin it is! Mark is slothful, shrinks from fatiguing, dangerous journeys in the cause of Christ; as Matthew Henry so quaintly puts it, "He wanted to go home and see his mother." Demas fails, even in the hour of the apostle's need: he could not put any energy into his Christian life, through the love of this present world. Even Timothy must be reproved for yielding to his retiring, studious disposition, and shrinking back from the active features of ministerial duty. And with withering severities the angel of the Churches pleads with the Laodiceans, "Thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . I would thou wert cold or hot." The stability, the usefulness, the joy, and the ultimate triumph of the Christian life absolutely depend on our taking it up with energy. It is miserable to think of Christian people that, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, they shall all escape safe to land. What noble soul will care to drift into the harbour of God like that? Let us be in earnest, and win an "abundant entrance." As we pass round over the bar, let every flag be flying, every man be at his post; a battered hull, but sound; rent but mended canvas filling with the heavenward breeze, and round the crowded harbour the thousand white-robed shouting our glad welcome, and saying,—

> "Come in, come in; eternal glory thou shalt win."

That is the way to go to heaven and God from an earnest Christian life. A little hut, built of half-burnt logs and boards, was raised amid the smouldering fire-ruins of Chicago, the first sign of the restoration of that desolated city, and on the front was placed this inscription:—

> "WILLIAM D. KERFOOT;
> All gone except wife, children, and energy."

With energy all could be retrieved. With energy a noble Christian life can be lived. Work for Christ is worth doing "with both hands earnestly." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "Do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." "Curse ye, Meroz, saith the Lord; for they came not unto the help of the Lord against the mighty." Beware of this subtle, seductive, ruinous Christian sin of slothfulness!

II. **The temptations to the sin of Christian slothfulness in modern life.** —Certainly there is no temptation to slothfulness in modern business life. Intensity, haste, keenness, over-grasping, are the modern business sins. But this business life of ours in many ways brings temptation to a weak Christian living. Observe how it tends to exhaust energy, expending all the gathered stores of physical and mental strength, and leaving none to be given to Christian uses. What sort of men are you when the day's work is done? It can be put in a few words: fit only for the social dinner-table and the easy-chair. All else but actual business hours must be devoted to recruiting strength for the coming business hours. Christ and His claims are simply crowded out. Sounding almost unheard in every office and warehouse and shop are words of Christ's with

which He fain would still the fevers, and calm the hurrying waves, of modern life. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Then, too, it brings wealth, and the enervating influence of luxury. Precisely the sin of old Sodom, old Jerusalem, and old Tyre, against which a prophet's voice is ever needed. "Pride, fulness of bread, and idleness" were in them and their daughters, telling fatally upon the national energy. We know how our very food affects us, and we only care to rest. Once at home we can find plentiful excuse for shrinking from Christian worship or work. Other things besides business are seriously telling on the energy of religious life. I do but suggest them to your thought, that you may ponder over them seriously. To what an alarming extent personal Christian effort is excused by an arrangement for money payment; as if cold cash could ever do in the world for Christ what living souls can! The extravagant pursuit of mere pleasure, and interest in the excitingly sensational, and weakly sentimental, in literature. Intelligent Christian evenings are out of fashion, and our houses are flooded with tale-books, until we can get our children to read nothing that is solid and instructive. And then in other departments of life we have the open enthronement of intellect as the deity for modern worship. Men have not yet dared to call her "Minerva" or "Athene," and claim for her a temple and an altar; but the goddess of wisdom is fast pushing Jehovah, the God of righteousness and love, out of His claim to men's thoughts. Now can you seriously weigh the influence of all these things on Christian energy, on religious life? Can you see how these things account for the religious easyfulness that is all around us—an easyfulness that makes all Christian work drag heavily? Can you, by the help of these things, explain the pleasant way in which you are being borne along to heaven, as if in some delightful gondola, on a still and flowing stream—your boat fitted up with exquisite taste, pleasant companions around you, delightful music to soothe you into a dreamy half-sleep, rowers to dip their oars in the sparkling waters and relieve you of all the toil, and a strange delusion possessing you that in this way you may sail on, and never know a windy, stormy ocean, and never feel one tossing wave until the boat rounds in to the heavenly landing-stage? Awake, O sleeper! Arise from the death of such delusions! Let Christ give you light; let Christ inspire you to higher things with His constraining love. Christian life is conflict; Christian life is pilgrimage; Christian life is toil. No rowers can ever row for you while you recline on soft pillows of ease. The Christian boat is no fancy-painted gondola. It is a stout fisherman's boat; and there is nothing for thee but thine own hand to the oars, and a life of hard pulling against the down-rushing stream. Christian work demands your help. A heaven that could be any real joy to you is to be won. Your crown is to be gained through a present victory over self and circumstance and sin! "Be not slothful." Too surely all nerveless living induces disease. Slothfulness is a plague-spot; soon it spreads into unbelief, grows into indifference, eats inward until it become apostasy, and at last, reaching the vitals, it becomes spiritual and eternal death. Well indeed may the Son of man say, "I would thou wert cold or hot."

"Who would share Abraham's blessing
Must Abraham's path pursue;
A stranger and a pilgrim,
Like him, must journey through.
The foes must be encountered,
The dangers must be passed;
Only a faithful soldier
Receives the crown at last."

III. The dishonour which Christian slothfulness puts upon those saints and heroes who have gone before us, and who seek to live again in us.—"Them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." We are not

sure that hero-worship, or the inspiration of heroic examples, is as mighty in our day as in some past times. Pride in one's own age was perhaps never carried to such an extreme as it is now. Men can speak lightly and even disdainfully of the grandest men that have ever lived, and we think ourselves quite competent to criticise the greatest productions of human genius. We often notice a failing reverence for *God*; there runs along with it a failing reverence for good and great men, and these are surely bad signs of the times. This age deals more with things than with persons, and it is as an antidote to this tendency that we persist in setting forth the *person* of the Son of God: not first His doctrine, not first His work, but first Himself. True greatness in every age is a response to the influence of sublime human examples. "The real interest of the Scripture books centres about persons, who reproduce and exhibit in their human lives the purposes of the Father of all. . . . The lives of the saints are always in some form a chief part of the spiritual food of every generation. Their experiences are assimilated by us, and enter into our own lives. The pious propagate their piety, the brave man propagates his courage, there is a spiritual descent and inheritance more sure than that of the race" (*Ll. Davies*, "*Gosp. Mod. Life*," p. 173). The power of heroic examples has perhaps never been so forcibly illustrated as in the case of the great French Revolution. Men were, indeed, terribly mistaken in their modes of action, and borne beyond all sobriety in the enthusiasm of a great national hope; but the leaders were for the most part grand men, men of heroic soul, and it is instructive to observe that their heroism was fed by reading Plutarch's *Lives of the Great Romans*. Luther cultured his brave, courageous spirit by constant fellowship with the great Israelite prophets, reading them till their ardour burned in his own breast. But there is also an unsurpassed humbling in the influence of heroic and saintly examples. They will cure us, as nothing else will, of our self-confidence and self-sufficiency. That which is true of the ministers is true of the people. If we find conceit growing, and we are beginning to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, we take down the Life of John Howe, who pressed near to the fountains of God's truth till he felt that he drank right from the fresh spring. Or of Edward Payson, or R. M. McCheyne, men who lived in the secret place of the Most High. Or of Norman McLeod, broad as the world in heavenly, Divine charity, but gentle, humble, simple, playful as a child, and knowing on earth no joy but serving —serving God and his fellow-men. It is one of the characteristics of our religion that it presents to us, and keeps ever before us, a galaxy of heroes, of noble men and women, like a great sky full of various stars, circling about that wondrous light, that central pole-star, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible and the Christian ages do not give us so much a record of achievements as a record of men. And no man can know the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, by any critical estimate of His works; He must be apprehended in His person; He must make the impression of a living man. Think of that roll of heroes given by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews with an eloquence that makes it come to us like the swell of some grand organ-note, pealing forth, until it fills the whole place with its thrilling tones. What is the thing which we especially observe in that great cloud of witnesses? They lived their lives in the world with energy. Their religion was their glory. They were godly "men in earnest." Watch them as they pass in panoramic order before you—Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and David, and Elijah,

and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Daniel. Nay, this is but the beginning of the splendid muster-roll of the godly; add the "glorious company of the apostles," and the "noble army of martyrs," and the foremost men of the Christian ages—Augustine, and Bernard, and Luther, and Calvin, and Latimer, and Cranmer, and Loyola, and Knox, and Baxter, and a host of others. Come down into our own passing years, and add the names of such as have come within our own spheres of thought—Wilberforce, and Martyn, and Lincoln, and Hedley Vicars, and Havelock, and Arnold, and Robertson, and Chalmers, and Guthrie, and many more. Add, still again, those whom we have known and loved, with intensity because with reverence, in personal relationship and friendship. Think of those "holy souls and meekly who the cross of suffering bore." Think of the noble souls who stood well in the front of God's great war—earnest souls whose life-joy was the service they rendered to the Master whom they loved. What a splendid crowd of witnesses! Oh the glorious vision of the saints of God! Sainted fathers, sainted mothers, sainted pastors, sainted heroes. They have inherited the promises, and now they rest. But how? Through "faith," which is but another name for energy—energy seen on another side; and through "patience," which enabled them, amid all their toils and discouragements and failures, to keep up their energy. They live again in us. What dishonour do we put upon such men, then, if our Christian living is faithless and weak, self-indulgent and restless and fretful! How we disgrace our fathers and our grandfathers, our sainted mothers and grandmothers, and all the Christian dead, if we sink down so low as to make our lives a mere response to the questions: "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Brethren, surely this ought not so to be! They live again in us. They were the Church of Christ for their time, and we are for ours. Would to God that in earnest, energetic Christian lives we could be worthy of them! Nay, would to God that we might be worthy of Him whom they and we alike should imitate, who hath called us by His grace unto His kingdom and glory. I know of no promises to cheer the self-indulgent. I know of no high words of hope to speak to those who are at ease in Zion. But there are words of thrilling inspiration for those who will fight and toil. Do you say, "No cross"? Then the King will surely say, "No crown." If you will but take up that cross brightly, cheerfully, lift it on your shoulder, go forth to life with it a brave, earnest man, full of energy for Christ, then He shall speak a "Well done, good and faithful servant," and crown you with the crown of "full, and everlasting, and passionless renown." Be earnest. Be earnest for Christ. Be earnest for holiness. Be earnest for souls. "To him that overcometh" ease, and sloth, and disposition, and pleasure, and the age, and circumstances, winning them all for Christ—"to him," saith the Master, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God . . . and I will write upon him My new name." Would it surprise you to find that name just meant this: the Unslothful—a man earnest unto death?

The Lives of the Saints.—"All saints" are the great cloud of witnesses by whom we find ourselves compassed about when we move backwards in thought through the ages of Church history. To remember those who have gone before us, who have trodden to the end the path we are treading, who have fought in the honourable conflict in which we also are fighters, seems a kind of spiritual

obligation; but it is also one of the best exercises for spiritual training. The crown of all that the Bible has to reveal to us is the life of the Son of God in our flesh. In every age of the Church attention has been paid to the lives of good men. There has been no difference in this respect between Roman Catholics and Protestants. All sects and schools have had their lives of the saints. In the New Testament "the saints" are all the members of the Church, and their sanctity or holiness was regarded as depending not on their personal character, but on their calling. The ecclesiastical use of the word is not precisely the same as this. The saints we are to follow were men of *faith* and of *patience*. By faith they overcame the world; by patience they stood fast under the trials of their conflict. Whatever their opinions may have been, whatever their imperfections and lapses even may have been, men of eminent faith and of eminent patience are witnesses of the best things to us, and worthy leaders in the onward march of humanity. Such men have been the living heart of the Church, the salt of the earth. They have not always been honoured and promoted in their lifetime. The true saints have encountered difficulties which were mountains requiring all their faith to remove; they have undergone tribulations, such as neglect, persecution, contempt, which proved their Divine gift of patience to the uttermost. It is a good thing that we should try to obtain a closer acquaintance with the good Christians who have been in some way nearer to ourselves—with those, for example, of our own race and country, whose circumstances and trials and achievements we may be better able to understand. There is a continuous national life which is enriched by every faithful life that is thrown into it, and the contribution is more valuable when such a life is made the subject of an interesting record. Instances: W. Wilberforce, Ab. Lincoln, Hedley Vicars, Arnold of Rugby, Robertson of Brighton. These are lives that have become public property, by being led in conspicuous stations. But there have been lives of faith and patience known to us individually which never drew the eyes of the public upon them. There is always "the world" to be overcome; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Every example of persevering loyalty to the will of God, and of confidence in the ultimate dominion of that will, is an addition to the blessed company of the saints. In every life there are frequent calls for exercising *patience*. There has been no high Christian virtue, no eminent nobility of life, without patience. Where patience of the true quality has been shown, a patience sustained by hope, a sweet and kindly patience, *there* we ought to recognise the true saintship. The innumerable company of the saints is not a distant body of another nature than ours; it includes those who, whether they be still with us or have gone before us, have displayed the like faith and patience. These beckon to us to follow them in hope. When we commune with ourselves most sincerely, which kind of life seems really the noblest and most to be preferred, that of men who strove and suffered in faith and patience, whether they were happy in this world or not, or that of those who have selfishly steered their course so as always to get the most pleasure, and to avoid the most pain?—*J. Llewellyn Davies, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—20.

Two Immutable Things.—In this epistle there is certainly one of the marked characteristics of the Pauline style. St. Paul was constantly swept aside from the main line of his argument by new thoughts suggested by words he used.

And he does not always come back precisely upon the point where he broke off. The writer here has a train of thought suggested by speaking of those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." He checks himself to make mention of one, the patriarch Abraham. But it is not difficult to trace the continuance of his main argument. He had been urging the Jewish Christians to a persistent steadfastness. But what can he say to strengthen them in making the effort? What can he do better than remind them that God is always on the side of goodness? He has, through all the ages, encouraged His people to persevering and steadfast goodness, by two immutable things—His promise, and the oath that confirms it. Abraham is the example of those who can unite faith in God with patient waiting for Him. To him came the comforting of God's well-assured promise, "Blessing I will bless thee." In the ways of men promises are things to be relied on and acted on. Promises, when confirmed by solemn oath, become *covenants*, and are regarded as absolutely reliable. "In every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation." I. **The ground of Abraham's hope** was God's solemnly confirmed promise to him. II. **The ground of our hope** is God's promise of eternal blessing, eternal life, in Christ Jesus, sealed and confirmed as it is by the Divine assurance and oath. It is evident that the term "oath" is not used in the precise way that is familiar to us. It means generally "a solemnly assured promise." There is therefore good reason for considering Stuart's suggestion, that the two immutable things are: 1. The solemn declaration and assurance that Abraham should have a son, in whom all nations should be blessed. Abraham was encouraged and strengthened to endure all disabilities by that assurance. He lived and suffered and acted in the inspiration and cheer of it. 2. The solemn declaration and assurance, to which God, as it were, pledged His faithfulness, that Abraham's son, David's son, the Messiah, should be man's High Priest for ever, and after the permanent human order of Melchizedek, not the temporary and strictly Jewish order of Aaron. Both these promises are regarded as solemnly confirmed and sealed, because both are written down in the infallible Scriptures, to which God is solemnly pledged,—one in Gen. xxii. 18; the other in Ps. cx. 4.

I. **God's solemn pledges to His people.**—1. They are given in ways that show gracious Divine consideration for human weakness. 2. They are given in ways that make a basis for absolute confidence. 3. They are represented by the extremest ways in which men gain the confidence of their fellow-men. 4. They are written down in the sacred Scriptures so that there may be no disputing about their character and meaning. 5. So written, they become equally Divine pledges to the people of God in each succeeding generation. 6. The honour of God's name is involved in any failure to keep the promises so solemnly made. And God is a jealous God—jealous of the honour of His own name.

II. **A representative instance of God's faithfulness to His pledge.**—The case of Abraham. Specially interesting to Jews, because Abraham was the great race-father. God made a solemn promise to him. But it was one which it seemed, naturally, impossible to fulfil. Nevertheless Abraham accepted the assurance, relied on the promise, and found, what God's people find over and over again, that the impossible with men is possible with God, and that God's word never does "return unto Him void." The promised son was born; in his descendants came the Messiah, and in *Him* all nations of the earth have been and are blessed.

III. **The universally interesting instance of God's faithfulness to His pledge.**—As solemnly as Abraham was assured that all nations should be blessed in him, so solemnly was humanity assured that Messiah should be the Priest of

humanity after the order of Melchizedek. That may seem strange and almost impossible to men who could recognise no priesthood but the limited Levitical. But the pledge is kept. Christ is that priest; and if He seems to supersede the high priest for Jews, it is only because He is God's High Priest for humanity, Jews included.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 13. *Swearing as Asseveration.*—An examination of the references to swearing and oath-taking in a Bible Concordance will impress the familiarity of the custom in Bible times. It was the ancient way of assuring things which has in modern times been replaced by the signing of documents. 1. Swearing may be wrong. What is now commonly understood by swearing is always *wrong*. It is the "taking of God's name in vain," which is the expression of irreverence or unrestrained passion. 2. Swearing may be *duty*. It is when we are called upon seriously to confirm our word with an oath, in a court of justice. 3. Swearing may be the befitting thing. It is when the solemn confirmation of our word is called for. But Jesus taught that in the utterances of His followers there should always be such a ring of truth, that their words should never need such confirmations. Only in condescension to man's weakness can God ever confirm His word with an oath. And He can only swear by Himself, as there is no one greater than He to whom His appeal can be made.

Ver. 15. *The Issue of God's Waiting-time.*—"And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise." However long God may call us to wait for the fulfilment of His promise, the fulfilment comes at last; but when it comes, it may not come to the person who first received the promise, or it may not come in the form which he expected it to take. Abraham himself did not receive the promise in its fulfilment, but his posterity did. Abraham did receive the fulfilment of the promise, if its spiritual significance be apprehended; for the spiritual blessing which *holding the promise* was to him was its really best fulfilment. This gives us two principles which can be applied to our Christian expectations.

I. **Whatever God has literally promised will be actually and literally fulfilled,** however long the fulfilment may seem to tarry, and even if the the waiting-time overpasses any one man's life.

II. **The spiritual blessing which God makes our times of trustful waiting for the fulfilment of His promise to be, are the very best fulfilment of that promise.** In our trustful waiting we now "receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls."

Ver. 17. *The Immutability of God's Counsel impressed upon His People.*—R.V. "Wherein God, being minded to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed with an oath." God's taking oath to confirm His promise was an act of most gracious and pitiful condescension to the weakness of men—condescension indeed to admit for one moment the bare possibility that He might not be true to His word. Such a suspicion might arise in man's frail heart; but it is a marvel of grace that God should recognise it, and so patiently and so graciously arrange for its removal, by taking solemn oath for the confirmation of the promise. As if, for the comforting of man, and as if He were a man with men, He would pledge His very life upon His faithfulness. That marvel of condescending grace is seldom worthily estimated, and our response of absolute and entire trustfulness is seldom worthily made. The unchange-

ableness of God's word and God's plan, the "immutability of God's counsel," needs to be impressed upon us. But when we speak of *change* in relation to God, it is necessary to speak with great care and precision. There never can be change in His plan or purpose, there must be change in His modes of carrying out His purposes, if He is to adapt them to the ever-changing moods and circumstances of His uncertain and ever-changing creatures. But that sort of change we know is quite consistent with the steadfast and unwavering purpose of our human parenthood. Within the human limits, parents are at once unchangeable and changeable. But it is always a most serious endeavour of wise parents to fix the conviction of their faithfulness and unchangeableness on the minds of their children. It is the support of their authority; it is the ground of their claim to full trust. Just so, and in the higher, the infinite sense, God must adequately impress on us the "immutability of His counsel," because on our confidence in it rests our response to His authority, and our trust in Himself.

Vers. 17-19. *The Anchor of Hope.*—One of the saddest things that was ever said about the heathen world is said by the apostle Paul, who wrote of it as *having no hope.* The agnostic literature of our own period is doing what it can to drag Christendom back and down to the same dismal abyss. A grim, hard unbelief seeks to bound our little life for us, and there is no hereafter. We have a foundation in a Divine promise—a hope of eternal life. We have "an assurance of hope unto the end," that is a certainty as opposed to uncertainty, meagreness, and shallowness. This blessed hope is described and illustrated in the text.

I. **It is a "hope set before us."**—That form of expression is to be found again and again in this epistle. It is not uncertain, but devised, planned, and provided for by the God of our love. "Confirmed by an oath." "Set before *us.*" Whom? Those who "flee for refuge." Not for self-confident persons.

II. **It is a "hope sure and stedfast."**—It rests on the promise of God. We need it in the face of the frequent defeats of natural earthly hopes, and the frequent discouragements of our personal experience and service.

III. **It "enters within the veil."**—Thus it is like an anchor that goes into the sea—its proper place. Its security is in heaven, where Christian believers have and hold all their best things. The writer of this epistle never lost sight of the priesthood and the sanctuary. Nothing can twine itself about the person or injure the life of the great High Priest who is "within the veil." We hope in Him, think of Him, and wait—that is our hope.

IV. **The hope illustrated.**—1. *It is an anchor of the soul.* A most apposite and instructive metaphor. The anchor gives steadiness and security. So of our hope that goes down beneath the surface-troubles of life, and grapples with some secret ground of strength and comfort. 2. *The folly of going to sea without an anchor.* Men have impulse, energy, but no hold on the promises of God, no good hope through grace. So, too, unsound anchors and chains are worse than having none. A little profession, a faint hope, is an unsound anchor. 3. *A well-taught, well-disciplined Christian has good hope, and is secure against going on the shoals of doubt, or the hard rocks of despair.* When life is troubled, conscience agitated, and the heart tossed with tempests and conflict, the Christian can hope in God. The shipwreck of faith is well prevented by the strong anchor of hope. There is no perfect calm. We must put our hope in the promise of eternal life, which God has given to us in Christ Jesus. That is our anchorage ground. If, like Bunyan's pilgrim, we "feel the ground," we shall "see the Gate and Him standing by it to receive us."—*Donald Fraser, D.D.*

Ver. 18. *The Immutable Promises of God.*—This is one of the most inspiring

and helpful passages in the New Testament. The key to it is in the *dual* thought presented, and which runs all through the paragraph. God gave to Abraham a *promise* which He confirmed by *oath*. These, His word and His oath, are the two immutable things; they constitute not only a consolation, but a *strong* consolation; we have not only an *anchor*, but an *anchorage*; the word is *sure*, and the oath makes it *steadfast*. This double form of presentation thus pervades the passage. God condescends to human frailty and the weakness of our faith. He gives His word of promise, and then confirms it with an oath; and because He can swear by no greater, swears by Himself. A deeper thought lies here. *Jesus Christ is the living, incarnate oath of God*—His word of promise made flesh, and thus doubly secured to the believer. The word of God is our anchor; but the anchor needs an anchorage; and Jesus, the forerunner, takes the anchor and lodges it within the veil, making it fast to the rock of ages. The introduction of the person of Christ here is to be accounted for on this ground—that He represents God's confirming oath; and hence without Him the promise would lack its confirmation. (Compare Heb. vii. 22, also 2 Cor. i. 18-20.) The theme suggested is *the immutable promises of God.* 1. God has given His *word*, and cannot lie. 2. God has given His *oath*, and cannot perjure Himself. 3. God has given His *Son*, and so has given Himself. Christ incarnates His word of promise and His oath in Himself, and fulfils both. He adds the *yea* of confirmation to God's word. He seals the promise with His own blood. Practical thoughts: 1. The *folly* of unbelief. The land of promise is before us, but we are slack to possess it. All depends on our appropriation. (Compare Josh. i. 3.) Only what we measure off with our own feet do we actually possess and enjoy. 2. The *sin* of unbelief. We virtually make God both a liar and a false swearer by not accepting His promise. We dishonour and disobey so far as we lack faith. 3. The inseparableness of the word written and the word incarnate. He who appropriates or rejects the promises appropriates or rejects Jesus. No man's anchor has an anchorage until he finds Jesus as his Saviour. 4. Faith and hope are close akin (Heb. xi. 1). To believe God's word begets hope. The more confident the faith the more assured the hope. Both reveal their real value, like an anchor, only when subjected to the strain of trial.—*Anon.*

Taking Sanctuary with Christ.—"Fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." There are two sets of associations which will materially help us in the endeavour to understand and to apply this somewhat figurative expression. There are one or two cases mentioned in Old Testament Scriptures in which men whose lives were imperilled fled for personal safety into the tabernacle precincts, and caught hold of the horns of the altar of burnt offering, evidently with the idea that they could not be slain while they held those horns. Adonijah, an elder son of David, made a desperate effort to secure the succession to David's throne. He was thwarted by the promptitude of Solomon and Bathsheba; and then, knowing that he had forfeited his life by his rebellious scheme, "he arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." Solomon graciously accepted this symbolical appeal, and granted him the right of asylum which he thus claimed. Because Adonijah had been successful, Joab, one of the rebellious party, and a much more dangerous man, thought he would try the same plan, and demand the same asylum. He also "took sanctuary." "And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar." But Solomon refused in this case to recognise the right of asylum; and as Joab would not voluntarily come forth from the holy place, he ordered Benaiah to fall

upon him and kill him, even as he clung to the "horns." It is not necessary now to vindicate the wisdom, or the rightness, or the policy of Solomon's different action in these two cases; we only need attend to the fact, that laying hold of the horns of the altar was one of the ancient modes of claiming sanctuary, or protection from the legal consequences of misdeeds. It should, however, be fully understood that no sanctuary was allowed for wilful and determined criminals, though it was always difficult to decide who were to be classed as such. Sanctuary was recognised for those who had done some wrong by haste, or inadvertently, or by accident, or through circumstances that were quite beyond their own control. It was altogether a degradation of the idea of "sanctuary" when, in the middle ages, villains and criminals were shielded from the proper punishment of their crimes. It is interesting to know that the right of sanctuary was enjoyed by various districts and buildings in London. "In times when every man went armed, when feuds were of hourly occurrence in the streets, when the age had not yet learned the true superiority of right over might, and when private revenge too often usurped the functions of justice, it was essential that there should be places whither the homicide might flee, and find refuge and protection until the violence of angry passions had subsided, and there was chance of a fair trial. Whitefriars was once a refuge for all criminals except traitors; but in the fifteenth century it afforded shelter to debtors only. The ancient sanctuary at Westminster is of historical celebrity as the place where Elizabeth Gray, queen of Edward IV., took refuge when Warwick, the kingmaker, marched to London to dethrone her husband, and set Henry VI. on the throne. The precinct of St. Martin le Grand was also a sanctuary. So was the Savoy; and it was the custom of its inhabitants to tar and feather those who ventured to follow their debtors thither." Dr. Turner, the missionary in Polynesia, tells us that, in the Samoan Islands, the manslayer, or the deliberate murderer, flies to the *house* of the chief of the village, or to the house of the chief of another village to which he is related by the father's or the mother's side. In nine cases out of ten he is perfectly safe if he remains there. In such instances the chief delights in the opportunity of showing his importance. The other set of associations likely to help us in understanding the metaphor of the text is that connected with the very familiar Mosaic "cities of refuge." Indeed, that is more likely to have been in the mind of the writer, and to have guided his thought, than the less familiar sanctuary safety of the horns of the altar. Moses was instructed to make an arrangement which would give an unintentional manslayer, in any part of the country, a temporary asylum from the family goël, or avenger of blood. Three cities on each side Jordan were made refuge cities, and the roads giving access to these cities were required to be kept in good repair, so that the man fleeing from the avenger might have no hindrance. A man with the stain of a brother's blood upon him must flee for his life to the nearest city of refuge; or, as our text expresses it, "he must flee for refuge to the hope set before him." With these two sets of associations in our minds, can we find the applications of our text to our own religious conditions? If we are Christians indeed, we have taken sanctuary with Christ; we are in the Christ-sanctuary; we have, as it were, firm hold of the "horns of the altar"; we "have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." The writer is using persuasion to Christian professors.

I. A Christian is one who has had cause to flee.—He has been a sinner, and such a sinner that he has forfeited his life. The law has reached him, "The soul that sinneth it shall

die." We need not speak exaggeratedly about this, or in any unreal, excited, sentimental way. The Christian has not been a murderer, or a thief, or a slanderer, or unclean. He may look at the great commands that affect moral relations, with the rich young ruler, and say as sincerely as he did, "All these have I kept from my youth up." And yet the fact may remain, that relative to the searching spiritual law of God which demands a spiritual perfection of motive as well as of conduct, and the supreme devotion of the whole man to the glory of God, he is found wanting, judged a sinner, guilty before God. He has sinned with his soul; he must die. We can never get that sense of our sin which makes us feel the need of Jesus as our Saviour while our attention is fixed on *acts* of sin. It is not until we come to apprehend what sin really is, not until we see it to be the soul's rebellion against God in order to exalt *itself*, that we see how righteously there hung over us the rebel's doom—the doom of the spiritual and eternal death. Once the avenger of God's outraged honour and claim was aroused, was at our heels, and we had cause to flee. Bunyan pictures Graceless awakened to see himself a sinner, and exposed to the sinner's death. In his hand is the roll, in which he reads. There is the direction which he needs. He has cause to flee; and it reads, "Flee from the wrath to come."

II. **A Christian is one for whom a refuge has been provided.**—It is pictured and anticipated in the old cities of refuge for the manslayer. It is a secure refuge; it is near at hand: the access to it is easy. But the old city was only a materialising of the the spiritual reality. The refuge provided for the soul-sinner is a man, a fellow-man, a Divine Man—altogether competent, for He has gained the full right and the full power to become man's sanctuary. The psalmist had his foreshadowing of the truth which is so plain to us when he said, "I flee unto *Thee* to hide me." An imperilled criminal may find refuge in a house, in a tabernacle, in a city; but an imperilled soul—and remember you once were a *soul*-sinner, that is the supreme fact of the past which demands such anxious attention—cannot find refuge at an altar, in a church, or even in an appointed city of refuge. No sanctuary that you ever heard of is any good at all to you, you soul-sinner. The imperilled soul, after whom the eternal death-avenger is pursuing, can find no refuge save in God—nay, nay, there is something far deeper, far more wonderful than that—only in the God-man, in God come into the soul's actual sphere, to stretch out arms of welcome, and to make precisely adapted defences and securities. That Samoan custom to which allusion has been made suggests the true and spiritual refuge-provision. The man fleeing for his life fled to a man, the strongest, noblest, most powerful man within his reach; and the man, the chief, became his sanctuary: and Christ Himself is our refuge provided.

III. **A Christian is one who has fled to the refuge provided.**—It was much that three cities this side Jordan, and three cities that side, were known throughout the land to be "cities of refuge." But the knowledge never secured any manslayer from the avenger of blood. Only his actual energetic flight over bridge and road, only his breathless hurrying till he could almost leap the last step within the gates of the city, could secure him. He must flee for refuge. It is much that an all-sufficient, almighty, infinitely adapted, and most gracious Saviour-refuge has been provided for us. We may dwell with the utmost satisfaction upon His Divine person, His finished righteousness, His perfect work, His recognised merit, His entrusted power to save, and His satisfying attractiveness; but the meditation, and even the knowledge, never yet saved one soul from the fatal grip of the avenger who executed the eternal death-penalty on soul-sinners. Adonijah would have found no

clemency if he had satisfied himself with *knowing* about the safety gained, and the rights secured, by clutching the horns of the altar. He must flee to the tabernacle, and clutch them; and there must be no possibility of mistaking the fact that he does clutch them. And we cannot be Christians if we only know about Christ our refuge. We must have come into personal relations with Him. We must have fled to Him for refuge. We must have actually taken sanctuary with Christ. We must be behind Him, safe behind Him, so that He shall meet and answer all our foes. The apostle Paul has a famous passage, which is the exulting triumph of the soul that has fled for refuge, that is actually in the sanctuary. It is the song of the soul's safety. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died; yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

IV. **A Christian is one who has found more than he expected in the refuge to which he has fled.**—Here we leave all the earthly symbols of Christ our sanctuary far, far behind. The old city of refuge provided safety—nothing more; or rather nothing more that was unusual. The "horns of the altar" provided safety—nothing more. The middle-age sanctuaries provided safety, and little or nothing more. And if all I could tell you about Christ the soul's sanctuary were that it provided for the soul's safety, but nothing more, I would scarcely care to tell the story—at least, there would be no passion of intense persuasion in the telling. Some people think to take sanctuary with Christ that they may be secure from going to hell. Many want Christ for nothing more than safety from their spiritual peril. Let us begin with that, but do not let us stay with that. Take sanctuary with Christ for shelter from the eternal death-avenger; and if you are true-hearted, you will soon find that taking sanctuary is an altogether more precious, more inclusive, more wonderful thing than you could have imagined. Christ our sanctuary is a provision for present enjoyment, and an inspiration to our hope. All thought of peril passes away in the restful, happy, beautiful life we can live in this sanctuary; and everything in it seems full of reminders of the "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." In Christ our sanctuary we are safe—that is true. In Christ our sanctuary we are being saved—that is yet more precious truth. In Christ our sanctuary we have the pledge of eternal salvation—that is the unspeakably precious truth. We fled for refuge to a Saviour, and we find that we have fled for refuge to gain a hope full of immortality and bliss. Would you be a Christian? Verily you have good cause to flee. A refuge has been provided for you. You must flee to it, or it can be no refuge to you. If you do take sanctuary with Christ, there is safety for you, joy unspeakable for you, a hope laid up in heaven for you.

Ver. 19. *Hope as a Christian Grace.*—Hope is the looking for something to come with an earnest longing and desire. What is it that Christians hope for? Is it not for "fulness of joy" in the presence of God, for the "pleasure" which is at His "right hand for evermore"? There can be no true hope where there is not some faith and some love. If we have no faith, no living interest in the things of another world—no strong feeling of their vast importance—how can we hope for them? And we only hope for that on which we have set our affections; and hope, in its very nature, springs from and implies a love of that which we hope for. Perhaps we do not think enough of hope, as a Christian grace and duty. We strive after a brighter faith and a warmer love, but suffer our hope to be weak and

dim. We do not dwell enough on the glorious things which it is our privilege to hope for. God has given us hope as a help and support to other higher motives.—*W. Walsham How, D.D.*

The Anchor Figure for Christian Hope.—The anchor, in one form or another, was known among the most ancient navigators of whom we have any record; and very early, as was natural, it became a symbol of hope. The Jews were not a maritime people, and they probably borrowed both the anchor, and the symbolic use of it, from their Gentile contemporaries. From the text it appears that the anchor, as a symbol of hope, was well known in the apostolic Church. The early Christians engraved it on rings, sculptured it on monuments, and on the walls of cemeteries and catacombs. Sometimes the symbol was associated with the *fish*, which was regarded as the symbol of Christ Himself. The anchor still holds its place as a sign of hope, and will do so probably to the end of time.

The Soul's Anchor-hold.—Christ is the soul's anchor. He is within the veil. He is there for us—there in such real connection with us as is represented by the relation of the anchor to the vessel. The illustration can only be taken in a general way, suggesting the stability of that in which the anchor holds; the strength of the grip with which it holds; and the real—though not necessarily apparent—safety and restfulness of that for whose sake the anchor holds. The verse is a somewhat difficult one, and the metaphor is more involved than our Western precision of thinking can readily appreciate. *Stuart* gives the meaning so as to put the stress on the quality, soundness, of the anchor. "Which hope we are in possession of, ἔχομεν, and it will prove to us, in our troubles and distresses, what an anchor of sound materials, and one firmly fixed, will be to a ship in a tempest, *i.e.* it will keep us from making 'shipwreck of the faith.' Ἀσφαλῆ means, *that which will not fail, i.e.* like an anchor of good materials, which will not give way. Our Hope enters into the inner sanctuary, where God dwells. The meaning is, that the objects of hope are in heaven. The sentiment then is this: Hold fast the objects of your Christian hope. These will keep you steady in your adherence to the Christian religion, and preserve you, like an anchor, from making shipwreck of your faith." Then the soul's anchor-hold is *its hope*. We have said above that the soul's anchor is *Christ*. Both are true. And perhaps if we could see more than the surface of things, if we could see the depths of things, we might find these two to be really one. When our thoughts circle about ourselves, our anchor seems to be *our hope*, which we put out into the heavenly things, and try to steady ourselves by getting a strong hold. But when we are in worthier and less self-centred moods of thought, we lose satisfactions in *our hope*, in anything that is ours, and see Christ to be our anchor, close fastened to us here amid the seas of time, but actually reaching into, actually there in the heavenly world, gripping tight for us the everlasting rocks, and holding us so firm that no wildest storm of earth can ever shift us from our Christian place.

Ver. 20. *Jesus as our Forerunner.*—"Whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us." The use of the term "forerunner" reminds us at once of John the Baptist, and suggests a comparison or contrast between John as the forerunner of Jesus, and Jesus as the forerunner of His Church. It is necessary to the idea of a forerunner that (1) he announces one coming; (2) that his presence pledges the certainty of his coming; and (3) that he secures all due preparations for the coming. In these senses we may look at the work of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the earthly Messiah. He announced the Coming One. His

presence was the pledge that He was coming, and the assurance that He was coming at once. And his work as forerunner was only completed in his endeavour to secure the necessary moral preparations for the coming. It is manifest that these peculiarities of a forerunner can only be applied to Jesus in modified ways, if He be regarded as the forerunner of the Church, as the Church comes to its spiritual privilege and heritage; and that other ideas must be associated with Christ as forerunner. He does go into the spiritual world to say that His Church is coming, and to pledge His Church's coming, and to prepare for His Church's coming; but we must not miss His peculiarity as forerunner—He is the ground on which the Church has the *right* to come, and the source of the Church's power to come.

The Order of Melchizedek.—In what sense was Christ a priest after the order of Melchizedek? The question may be answered thus: The Aaronic priesthood was typical of Christ, but in two principal respects it failed in representing the great Antitype. It consisted of succeeding generations of mortal men; it consisted of priests not royal. The Holy Ghost, on the other hand, suddenly brings Melchizedek before us in the patriarchal history. A royal priest, with the significant names "King of righteousness" and "King of peace" (Gen. xiv. 18-20), and as suddenly withdraws him. Whence he comes and whither he goes we know not. As a private man he had an unwritten history, like others; but as a royal priest he ever remains, without father, without mother, without origin, *succession*, or end; and *therefore*, as Paul says (Heb. vii. 3), made beforehand of God an exact type of the eternity of the priesthood of Christ (Ps. cx. 4). The prophecy was "Thou shalt be a priest *for ever*," or an eternal priest, "after the order of Melchizedek." The similitude of this type therefore included two things: 1. An everlasting priesthood. 2. The union of the kingly and priestly functions in one person.—*Hodge.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 8. *Burning over the Ground.*—This lad who is setting fire to these briars and thorns is doing the very act which typified the awful state of those apostates whom it was impossible to renew again unto repentance. He finds it difficult to set the thorns on fire, for it is too late in the season. Before the rains came this whole mountain-side was in a blaze. Thorns and briars grow so luxuriantly that they must be burned off always before the plough can operate. The peasants watch for a high wind, and then the fire catches easily, and spreads with great rapidity. It is really a beautiful sort of fireworks, especially seen at night.—*Thomson.*

Virgil on burning the Ground.—This practice of burning over the ground is very ancient in other lands besides this, and as there are neither fences nor habitations in the open country to be injured by fire, there is no danger in it. Virgil says,—

"Long practice has a sure improvement found,
With kindled fires to burn the barren ground,
When the light stubble, to the flames resigned,
Is driven along, and crackles in the wind."
1 *Georgic*

The Uses of burning the Ground.—The poet speculates about the possible ways in which the burning is beneficial; as, whether "the hollow womb of the earth is warmed by it," or some "latent vice is cured," or redundant humours "driven off, or that new breathings" are opened in the chapped earth, or the very reverse. But the Arab peasant would say that two very good reasons not mentioned by the poet were all-sufficient: that it destroyed and removed out of the way of the plough weeds, grass, stubble, and thorn-bushes; and that the ashes of this consumed rubbish was a valuable manure to the land.—*Thomson*, "*Land and Book.*"

Ver. 13. *Three Kinds of Oaths, or Swearing.*—In early times we find no scruples about the employment of the *oath.* As then humanity had to be accustomed to a mutual reverence for truth and fidelity, it was natural that its use should be frequent and its signs

forcible. We may distinguish three kinds: 1. The simple kind, when a private individual would confirm something in a sacred manner by his own spontaneous action. He would call on the name of his God, and the Semitic nations raised the right hand, as if in a challenge, to heaven. Along with the name of God, the person swearing would at the same time designate His other attributes, His power and greatness, or whatever else of the essence of this God appeared to him at the moment of swearing of special significance. One of the shortest and finest of the asseverative phrases is that of the last king of Judah: "As Jahveh lives, who has created for us this soul" (Jer. xxxviii. 16). There is a peculiar Hebrew word which means "to bind oneself by seven [things]." According to this, the person swearing deemed it necessary to call upon seven things as witnesses of his declaration, or as enduring monuments of the truth. It might be seven men whom he invoked, or seven gods, or else he might touch seven sacred objects, or take seven steps to a sacred stone. (This last was customary amongst the ancient Indians in concluding treaties.) Sometimes seven sacrificial animals were presented (Gen. xxi. 27-31). 2. The oath became an adjuration, when it was used to compel another to confess the truth, or observe a command. Then the punishments imprecated from heaven would undoubtedly be always expressed in the strongest language. In the patriarchal times the person who desired to bind another to the strictest truth used to make the latter lay his hand under his own hip, on that part of the body out of which, according to ancient ideas, posterity proceeded. Thus he would refer the latter to the whole of posterity at once, and to its revenge should he break his promise. 3. When the oath was employed in making contracts or alliances, each of the two contracting parties made the other utter aloud the words of the contract which concerned him, these mutual promises being accompanied by similar oaths and imprecations.—*Biblical Things.*

Swearing by laying Hands on the Koran.—The present mode of swearing among the Mahometan Arabs, that live in tents as the patriarchs did, according to *De la Rogue*, is by laying their hands on the Koran. They cause those who swear to wash their hands before they give them the book; they put their left hand underneath, and the right over it. Whether, among the patriarchs, one hand was under and the other upon the thigh is not certain. As the posterity of the patriarchs are described as coming out of the thigh, it has been supposed that this ceremony had some relation to their believing the promise of God, to bless all the nations of the earth by means of One that was to descend from Abraham.—*Harmer.*

Oath "By the life of Pharaoh" (Gen. xlii. 15).—Extraordinary as the kind of oath which Joseph made use of may appear to us, it still continues in the East. *Mr. Hanway* says the most sacred oath among the Persians is "By the king's head"; and among other instances of it we read in the travels of the ambassadors that "there were but sixty horses for ninety-four persons. The *nehemander* (or conductor) swore by the head of the king (which is the greatest oath among the Persians) that he could not possibly find any more." And *Thevenot* says: "His subjects never look upon him but with fear and trembling; and they have such respect for him, and pay so blind an obedience to all his orders, that how unjust soever his commands might be, they perform them, though against the law both of God and nature. Nay, if they sware by the king's head, their oath is more authentic, and of greater credit, than if they swore by all that is most sacred in heaven and upon earth."—*Burder.*

Touching the Altar.—*Patrick* tell us that it was the custom of all nations to touch the altar when they made a solemn oath, calling God to witness the truth of what they said, and to punish them if they did not speak the truth.

Swearing lawfully.—*Cruden* says: That a person swear lawfully, must have a regard 1. First to the *object*; that he swear by the Lord alone; for seeing we deify and make that our god which we swear by, therefore we forsake the true God if we swear by that which is no God (Jer. v. 7). 2. To the *manner*; that he swear in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness (Jer. iv. 2); that he swear not falsely or deceitfully, but that which is agreeable to truth; that he swear not rashly, but upon due consideration of all circumstances; and that he swear nothing but what is agreeable to justice and equity. 3. He must have a regard to the *end*; that God may be glorified, our duty discharged, controversies appeased, our brethren satisfied, or our own or others' innocency cleared.

Ver. 18. *The True Refuge.*—During the rebellion in Ireland in 1798, the rebels had long meditated an attack on the Moravian settlement at Grace Hill, Wexford County. At length they put their threat in execution, and a large body of them marched to the town. When they arrived there, they saw no one in the streets nor in the houses. The brethren had long expected this attack; but true to their Christian profession, they would not have recourse to arms for their defence, but assembled in their chapel, and

in solemn prayer besought Him in whom they trusted to be their shield in the hour of danger. The ruffian band, hitherto breathing nothing but destruction and slaughter, were struck with astonishment at this novel sight. Where they expected an armed hand, they saw it clasped in prayer—where they expected weapon to weapon, and the body armed for the fight, they saw the bended knee and humble head before the altar of the Prince of peace. They heard the prayer for protection; they heard the intended victims asking mercy for their murderers; they heard the song of praise, and the hymn of confidence, in the "sure promise of the Lord." They beheld in silence this little band of Christians; they felt unable to raise their hand against them; and after lingering in the streets which they filled for a night and a day, with one consent they turned and marched away from the place, without having injured an individual or purloined a single loaf of bread. In consequence of this signal mark of protection from heaven, the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages brought their goods, and asked for shelter in Grace Hill, which they called the City of Refuge.

Ver. 19. *The Anchor-symbol in the Catacombs.*—Because the anchor is often the sole hope and resource of the sailor, it came to be called by the ancients "the sacred anchor," and was made the emblem of "hope." By the early Christians it was naturally adopted, sometimes with regard to the stormy ocean of human life, at other times in relation to the persecutions and dangers of the ship of the Church. It is found engraved on rings, and depicted on monuments, and on the walls of cemeteries in the catacombs. The symbols on sepulchral tablets often contain allusions to the name of the deceased. The Chevalier de Rossi states that he has three times found an anchor upon *tituli*, bearing names derived from *spes*, the Latin, or *elpis*, the Greek word for "hope," upon the tablet of a certain ELPIDIVS, and upon two others, in the cemetery of Priscilla, two women, ELPIZVSA and SPES. In some cases above the transverse bar of the anchor stands the letter E, which is probably the abbreviation of the word *elpis*. Further, we find the anchor associated with the *fish*, the symbol of the Saviour. It is clear that the union of the two symbols expresses "hope in Jesus Christ," and is equivalent to the formula so common on Christian tablets, "Spes in Christo," "Spes in Deo," "Spes in Deo Christo." The fact that the transverse bar of an anchor below the ring forms a cross may have helped towards the choice of the anchor as a Christian symbol.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TYPE OF UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Melchizedek.**—Already three times referred to (chaps. v. 6, 10, vi. 20); in each case the order of priesthood which Melchizedek represents, rather than the man himself, is in the writer's mind. Melchizedek is a very vague and indistinct figure. All that is actually known concerning him is found in Gen. xiv. 18-20. He is mentioned in Ps. cx. 4. The writer gives a mystical explanation of these brief references to a priestly *order*, antecedent to, and independent of, the order of Aaron. Notice that Melchizedek is the only priestly figure presented in tradition or history prior to the anointing of Aaron. *Farrar* reminds us that the "Jews attached high honour to the name of Melchizedek, whom they identified with Shem; and Philo had already spoken of Melchizedek as a type of the Logos." The mystical explanation of his priestly order is the advanced truth for which the writer feared that his readers were hardly prepared. **Salem.**—Perhaps another name for Jebus, which was afterwards Jerusalem. Perhaps it is an appellative, rather than the name of a place (see ver. 2). *Farrar* identifies it with the town near Shechem (see Gen. xxxiii. 18; John iii. 23); and this is the view of Jerome. **Priest.**—Gen. xiv. 18. It was common among the ancients for the kings to be priests also, as in the time of the Maccabees; but we look for something unusual in this priesthood of Melchizedek. The suggestion made by Miss Corbaux, in her work on the Rephaim, is worthy of special attention. She thinks that Salem was the central seat of their authority, and that the king who reigned there was the supreme head of their nation, to whom the different tribes were subordinate. If Melchizedek had been a mere local chief, it is difficult to see why the King of Sodom, an Emim prince, and why Abraham, should pay him the deference they did. "But the moment the important fact comes in by way of explanation, supported by sufficient extrinsic evidence,

that the King of Salem was the supreme chief of the entire nation, and the local chiefs of the tribes were his subordinates, the whole transaction recorded in Genesis becomes intelligible, because we understand the mutual relation of all the parties concerned in it." This suggests that Melchizedek was the one high priest of the day, and not one of many priests. **Most high God.**—R.V. "God most high." *El elión*, also a title of God among the Phœnicians. Distinctly the one and only God, specially known to the Hebrews as "Jehovah." A true high priest of the true God. There need be no assumption that the knowledge of the true God was confined to the family of Abraham. **Slaughter.**—Better, smiting, with the sense of defeat. **Blessed him.**—This is significant, as indicating a distinctly priestly act.

Ver. 2. **King of righteousness.**—*βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης.* **King of peace.**—*βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης.* Philo also interprets "King of Salem" as "King of peace." A mystical connection between the two names may be intended, since "righteousness" is the necessary antecedent to "peace." See Isa. xxxii. 17; Eph. ii. 14, 15, 17; Rom. v. 1.

Ver. 3. **Without father, etc.**—These are not stated as actual facts concerning Melchizedek. They are true so far as the narrative of Genesis presents him to us. He is set before us without any genealogy. The writer argues from the silence of Scripture. "The fact that Melchizedek had no recorded father or mother or lineage enhanced his dignity, because the Aaronic priesthood depended exclusively on the power to prove a direct descent from Aaron, which necessitated a most scrupulous care in the preservation of the priestly genealogies." The Arabians say of a man who has by his own efforts procured an exalted place of honour, and who is descended from ignoble parents, *he had no father*—that is, he is not named from his father, does not derive his titles and honours from his father. **Beginning of days.**—Or a fixed and limited period during which to exercise his priesthood. For limitation of Levitical service see Num. iv. 3, 23, 35, 43, 47; and compare Num. viii. 24, 25. **Continually.**—Perpetually. As we have no intimation of its ever having ceased, we assume it is still going on.

We are now prepared for the arguments or illustrations that are to be based on this man's name and history—on what is *not* known about him as well as what is known. The writer treats Scripture in a singular way.

A general sketch of the comparison of the orders may be given, in order to show that the order of Melchizedek's priesthood better represents that of Christ than the Levitical. It should be noticed that Christ's *priesthood* gets illustration from Melchizedek, but Christ's *work as a priest* gets illustration from Aaron. These are the chief points brought out :—

(1) **To show the dignity and superiority of the order of Melchizedek.**
  (*a*) Abraham, though founder of the Jewish people, gave tithes to Melchizedek.
  (*b*) Though Levi was appointed to receive tithes, nevertheless, in the person of Abraham, he virtually paid tithes to Melchizedek.

(2) **Continuing the comparison between the orders.**
  (*a*) The office of Levi was subject to change and death; the office of Melchizedek was permanent and perpetual.
  (*b*) The prophecy of Messiah as belonging to another priesthood indicated the imperfection of the first priesthood.

(3) **Proof that Christ is Priest after the order of Melchizedek.**
  (*a*) He sprang from the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi.
  (*b*) There was a priest promised after the order of Melchizedek.
  (*c*) That promise is only fulfilled in Christ.

(4) **Further extension of the comparisons.**
  (*a*) Appointment of priests was *without* an oath, and *with* an oath.
  (*b*) Priests of Levi were *many*; Melchizedek was *one* priest.
  (*c*) The sacrifices of Levi were *many*, the sacrifice of Christ was *one*.
  (*d*) Christ is a heavenly, spiritual Priest; Levites were only earthly, ceremonial priests.

Christ could not be an earthly priest, seeing that God had already appointed such. He must be a priest after a new order. So the writer keeps close to his point, *the uniqueness of Christ*. He belongs to his own plane.

Ver. 4. **How great.**—Lit. "of what exalted rank." Jesus had shown great reverence for Abraham. **Spoils.**—Lit. "the top part of a heap of grain." Then firstfruits. "As offerings were made to their gods, by the Greeks, from spoils taken in war, *ἀκροθίνια* came at last to signify, in the Greek language, any kind of spoils from which an offering for the gods was taken.

Ver. 5. **Take tithes.**—See Num. xviii. 28-30; Deut. xiv. 22, 27-29. Tithe-giving was a recognition of superior dignity. **Out of the loins.**—A Hebrew figure (Gen. xxxv. 11): descendants from Abraham.

Ver. 6. **Descent.**—R.V. "genealogy"; margin, "pedigree." **Received.**—R.V. "hath taken." *δεδεκάτωκε* is Hellenistic; found only in the New Testament and the LXX. **Blessed.**—The act of a superior.

Ver. 7. **Less.**—Simply inferior in rank or office. Lit. "Inferiority is blessed by superiority."

Ver. 8. **That die.**—Not natural death; whose term of ministry ends. The writer has in mind the limitation of the Levitical priestly office, as a sign of its inferiority. **There.**—In the Scripture narrative of Melchizedek. **Liveth.**—No mention being made of his priesthood ending, it is taken as continuing. The writer is raising an argument to prove the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood.

Ver. 9. **May so say.**—Or, "If I may be allowed the expression." The apology indicates a fear that what he was about to say would seem far-fetched and exaggerated; and it is a kind of argument that Western minds are very imperfectly able to appreciate. Note that Isaac was not born until fourteen years after the incident of the tithe-paying. The writer's suggestion must be taken as popular and rhetorical, not as logical or scientific. **Payed tithes.**—The whole race, according to Eastern ideas, may be spoken of as paying tithes, representatively, in Abraham, its head; and Levi is included in the race. "The descendants of Abraham cannot but occupy a lower position in presence of one who appears as Abraham's superior." Only "in a certain sense" was Levi then potentially existent. The argument depends on patriarchal and tribal notions and sentiments.

Ver. 11.—Here begins the argument of the next nine verses. **Perfection.**—A difficult word; the full meaning of everything that could be required of a human priesthood. "Power of perfectionment, capacity to achieve the end in view." This was not to be attained through the Levitical priesthood. Some say the term means "accomplishment"; others "sanctification"; others "consummate happiness"; others "moral rectitude." Compare chap. ix. 9-14; x. 1, 2-4; 3, 14. The point of the writer is, that it could not meet the entire circle of human need. It could neither spiritually purify their worshippers, nor free them from the conscience-burden of their sins, nor from their apprehension of eternal punishment. There was, therefore, manifest room for another priesthood after another order.

Ver. 12. **Being changed.**—Better, "being transferred"; a mild and delicate term is purposely chosen, *μετατίθημι*. "It is a characteristic of the writer to be thus careful not to shock the prejudices of his readers more than was inevitable. His whole style of argument, though no less effective than that of St. Paul in his own sphere, is more conciliatory, more deferential, less vehemently iconoclastic. This relation to St. Paul is like that of Melancthon to Luther" (*Farrar*). **Also of the law.**—From a ceremonial to a spiritual range. With the ceremonial alone had the Levitical priest to deal. This change of the law is not sufficiently recognised. It is easy to go astray if we attempt to explain the work of Christ by the formal terms of the Mosaic law. Christ is the fulfilment of its spiritual suggestions and meanings.

Ver. 14. **Out of Juda.**—Whatever may be the difficulties of our Lord's genealogies, as given in Matthew and Luke, the fact is clear that He belonged to Judah, not Levi. This is mentioned as one instance of change in the law.

Ver. 15. **More evident.**—Because there is a distinct prophecy and promise of another priest. **Ariseth.**—Is to arise.

Ver. 16. **Carnal.**—Fleshly, in the range of the outward, the material. Not here "fleshly" in its bad sense, but simply "human." **Power of an endless life.**—*Stuart* renders *ἐντολῆς σαρκικῆς* as *precceptum caducum*, an obligation of a temporary, perishable nature; and *ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου*, indissoluble life, or perpetuity. The word *ἀκαταλύτος* is not elsewhere found in the New Testament. Based on the assumption that the priesthood of Melchizedek was without limitations of time.

Ver. 18. **Disannulling.**—Setting aside from its active place and work, as that which has had its day, and is no longer efficient. It had to be superseded. A stronger word is now used than that in ver. 12. **Weakness, etc.**—See following verse. Sufficient in relation to man's spiritual needs. The Jews recognised imperfection in the Mosaic system, as they expected perfection only when Messiah should have appeared.

Ver. 20. **Not without an oath.**—Sign of an immediate call. Compare the Levitical priests, who came into office by simple right of descent. See the allusion to Ps. cx. 4.

Ver. 22. **Better testament.**—*διαθήκη* should have been translated *covenant*. Heb. *Berîth*. Of "testaments" the Hebrews knew nothing.

Ver. 24. **Continueth ever.**—A firm assertion of the present living priesthood of Christ. **Unchangeable.**—R.V. margin, "hath a priesthood that doth not pass to another." Vulgate, *sempiternum*. *Stuart*, "without succession." *Moulton*, "Since His life is indissoluble, none can trespass on His right and invade His priesthood."

Ver. 25. **Save.**—To be understood here as embracing the various services to men that are represented in the work of the high priest. **Uttermost.**—Or "consummate end." Completely deal with even their highest, most spiritual needs. Judaism could not "save to the uttermost," because its range was confined to ceremonial offences. **Make intercession.**—Lit. to interpose on their behalf who employ him as their High Priest.

Ver. 26. **Became us.**—Was necessary for us, who are conscious of these higher, spiritual needs. That which is precisely "befitting" may be spoken of as necessary. **Holy.—Internal.**

Harmless.—External. One who *does* no evil. **Undefiled.**—This is the opposite to the "unclean" of Judaism. Free from ceremonial charge. **Separate from sinners.**—Diverse from them; unlike them; having no sort of fellowship with them. **Made higher than the heavens.**—Exalted above the heavens. Compare chap. i. 3. For this idea of Christ's exaltation in acknowledgment of the perfect fulfilment of His mission, see Phil. ii. 9; Col. i. 8; Heb. ii. 9, viii. 1; Rev. v. 12; Matt. xxv. 31.

Ver. 27. **Daily.**—The high priest officiated every day, as well as on the Day of Atonement (Heb. vi. 19-22; Num. xxviii. 3, 4). **His own sins.**—See the order of ceremonies on the Day of Atonement. **Offered up Himself.**—Surrendered Himself in life and death obedience; this was the one sacrifice.

Ver. 28. **Infirmity.**—Here moral infirmity, which involved the need of their offering sacrifices for themselves. **Since the law.**—And therefore a later and fuller manifestation of the will of God. **Consecrated.**—As High Priest for a perpetual service to sinful men. *Stuart* renders, "the Son, who is for ever exalted to glory." R.V. reads, "a Son perfected for evermore." Whose unchangeable, untransmissible, ever-living priesthood is our ground of hope.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

The Historical and Symbolical Melchizedek.—Only a passing allusion is made to Melchizedek in the book of Genesis. He flashes into view for a brief moment, and then passes back into the darkness. So vague is our knowledge of him that many have doubted whether he is to be regarded as an historical personage, or only a poetical or legendary character.

I. **The Historical Melchizedek.**—For many it settles the question of his historical character that he is mentioned in a Bible book; but the critical-minded are disturbed by the evident legendary character of some parts of the book of Genesis, and find it difficult to decide what is historical and what is not. This much may be said, Melchizedek is as real a person as Abraham. To accept the narrative of the slaughter of the kings involves accepting the paying of tithes to Melchizedek. Recent researches have confirmed the view that from very early times Salem, or Jerusalem, was inhabited, and occupied a central position, and a special sovereignty, in relation to the tribes that dwelt around. If this be so, the sovereign rights of Melchizedek may be fully understood. The word Melchizedek means "king of righteousness," which may mean, or suggest the meanings, "king of morals," "king of religion," which is essentially righteousness; or "righteous king," recognised and named because of his character; or "one who rules in righteousness"; or "one whose rule makes for righteousness." The name at least suggests that he was no mere king of a ceremonial system, but a king of the spiritual things of character, and so a fitting foreshadowing of Him who was "Lord of lambs the lowly, King of saints the holy." "Whence he came, from what parentage, remains untold; nay, even of what place he was king remains uncertain (for Salem may be either Jerusalem or the smaller town of which, in after-times, the ruins were shown to Jerome, not far from the scene of the interview). He appears for a moment, and then vanishes from our view altogether." His name is Semitic, but he dwelt among Canaanitish people. Possibly he was a relic of the older inhabitants, and for this reason held in peculiar reverence. In some respects he may be compared to Balaam. Historically treated, three things claim attention: 1. His *kingship*, which may have been that of a particular town, but, more probably, was a suzerainty over the whole land. That kingship was exercised for righteousness, and therefore Melchizedek was a peacemaker. It is, however, quite possible that he was not an actual reigning king, but the *kingly man* of the age—the standard of goodness, the model of righteousness. If so, we can better understand his being also priest. 2. His *priesthood*. It is true that in early ages the heads of tribes were also priests of the tribe; but it is much

more true that the exceptionally good man always is a priest to his fellows, a ministrant of heavenly blessings to them, and an intercessor with God for them. The best man is always both kingly and priestly. 3. His *religion.* There need be no difficulty about recognising this as the genuine religion of humanity, the worship of the one God according to the principles of His universal revelation to humanity. "His pure and holy faith in the 'Most High God' was doubtless a relic of the anciently universal recognition of the one Creator. . . . God has at no time left Himself without a witness even in lands secluded from the direct privileges of His people." *El* or *Il* was the ancient supreme god of the Semitic races of Babylonia.

II. **The Symbolical Melchizedek.**—If he belonged to the earlier races of Palestine, and was above the average size of the existing inhabitants, vague ideas, and strange legends, might easily gather about him. The people around would know nothing about him, about his father, or about the office he held: they would only feel a vague reverence for the unusual-looking, beneficent, and other-world sort of man who moved to and fro amongst them. He became the symbol of the permanent priest of humanity; who must be—1. Human, yet distinct from humanity. 2. Able to gain power by what he *is* in holy character. 3. Presenting the claims of righteousness wherever he goes. 4. Always the same, in order to stamp righteousness as an unchangeable thing. No more fitting, and no more suggestive, symbol of Christ, man's spiritual and eternal priest, could be wished for.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *The Historical Figure of Melchizedek.*—This passage, which has ofttimes been misunderstood, presents no real difficulties. The last clause, "without descent," is explanatory of the two former. Melchizedek is thus styled "without father and without mother" simply because he was not, as were the Levitical priests, recorded in any genealogy. This is made more plain by the language used in ver. 6: "But he whose descent is not counted from them [*i.e.* the sons of Levi, ver. 5] received tithes," etc. "These words," says Tholuck, "denote him whose genealogy is unknown; while a priest, in the Levitical sense, could not, by any means, dispense with the proof of his descent." Stuart and others differ slightly from the explanation of the phrase "without descent" given above. They take the sense to be, "whose father and mother are not mentioned in Scripture." Kuinoel takes the meaning to be, "who had not a father, a priest, nor a mother the daughter of a priest." The sense given by Tholuck, from whom Kuinoel differs but little, appears to us the most simple. All these authors substantially agree in the meaning they attach to the first two clauses. That the words "without father and without mother" may be used in a modified sense to indicate those whose parentage is either obscure or unknown, is evident from many passages in the Greek and Latin writers. Thus Ion, in Euripides, conceiving himself of mean birth, says, "As I am without mother, and without father, I attend the temple of Apollo." So Philo calls Sarah, of whose mother no mention is made, "without mother." In Latin authors this usage is still more common. Seneca, in his 108th Epistle, writes: "There are two Roman kings, of whom the one has not a father, the other a mother." He then refers to Servius Tullius and Ancus Martius. Of the former king, Livy states that he was born of a female slave, "of no father." Horace speaks of men "sprung from no ancestors" who had risen to great eminence and renown. Even the Rabbins have the same sort of speech.

In the *Bereshith Rabbi*, sect. 18, 18, 2, it is said, "The Gentiles have *no father*," having no Jewish pedigree. The explanation given above is further sustained by the ancient versions and the most eminent commentators. The Syriac Version, peculiarly valuable for its antiquity and fidelity, admirably renders the passage thus: "Whose father and mother are not inscribed among the genealogies." The Arabic, being taken from the Syriac, substantially agrees with it. Chrysostom and Theophylact entertain the same opinion. Suidas thus writes: "He is, therefore, declared to be without descent or genealogy, because he is not of the seed of Abraham, but of Canaanitish origin . . . therefore he is destitute of the honour of a genealogy." "Thus," says Dr. Owen, "was Melchizedek without father and mother, in that the Spirit of God, who so strictly and exactly recorded the genealogies of other patriarchs, etc., speaks nothing to this purpose concerning him." The opinions of better and later critics have already been given; to these two or three more may be added. Dr. Robinson informs us that Melchizedek is styled "without father, without mother," because neither his father nor his mother was found in the Hebrew genealogies. "Being a Canaanite, and not standing in the public genealogical registers, as belonging to the family of Aaron, he was a priest, not by right of sacerdotal descent, but by the grace of God." His priesthood, therefore, is of a higher and more ancient order than that of Aaron. "The context," says Schleusner, "requires us to believe that Melchizedek is called 'without father' by Paul because his father was not inscribed in the genealogies of the Jewish priests." It may, however, appear somewhat to militate against this interpretation that Melchizedek is mentioned immediately after the passage cited above as having "neither beginning of days nor end of life." We may answer this objection in two ways. With Tholuck, we may adopt the language of Chrysostom, and say, "How 'having neither beginning of days nor end of life'? How? as it is not contained in Scripture; this is 'having no beginning,' this is 'having no end.'" "We must," Tholuck goes on to add, "at 'having neither beginning of days nor end of life,' conceive added, 'in history.' These words would then be understood of the Mosaic annals, or of the early chronologies referred to by Josephus." There is another answer. It is this, in the language of Stuart: "'Having neither beginning of days nor end of life'; *i.e.* who, as high priest, has no limited time assigned for the commencement and expiration of his office; for so the following clause leads us to interpret this expression. The Levitical priests were limited in their service (see Num. iv. 3, xxxiii. 35, 43, 47: compare viii. 24, 25). The meaning of the writer then is, that Melchizedek's priesthood was limited to no definite time, *i.e. sacerdos perpetuus*, a priest without limitation of office." The latter explanation strikes us as being the best. Melchizedek appears then, in history, as an enigmatic priest-king. From what race he sprang, where he obtained his knowledge of the true God, what was the nature and authority of his priestly office, we know not. He comes before us as a mysterious being. He disappears we know not when or where. In the dignity and perpetuity of his priesthood, how admirable a type he is of our High Priest—a priest for ever after the order (*i.e.* of an order or rank like that) of Melchizedek.—*Biblical Treasury.*

Ver. 3. *A Successor to Melchizedek.*—Recent discoveries of Oriental archæology have established the strictly historical character of the account of the campaign of Chedorlaomer and his allies against Palestine. The accounts of Melchizedek, king of Salem, which the critics were unanimous in pronouncing to be mythical, have also received an unexpected confirmation from the same source. The new light has come from the decipherment of

the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. "Among the correspondents of the Egyptian Pharaohs, whose letters have been found at Tel-el-Amarna, is a veritable successor of the priest-king Melchizedek. Ebed-Tob, the king of Uru-Salim, or Jerusalem, was indeed a vassal of Egypt; but he was a vassal who boasts that, unlike the other Egyptian governors in Canaan, he did not owe his position to the Egyptian monarch, nor was his royal dignity inherited; it was neither his father nor his mother, but an oracle of the god—'the mighty king'—whom he worshipped, that had conferred it upon him. This god bore the name of Salim, the god of 'peace.' The royal priest, accordingly, who ruled in Uru-Salim, 'the city of Salim,' might be called 'the king of Salim,' with even more truth than 'king of Jerusalem.' Like the descendants of David, whom Isaiah beheld in prophetic vision (vii. 6), he was a 'prince of peace.' The description given of himself by Ebed-Tob, in his letters to the Egyptian monarch, explains the suddenness, as it were, with which Melchizedek is introduced upon the scene. His father is unmentioned. As the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says (vii. 3), he comes before us 'without father, without mother, without descent.' Like Ebed-Tob, it was not from his father or mother that he inherited his royal office—he had been appointed to it by the deity whom he worshipped, and he was king because he was also priest."—*After Sayce.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—10.

The Greatness of Melchizedek.—Not as a man, or as a king, but as the remarkable representative of an order of priesthood antecedent to the Aaronic, independent of the Aaronic, continuous in a line outside of Jewish exclusiveness, and coming into world-prominence once again in the priesthood of the Son of God. "We have long looked upon Abram as the one witness to monotheism among an idolatrous people, and to see him holding a position inferior to this hitherto unknown chieftain is an unexpected difficulty." Abraham was himself a king-priest in his tribe, and yet he at once acknowledged a supremacy in Melchizedek. He did not look on him as one tribal patriarch would look upon another, who stood in a position of equality. Abraham distinctly recognised a superior person, one in a higher standing with the same God whom He served.

I. **The greatness of Melchizedek is seen in his receiving tithes from Abraham.**—It is not that Abraham made certain handsome presents to the supreme king of the country; it is that he "paid tithes," which are distinctly religious dues, the proper claim of the priests. Jewish priests claimed tithes of their brethren by the authority of God; and Abraham must have realised that Melchizedek was priest by Divine authority, or he would never have given him the priest's portion. The argument is, that Abraham's act shows him to have recognised in Melchizedek one greater than himself; but Abraham was a race-father, and by his act represented his race. None of his descendants could be greater than himself, and none of them, therefore, could be greater than Melchizedek. The conclusion to which the writer would lead is this: Jesus is priest of the order of Melchizedek; therefore, if his priesthood is superior to the Aaronic, the priesthood of Jesus must also be superior. Abraham's descendants may be required to pay tithes to the descendant—or, if you will, the continuance—of Melchizedek.

II. **The greatness of Melchizedek is seen in his blessing Abraham.**—The blessing given by a priest is the assurance of the acceptance and approval of God. The blessing of Melchizedek was the Divine recognition of Abraham's prompt and decisive action in the overthrow of the invaders, and recovery of the

spoil. But Abraham would never have cared to receive a blessing from a smaller man, and a man in a lower office than himself. "Without any dispute the less is blessed of the better." The suggestion is, that Christ, as of the order of Melchizedek, wants no blessing from the house of Aaron. The bigoted Jews exaggerated the dignity and authority of the Jewish priests. The truth is, that they needed to seek the blessing of Him who represented the superior order of Melchizedek.

III. **The greatness of Melchizedek as the type of an undying priest.**—It was a distinct stamp of inferiority that the Levitical priests only held office for a fixed term of years. It was not for them an office belonging to their *lives.* Melchizedek's office was continuous with his life. It is suggested that Christ's office is also continuous with His life, and *He lives for ever.* It is not natural life, or future immortality, that is dealt with in ver. 8, but an enduring, unlimited time of priesthood. "So far as the letter of Scripture is concerned, Melchizedek stands in a perpetuity of mystic life." And Christ, having risen from the dead, dieth no more, but "abideth a priest continually."

IV. **The greatness of Melchizedek as receiving tithes from Levi.**—In a representative way Abraham's act included that of his race, and therefore that of Levi. The writer presents this point in a way which would be more impressive on those who made much of genealogies than it is upon *us.* The representative act may be used to impress yet again the independence and superiority of Christ's priesthood.

In conclusion show that Christ's priesthood is—1. For humanity, not for a section of it. 2. That it is spiritual, and concerns men's primary, not merely ceremonial, relations with God. Therefore men need not fear to let formal, Aaronic priesthoods pass away, and satisfy themselves with the great, the true Melchizedek.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—17.

The Two Priestly Orders.—It must be evident to every candid reader of this epistle that its author does not use the older Scriptures as confirmation or proof precisely in the way that we do. He probably follows the method taught in the Rabbinical schools, which laid undue stress upon single, and often subordinate, words. It is necessary to bear in mind that truths are eternally true, but the methods in which they are presented and proved belong to each particular age, and are precisely adapted to each age. We are not obliged to recognise the force of every argument that has ever been used to support a truth. The Divine inspiration works through the mental methods and mental moods of each age, with a precise adaptation to one age, and a general adaptation to all ages. What the student has to do is to put himself into the times when a particular method of proof was used, and so get to feel its precise force. And this may be quite in harmony with his endeavours to find and use the method of proof which may be effective on his own generation. These remarks are important because the proofs from Scripture given in this epistle often become a grave stumbling-block to critical-minded readers. All the offices which the Lord Jesus Christ is represented as filling are interesting to us. Some we can appreciate at once. Some require much and careful thought before we are able to trace their permanent relations and value. And some are difficult to appraise aright, because we have no help from our associations. Such an office is that of priest. We are not in any sense familiar with it. It does not come into the range of ordinary Christian thought, but it was bound up with the religious thought, and the daily life, of the Jews. And this writer addressed Jews, to whom the high

priest was a most familiar figure, and who had thoughts about him that we can hardly realise. In endeavouring to detach the Jewish Christians from their new-found faith in Christ, the bigoted Jews made a strong point of the fact that Jesus could not be a priest, seeing that they all admitted the Aaronic priesthood to be the direct appointment of God. So far from Jesus being in the Aaronic order, He did not even belong to the tribe of Levi, but to a tribe of which nothing had been said concerning priesthood. This was a very fair plea from their outward, national, and limited standpoint. It is indeed so fair a plea that the writer of this epistle feels bound to give it elaborate and careful consideration, meeting this strictly Jewish objection on strictly Jewish lines. Admitting that God did establish the Aaronic order of priesthood, and that it stood, and always had stood, upon the Divine authorisation, he argues—1. That God's having appointed one order does not involve that He never has appointed, and never will appoint, *any other*. In asserting the priesthood of Christ, it is only necessary for him to prove that the same God appointed Him, in His order, as appointed the Aaronic priests in theirs; and consequently that Christ, as priest, equally acts upon Divine authorisation. 2. But he can advance on this, and say, not only *may* God appoint another order of priesthood, but He *has* done so; He *had* done so long before He established the Aaronic order, and entirely independent of it. The order of Melchizedek was no seed out of which the Aaronic order grew; it was a priesthood for men quite distinct from the priesthood for a particular nation—the Jews. Patriarchal priesthood was established by God long ages before the Levitical. It was a universal human priesthood, and out of the range of the limited Mosaic revelation. 3. Then he is able to make a somewhat surprising assertion. The earlier order of Melchizedek was recognised by the later as higher than itself, and the earlier order actually received the representative homage of the later. It received tithes from Abraham. "And so to say, through Abraham, even Levi, who received tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." 4. The appeal is now made to Scripture. God can make a new order; God had made another order; and God has actually promised in the Scripture to raise up a new priest after the older order. 5. That promise, he claims, was fulfilled in the raising up of Jesus, and constituting Him priest, not as the Aaronic, "after the law of a carnal commandment," but as the order of Melchizedek, "after the power of an endless [indissoluble] life." It is important that we should understand the distinctions between the two priestly orders, so that we may recognise the peculiarities of the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The order of Melchizedek had all the permanent essentials of priesthood.—And these are three: 1. The power of *intercession*. Too readily we assume that the essential thing in priesthood is presidency over a religious ceremonial, which includes sacrifice. But this is an accident of priesthood; the essential thing is his acting as medium of communication between God and man—the difference between a "priest" and a "prophet" being that a priest so acts constantly, and the prophet so acts occasionally. In thinking of the Jewish high priest we seldom see the importance of wearing the breastplate, and being the people's mediator. Melchizedek was an intercessor. He stood for Abraham to present to God the tithes of thanksgiving. He stood for God to present to Abraham acceptance and blessing. 2. The power of *character*. Ideally this is absolutely essential to priesthood. It is the secret of acceptance with God, and the secret of influence on men. It is the basis of reverence and trust. It was not guaranteed in Jewish priests, seeing their office was hereditary: it was found in Melchizedek, as indicated in the respect shown him, which Abraham felt, and responded to. 3. The power of *continuity*. A priesthood which is really efficient cannot be thought of as stopped or changed. If there is need for change in it, then there

must be some imperfection in it, or in its adaptations. The priesthood of Melchizedek was never changed while he lived. The ideal priesthood of man, which he represented, God established for ever; He has never changed it: in the line of the absolute priesthood of universal humanity Jesus came.

II. **The order of Aaron had certain temporary characteristics.**—Especially may be noticed its—1. Limitation to a (1) nation, (2) tribe, (3) time. Jewish priests only held office from thirty to sixty years of age. 2. Its hereditary character, which did not involve any direct Divine call to individuals. A man was an Aaronic priest, not because he was singularly fitted for the office, but because his father was a priest. 3. Its sacrificial character. Careful distinction needs to be made between the great and universal *human* ideas of sacrifice, and the small and particular *Jewish* ideas of sacrifice, connected with a local religion, a limited revelation, and an elaborate social and ceremonial system. The priests of the Jewish cult must be distinguished from the priests of humanity. In Judaism the *system* was greater than any *individual.*

III. **The priesthood of Christ represents the permanent, and not the temporary, ideas of priesthood.**—Therefore it is said to be after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron. 1. He is our *Intercessor.* This is the essential side of priestliness. It need not be affirmed that Melchizedek presented no sacrifice, but it should be noticed that no mention is made of any in the narrative (Gen. xiv.), and that the interceding element of his priesthood is the one set forth prominently. 2. His power lies in His *personal character.* "Such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sins." He, on this ground, stands in acceptance with God: "He offered Himself without spot to God." He, on this ground, gains influence on men, who always respond, with their confidence, to ideal goodness. 3. And His relation is a *continuous one.* He has an unchangeable priesthood, in the power of an endless life. What He is to us He is for ever, He is so long as we need Him.

Conclusion.—The cry of human souls, in the sense of their separation from God, is for a priest, an intercessor. That cry can never be stilled by the ministry of any man. It can be quieted, and the soul can be satisfied, with the full, and practical, acceptance of Jesus as actually now, for us, "our great High Priest, passed into the heavens," "ever living to make intercession or us."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 11. *Perfection as Complete Meeting of Requirements.*—Perfection applied to the uncreated, independent Being, God, is an absolute quality. It is the standard. But perfection applied to any one, or anything, in the created sphere, can never be more than a relative thing. It may reach the standard of its particular class or order. An absolutely perfect man is inconceivable. A man perfect, according to the perfection that is possible to humanity, is conceivable. An act of a created human being that is absolutely perfect is inconceivable, but an act judged perfect according to the standard of the class of acts to which it belonged is quite conceivable. And only *such* perfection can be of any real or vital interest to us, because only such perfection is attainable by us. Another idea of perfection is embodied in the word "entire." It is often applied to animals. Given a whole set of organs and capacities as belonging to an animal, if we find all those organs and capacities in any animal, and those organs all in full health, and harmonious proportions, we call that animal "entire." And it is easy to see how the idea can be applied in the Christian life. But in our text the idea of "perfection," though related, is somewhat different. A thing

is "perfect" when it precisely and fully meets what is reasonably required and expected of it. So a man who invents or makes a machine strives to make it "perfect" in the sense of adequately meeting what is expected of it. It is "imperfect" if it leaves any expectation unfulfilled, or only half fulfilled. In this sense of "perfection" the old Mosaic economy of sacrifices, and ceremonies, and formal rules has to be judged. And so judged, the writer is compelled to condemn it as imperfect. Given the reasonable expectations of a particular nation, in a particular set of circumstances, and at a particular time, and the Levitical system may be considered "perfect." But given the requirements of man as man, of man as a moral being, of man as sinful, of man as out of relations with God, of man as deteriorated by his wilfulness—given the requirements of man's conscience and will, and relations with God, and with fellow-men, and then the Levitical system must be condemned; perfection is not that formal, outward way. A spiritual religious system is wanted in order to meet spiritual conditions.

Ver. 16. *The Power of an Endless Life.*—The suggestion is, that the priesthood of Christ is graduated by the wants and measures of the human soul, as the priesthood of the law was not; that the endless life in which He comes matches and measures the endless life in mankind whose fall He is to restore; providing a salvation as strong as their sin, and as long or lasting as the run of their immortality.

I. The power of an endless life in man, what it is, and, as being under sin, requires.—The word translated "power" in the text is the original of our word "dynamic," denoting a certain impetus, momentum, or causative force, which is cumulative, growing stronger and more impelling as it goes. And this is the nature of life or vital force universally—it is a force cumulative as long as it continues. The cumulative powers of vegetable life are only feeble types of that higher, fearfully vaster power, that pertains to the endless life of a soul—that power that, known or unknown, dwells in you and in me. The possible majesty to which any free intelligence of God may grow, in the endless increment of ages, is after all rather hinted than imaged in their merely vegetable grandeur. Mere attention to eternal duration limits thought and apprehension. If we look no further, that is only the eternal continuance of its mediocrity or comparative littleness. Its eternal growth in volume and power is, in that manner, quite lost sight of. The growth of the soul is a merely spiritual growth, indicated by no visible and material form that is expanded by it and with it. As in old age there seems to be an apparent limit to the spiritual powers and faculties, we drop into the impression that these have now passed their climacteric. But the soul outgrows the growth and outlives the vigour of the body, which is not true in trees. In the beginning of the soul's history, it is a mere seed of possibility. But a doom of growth is in it, and the hidden momentum of an endless life is *driving* it on. What a chasm there is between the idiot and the man! One a being unprogressive, a being who is not a power; the other a careering force started on its way to eternity, a principle of might and majesty begun to be unfolded, and to be progressively unfolded for ever. Intelligence, reason, conscience, observation, choice, memory, enthusiasm—all the fires of his inborn eternity are kindling to a glow, and, looking on him as a force immortal, just beginning to reveal the symptoms of what he shall be, we call him man. And yet we have, in the power thus developed, nothing more than a mere hint or initial sign of what is to be the real stature of his personality in the process of his everlasting development. We exist here only in the small, that God may have us in a state of flexibility, and bend or fashion

us, at the best advantage, to the model of His own great life and character. And most of us, therefore, have scarcely a conception of the exceeding weight of glory to be comprehended in our existence. Illustration may be taken from the faculty of memory, imagination, acquisition—from the executive energy of the will, from the benevolent affections, and from all the active powers. What force must be finally developed in what now appears to be the tenuous and fickle impulse, and the merely frictional activity of a human soul! But this expression looks on the soul as a falling power, a bad force, rushing downward into ruinous and final disorder. It was this which made the mighty priesthood of the Lord necessary. By what adequate power, in earth or in heaven, shall man's sin be taken away?

II. **What Christ, in His eternal priesthood, has done; or the fitness and practical necessity of it, as related to the stupendous exigency of our redemption.**—The great impediment which the gospel of Christ encounters in our world is that it is too great a work. It transcends our belief—it wears a look of extravagance. We are beings too insignificant and low to engage any such interest on the part of God, or justify any such expenditure. In the contemplations started on this subject, the purpose is to start some conception of ourselves, in the power of an endless life, that is more adequate. Mere immortality, or everlasting continuance, when it is the continuance only of littleness or mediocrity, does not make a platform or occasion high enough for this great mystery of the gospel. It is only when we see in human souls, taken as germs of power, a future magnitude and majesty transcending all present measures, that we come into any fit conception at all of Christ's mission to the world. This power of endless life, could we lay hold of it, could we only grasp the force there is in it, how true and rational, how magnificently Divine would the great salvation of Christ appear, and in how great dread of ourselves should we hasten to it for refuge! Then it would shock us no more that visibly it is no mere man that has arrived. Were He only a human teacher, reformer, philosopher, coming in our human plane to lecture on our self-improvement as men, in the measures of men, He would even be less credible than now. Nothing meets our want, in fact, but to see the boundaries of nature and time break way to let in a Being and a Power visibly not of this world. Let Him be made a priest for us, and not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Humbled to the flesh and its external conditions, He will only the more certainly even Himself with our want, if He dares to say, "Before Abraham was, I am." The great salvation is a work supernatural transacted in the plane of nature; and what but such a work could restore the broken order of the soul under evil? It incarnates God in the world; and what but some such opening of the senses to God, or of God to the senses, could reinstate Him in minds that have lost the consciousness of Him, and fallen off to live apart? What but this could enter Him again, as a power, into the world's life and history? We are astonished by the revelation of Divine feeling; the expense of the sacrifice wears a look of extravagance. If we are only the dull mediocrities we commonly take ourselves to be, it is quite incredible. But if God, seeing through our possibilities into our real eternities, comprehends in the view all we are to be or become, as powers of endless life, is there not some probability that He discovers a good deal more in us than we do in ourselves, enough to justify all the concern He testifies, all the sacrifice He makes in the passion of His Son? Inasmuch as our understanding has not yet reached our measures, we plainly want a grace which only *faith* can receive. Christ therefore comes not as a problem given to our reason, but as a salvation

offered to our faith. His passion reaches a deeper point in us than we can definitely *think*, and His eternal Spirit is a healing priesthood for us, in the lowest and profoundest depths of our great immortality, those which we have never seen ourselves. He is somehow able to come into the very germ principle of our life, and be a central, regulating, new-creating force in our disordered growth itself. And if we speak of righteousness, it is ours when it is not ours. How can a being unrighteous be established in the sense of righteousness? Logically, or according to the sentence of our speculative reason, it is impossible. And yet, in Christ, we have it! We are consciously in *it*, as we are in *Him*; and all we can say is, that it is the righteousness of God, by faith, unto all, and upon all, them that believe.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

An Indissoluble Life.—The Greek word would be more precisely rendered an "indissoluble" life. There are no conceivable agencies, influences, or forces that can break it up. Let a thing once be moved, and it will go on moving for ever, unless something acts upon it to check it. Let a thing once exist, and it will never cease to exist, unless some outside force acts upon it to destroy it. Let a thing be a whole, it will remain a whole for ever, if no power breaks it up. Thus we are absolutely assured of the continuty and unchangeableness of God, because it is wholly impossible for us to conceive of any being, or force, or combination of forces, that can affect them so as to make any change in Him. It may further be observed that continuity is one of our chief "notes of value." We estimate things in the light of their persistency. They are valuable if they will last unchanged for a long while. The diamond is counted the most valuable of all earthly possessions, not for its appearance, but for its imperishableness. We know of nothing that can destroy it; it outlasts the generations; it can cut its kind, but nothing else can cut it. That note of value is taken to bring home to our minds the infinite value of Christ our Priest and Saviour. He has an "endless," or an "indissoluble," priesthood. It is not possible for us to conceive the conditions of humanity for which that priesthood is not necessary and effective. It is not possible for us to conceive of any forces that can ever so affect that priesthood as to make changes in it which will imperil its efficiency.

An Endless Life.—Life! the dearest and most wonderful thing we know—wonderful in its universality, its diversity, its mystery. Next comes life's crowning wonder, *death*. Life's greatest question is, What is it to be dead? What, in death and after death, becomes of life? The answer of the text is, The human race has the *power of an endless life*. We can, indeed, no more be eternal, as God is, than we can be almighty, or all-present, as God is. What is possible for us is an immortal life in the eternal life of God—to keep in and after death our consciousness, memory, will, and affections—*ourselves*: to find ourselves alive after death, and *alive for evermore*. 1. Without laying undue stress upon it, the mere existence of a world-wide belief in an endless life is, in a world with such a history and such daily experiences as ours, very wonderful. The history of the world is a history of death. And yet men refuse to believe in death! In Greenland and in Greece, in Rome and Egypt, Persia and India, men have persistently refused to believe the testimony of death; and wherever they raised a stone to chronicle a death, on that stone, by word or rude symbol, they recorded their undaunted faith in a life beyond the grave. Here then is a creed old as time, wide as the world, catholic as the race, native to every climate, and common to every religion. 2. Do not men's mental powers point to another life? All but man reach their highest development here. Man dies with the best powers undeveloped. His great actions are only specimens,

earnests of what he could do were not time too niggard of its days. We may see the possible progress by the actual achievement of man. 3. What is God to us—what are we to God? Man is a creature with strong longings for life, and apparently fitted for immortality. God is not playing with human life. He is our Father in heaven, and we are His children. And here is the ground of our faith: Man has a capacity for life; God a desire that we should live. Eternal life is the gift of eternal love.—*J. M. Gibbon.*

Ver. 17. *The Order of Melchizedek.*—The references to Melchizedek are found in Gen. xiv. 18-20; Ps. cx. 4. "Without descent" means without genealogy, such as Levitical priests had. "Without end of life" means that no limit of age attached to his office, as to that of Jewish priests. Observe the application of the argument of this chapter to the fact, that the Jewish religious system was a temporary one, that it had now done its work, and was decaying and passing.

I. **The order of Melchizedek involves superiority to the Levitical order.**—Abraham, the Jewish race-father, paid tithes to Melchizedek. The contrast was so pointed when the writer presented it, because *then* the Jewish system was evidently decaying. The Jews clung desperately to it, but nevertheless it was fast slipping out of their grasp. 1. The order of Melchizedek is antecedent to that of Aaron. 2. The order of Melchizedek is intercessory, not sacrificial. 3. The new priesthood, being spiritual and universal, must of necessity supplant that which is material and local.

II. **The order of Melchizedek involves the direct appointment of God.**—The Jewish priests came into office by regular succession from father to son, and no priest was ever able to claim direct Divine appointment. Both Melchizedek and Christ were specially called by God. Illustrate by the witness of the Divine voice at our Lord's baptism.

III. **The order of Melchizedek involves the perpetuity of priesthood.**—There is no account of Melchizedek's having died—no account of his priesthood's ever closing. And Christ's death was but the beginning of His spiritual and eternal life. "Abideth a priest for ever."

IV. **The order of Melchizedek involves the union of two offices, king and priest.**—"King of righteousness." 1. That—righteousness—is the end and object of his rule. 2. That—righteousness—is the characteristic of the peoples whom he rules. "King of peace"—which of necessity always attends upon the triumph of righteousness. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." They always do. Christ in the eternal temple is our King-priest. King of *righteousness*, which is for sinful humanity the essential condition of *peace*.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18—22.

The Reversion to an Older Order of Priesthood.—Here was a difficulty for the bigoted Jews to explain if they could. When God proposed to call out a new priest, why did He not choose a man out of the house of Aaron, and arrange his priesthood on the Aaronic lines? The only answer that can be given is, that the Aaronic priesthood had worn itself out; its mission had only been temporary, it had now come to its end: it was an effete thing, and therefore an ineffective thing. Illustration may be taken from the king-priests of the Maccabean era, or from the Annas or Caiaphas of our Lord's time. It is manifest that the Priest-saviour of a sinful world could never have come in the order of which such men were representatives. The reversion to the older order is the public declaration of the helpless inferiority of the later.

I. **The inferiority is seen in its temporary character.**—It was a priesthood for a nation, not for the world; for a time, and not for ever—the for ever of the life of humanity. The Jewish was a temporary revelation, a preparation for a fuller revelation that was to come, and be universal and permanent. The temporary is transitional, and there need be no alarm when the time comes for it to pass away. Christianity is no reformed Judaism; it is the return upon the primary principles of God's dealing with humanity. But in one line Judaism prepared the way for it. St. Paul's teaching of the relation of Christianity to the Mosaic system should be noted.

II. **The inferiority is seen in its limited range.**—This is only hinted at here, and further unfolded later on in the epistle. It is suggested in the sentence, "the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." The range of Judaism was outward and ceremonial. It took man's conduct and relations—not his will, heart, motives—into its management, imposed its penalties upon disobedience, and arranged its sacrificial and ceremonial conditions of restoration to privilege. But man wants more than the ordering of his conduct: he wants a power of inward renewal, an object of love who can be to him a supreme inspiration to righteousness.

III. **The inferiority is seen in its imperfect agents.**—Stress is laid on the fact that each priest is not, as an individual, directly called, and set apart for his office by God. There is no precise recognition of ability and fitness—no Divine consecration of each man. Consequently a Jewish priest might be a good man, or he might not. He was a priest because his father was, and not because he himself was a good and priestly man. Their imperfection as persons stands out distinctly in contrast with Melchizedek, who, by direct selection and appointment, was priest of the Most High God; and in contrast with Christ, who in Scripture is declared to be "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," and to whom the Divine call directly came at Jordan: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was an inferior covenant, administered by inferior men. Valuable enough for its time, and for its mission; but its time had passed, and its mission was done. Let it go. The greater High Priest had come, the surety of an altogether better and spiritual covenant. Cease to exaggerate the importance or authority of the Aaronic priesthood. Welcome the new Priest, the Melchizedek of the new era, on whom the most solemn Divine assurance rests—you have read it many a time in the word, you know its full significance now: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 18. *Good Things may become Ineffective.*—We have always to take account of the fact that, while the animal world can repeat itself generation after generation with absolute precision, the moral world never has repeated itself, and never can repeat itself, in two succeeding generations. "One generation passeth, and another, and a differently thinking, and differently circumstanced, generation cometh; but the earth abideth ever." The birds build their nests to-day exactly as the same birds built them in the trees of Paradise. The foxes make their burrowed holes just as they made them of old in the hillsides of Palestine. But man makes his house to-day altogether otherwise than Adam did when he wove tree-branches into a bower outside Eden. Moral man moves forward. He does not think to-morrow as he thought to-day. He wants something more to-morrow than he wanted to-day. And the Divine revelations to the moral being, man, must always be precisely relative to what he is, and thinks, and wants, when the revelation is given. Indeed, a revelation which, in form, can adapt itself to

all the generations of humanity, is inconceivable and impossible in the very nature of things. There are permanences in humanity; moral man has his unchanging essentials, and there is an essential in all Divine revelation which meets the essential and permanent in man, but we are not dwelling upon that feature now. If man is ever changing—moral man, intellectual man, social man—and revelation must of necessity change to adapt itself to the changes, then things that are good, right, adapted, Divine, may come to be practically ineffective, and have to be put up on the shelf of history. Illustration may be taken from the work of the Puritan divines, or the Schoolmen, or the Cambridge Platonists,—most valuable and effective in their day; most ineffective in our day. The world's lumber-room is full of good things that have had their day, and have ceased to be living forces. The stamp of the Divine on the Mosaic economy in no way exempts it from the operation of the ever-working Divine laws, which are superior to any local and particular revelation. Mosaism was a good thing, but the world's progress made it ineffective.

Ver. 19. *Law replaced by Hope.*—Law is an external and authorised direction, which takes the ordering of a man's conduct and relation into its control. Strictly speaking, the range of law—certainly of revealed law—is external: it has nothing to do with thought, or feeling, or will: it is concerned with actions, with conduct. The apostle Paul states this with great plainness and force, when he compares the righteousness which comes by the law, and the righteousness which comes by Christ. "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus . . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Law, as ordering of conduct, has its time and place and work; it belongs to the rudimentary stages of the moral life. It is the proper thing for the child life of individuals, of nations, and of humanity. *Joubert* says the great principle guiding the education of humanity is, "Force till right is ready." Hope is an effective force on thought, feeling, ambition. It is the inward inspiration of effort to win righteousness. Hold something before a man, and you make the man act from himself with the view to the attainment of that which he hopes for. Here is the difference between law and hope. Law takes the man into its control, and makes the man do what it would have him do. Hope makes the man *take himself into his own control*, and bring himself into all obediences and goodnesses. Therefore hope is such an advance upon law, that we may say the Divine anxiety, (and the answering human anxiety) is to get the orderings of law replaced by the inspirations of hope. Christ both elevates and redeems humanity, by bringing in a *hope*. It is a *better* hope, because all the law could offer was the acceptance and reward of obedient *acts*; but this hope offers the acceptance of, and Divine satisfaction in, loyal, loving, obedient *persons*. That which is the law for the individual, the nation, and humanity, is also the law for the Christian experience. The young Christian can only begin with laws and rules for the precise shaping of Christian habits and conduct. If he grows, that law power will pass, and give place to the ennobling and sanctifying inspiration of Christian hope.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23—28.

Our Priestly Saviour.—The main purpose of this epistle is the exaltation of the person, the offices, and the work of the Lord Jesus, by comparing, and in some ways contrasting, Him with the most honoured persons associated with the older history and dispensation—with angels, with the patriarch Abraham, with Moses, with the high priest. The text stands nearly at the height of the comparisons of the *person* and *office*, and introduces the comparison of His *work*.

I. **The nature of Christ's office.**—He is the "living Intercessor." It is anxiously set before us that our Lord actually holds present office. The idea that His work was completed while He was here on earth is only true when it is precisely and carefully stated, and with due qualifications. The work of Christ is both present and past. The past explains the efficiency of the present; the present guarantees the acceptableness of the past. The present work is essentially the same, but not formally, or to outward seeming, the same that He carried through in the past: He is in the office, and does the precise work now for which the earth experience has fitted Him. It is therefore better for us to say of Christ, not "He *has* redeemed," but "He *can* redeem, and *does*." Describe the office of intercessor, as illustrated in Moses, in the Jewish high priest, and in the Scripture figure of the "Angel of the covenant." Observe that the work of our Lord's present office is stated in the passage to be, not *only* mediating for Christians in the supplying of Christian needs, but also an actual present saving of men. "Save to the uttermost all coming to God by Him." Christ is set now in the office of *dispenser* of the salvation that He has won for men. Man, as a moral being, is to be saved, not by a salvation, but by a Saviour, through the agency of a salvation. The familiar words, "Simply to thy cross I cling," are a poetical figure, which, stated in a plain, prosaic way, would be, "Simply to Thyself I cling." In unfolding our Redeemer's particular office as priestly Saviour, show—1. Its sphere. Heaven as the symbol of the spiritual. The souls of men. The presence of the eternal Father. 2. Show its work. Saving, in the large and comprehensive sense of effecting all deliverances from all moral evils, and from all their consequences. 3. And show the ways in which He has won the fitness, and the ability, to be this living Saviour. "Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him." (1) By the faithful execution of a particular work entrusted to Him, He has proved Himself worthy of a higher trust. According to His own principle, embodied in the parables of the "talents" and the "pounds." (2) By the intimacy, variety, and completeness of His human experience, He has become precisely fitted for the sympathetic application of the saving power.

II. **The extent of the power which belongs to Christ's present office.**—"To the uttermost." This expression comprehends—1. Power to meet the precise case of every one. And salvation is not quite the same thing for every man. It must be adapted to individuality. 2. Power to completely satisfy the needs of each one. Here Christ's power is contrasted with that of Jewish high priests, who could not touch soul-sin. The infinite ability of Christ is our encouragement in the committal of our entire saving and sanctifying to Him.

III. **The persons for whom especially the power is exercised.**—Does the expression of ver. 25 mean "everybody"? And if not, what are its suggested limitations? Those who come into the saving power are those—1. Who spiritually turn towards God. There must be some opening of the soul to God. 2. Those who, in thus turning, seek the help of Christ. To these, and under these conditions, He becomes an all-sufficient and almighty Saviour. Or we may

say, that the condition of getting the exercise of this saving power is, that a man fully trusts his case to Christ. But nobody ever does that until he has ceased to feel that he can very well manage it himself. These considerations reaffirm the two essential things in every coming to God through Christ—penitence and faith. Reimpress the important truth, that the intercession of our Divine Lord is founded on His voluntary offering of Himself without spot to God.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 22. *Christ as Surety of a Covenant.—Dr. Moulton's* note on the word "covenant" may be found specially helpful: "This is the first occurrence in this epistle of a very interesting word (διαθήκη), which hereafter will occupy an important place in the argument. Throughout the Greek translation of the Old Testament it is used to represent a Hebrew word which is (more than two hundred times) rightly rendered 'covenant' in our version; and, like the Hebrew word, it is applied both to mutual agreements between man and man, and to 'covenants' or engagements into which God enters in regard to man. In classical writers διαθήκη commonly denotes a "testament"; and hence in the old Latin translation of the Scriptures *testamentum* became the common rendering of the word. As, however, this rendering is very often found where it is impossible to think of such a meaning as *will* (*e.g.* in Ps. lxxxiii. 5, where no one will suppose the psalmist to say that the enemies of God 'have arranged a *testament* against Him'), it is plain that the Latin *testamentum* was used with an extended meaning, answering to the wide application of the Greek word. St. Paul's designation of the Jewish Scriptures as the 'old covenant' (2 Cor. iii. 14) thus became familiarly known as 'the Old Testament.' . . . Here only is Jesus spoken of as a Surety, elsewhere as Mediator (chaps. viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24). As through the Son of man the covenant becomes established, so in Him it remains secure; the words addressed by God to Him as Priest and King contain the pledge of its validity and permanence." Ἔγγυος means sponsor, pledge, surety. In a covenant each party may be represented by some one who will guarantee their good faith. The case is conceivable in which the same person may guarantee the good faith of both parties; and then such a person would stand as a living pledge of the fulfilment of the terms of the covenant *on both sides*. That conceivable thing is actually realised in the case of Jesus Christ, and in relation to the new Christian covenant. He stands for God, and pledges His good faith. He stands for man, and pledges his good faith. And so long as Jesus lives *we* have the assurance that God will keep *His word*; and God has the assurance that we will keep *ours*. Christ pledges us both.

Vers. 23-28. *Uttermost Salvation.*—We are taught here—

I. **The perfection of Christ's priesthood.**—He is lifted above all other priests—1. *By the immortality of His nature* (ver. 24). He only hath immortality. 2. *By the perfection of His character* (ver. 26). Glorious in holiness. 3. *By the efficacy of His sacrifice* (ver. 27). So rich and prevalent that offering of the cross.

II. **The consequent perfection of Christ's saving power** (ver. 25).—Christ is able to save in every way, in all respects, "unto the uttermost," so that every want and need, in all its breadth and depth, is utterly done away. 1. *His salvation extends to the worst.* Such is the greatness of Christ's sympathy and power, that He reaches down to the lowest, and can lift the lowest to heights of purity and glory. 2. *His salvation comprehends all.* In this sense He saves to the uttermost.

Philanthropists usually select some particular class of sinners or sufferers as their sphere of beneficence—one cares for the slave, another for the prisoner, a third for the orphan; but Christ is "the Saviour of all men." There is a Rabbinical legend to the effect that, when the law was given at Sinai, all the yet unborn souls of the Jewish nation were assembled to hear it. Certainly, when Christ died on Calvary, He saw around Him the spirits of all flesh, and bare in His body the iniquities of them all. 3. *His salvation is complete.* "Uttermost" signifies completeness; it forms an antithesis here to ver. 19, where it is stated "the law made nothing perfect." Christ shall fully restore our nature to purity, to beauty, to joy. There is such a thing as being saved from fire, and yet the nerves to be shattered, and the flesh scarred; such a thing as being saved from shipwreck, and yet to stand bleeding and beggared on the shore; such a thing as being saved in the day of battle, and yet to have lost a limb. Not with such a salvation does Christ save His people. 4. *His saving power continues undiminished by lapse of time.* The power of Christ is as fresh and full to-day as it ever was; so it will continue to the latest age. 5. *His salvation confers eternal security and joy.* He ever liveth to continue the fellowship between His saints and God So all-comprehending is the salvation of Jesus Christ, He saves from deepest depths, to ends of the earth, to end of time: He saves thoroughly; He saves with the power of an endless life.

III. **The subjects of Christ's saving grace.**—Them that come unto God by Him, come *penitently*, come *boldly*, come *now*.—*W. L. Watkinson.*

Ver. 24. *No Change in Christ's Priestly Relations conceivable.*—If the relations were material and temporal, change in them would be quite possible, and might indeed reasonably be expected. Those relations are spiritual and eternal, and they are therefore permanent and unchangeable. Or we may say, that the priestly relations of Christ do not concern the merely accidental conditions of men, but the essential and universal conditions; and so the adaptations of His priestly ministry can never pass or change. The thought of the writer may not, however, be so comprehensive and so philosophical as this. The point immediately before him is the limited time in which a Mosaic high priest served his office, and the unlimited time that Christ, as our spiritual High Priest, serves His. This was suggested by the prominent fact concerning Melchizedek, that there was no fixed beginning to his office, and no fixed termination. If an office is put into the hands of a succession of men, it is manifestly entrusted to a variety of men; and many men have many ways. The methods of carrying out the duties of the office must, of necessity, vary. Each man will put his own impress upon it. But if an office could be held by one person throughout all generations, and that one person had the power of precisely adapting his principles and his methods to each generation, he would virtually hold an unchangeable office. And that is precisely what we are to understand concerning Christ. He is the one and only spiritual High Priest of humanity. There was no time, since humanity has existed, in which He was not its High Priest. He was spiritual High Priest when there were formal high priests according to the law. And there will be no time, while humanity exists, in which He will not be High Priest. If we do but grip the idea that He is spiritual High Priest to spiritual humanity—and that alone is humanity—we shall easily see that change in the principles and methods of His priesthood cannot be, for the very simple reason that the conditions and needs of *spiritual* humanity —of the souls which men *are*—never do change, and so there can be no call for any change to meet their new needs.

Ver. 25. *The Eternal Saviour.*—Happily we are not dependent on this or any other single passage of Scripture for our belief in the doctrine that Christ's power to save is practically unlimited. We are not certain that the word rendered "to the uttermost" has more than a temporal significance. Probably it has. But if the text does not positively affirm, it supports and suggests the truth, left beyond all doubt elsewhere, that the power of Christ to save—

I. **Is unconditioned by the character of the case.**—However complicated or aggravated that may be, no fear or doubt need be entertained for a moment. Men may, and they sometimes do, think that their sin is unpardonable, or that their true manhood cannot be restored, that no human or Divine power can raise and renew them. But Scripture and experience alike prove that they are wrong. There is no depth of iniquity to which man can descend from which the power of Christ cannot lift him up. There are no crimes against heaven and earth which the mercy of God in Jesus Christ will not cover. He saves to the uttermost.

II. **Extends through the whole of our human life.**—We may have to change priests or pastors, and we may be troubled by the fact. We have not to change one Saviour for another. The thought is too familiar to affect us, but it is a very precious truth, that all our life through we have to do with an unchanging Lord and Friend. It means—1. That Christ is ours through all the successive periods of our life, each one of which has its own dangers and difficulties, and demands special grace and power. Of Him do we all receive "grace upon grace," one kindness after another, varying according to the stage we have reached, and to the peculiar need of the passing hour (see John i. 16). 2. That in any great sorrow or emergency that may overtake us we are sure to have our Divine Friend to whom we can resort, and on whose sympathy and succour we can rely. 3. That in the great, continuous work of spiritual culture we may count on His help. We are in some serious danger of supposing that there are faults in our character, and blemishes in our behaviour, which are irremovable, and must be accepted as an inevitable detraction from our worth and influence. But by what right do we accept these as permanent and incurable? With an ever-living Saviour, a helpful High Priest, "ever living to make intercession," able to save His people to the uttermost from all their sin and shortcoming, we ought to be striving for and expecting a full deliverance, a complete salvation, through sanctity of spirit and excellency of life. We have no leave to settle down into a complacent tolerance of any evil thing in temper or in spirit, in speech or in conduct.

III. **Will continue through all generations.**—Many systems have had a brief day of power and have passed away. They have had adventitious or spasmodic advantages, and have done great things for a little while. Then testing time has come, and they have waned and disappeared. Jesus Christ has not lost one jot or tittle of His power to save and heal. Where His truth has been corrupted it has been enfeebled, as we can well understand it must be; but where it has been cleansed of its accretions, and has been presented in its purity, it has proved "the power of God unto salvation." This it is proving now. At home and abroad it is found to be the one sovereign power that transforms the base, that uplifts the degraded, that arouses the sluggish, that calls the worldly to the service of God, that makes the selfish to be concerned for the welfare of their kind, that comforts the sorrowful, that cheers the lonely, that gives peace in strife, and hope in death. It shows no signs of age, no symptoms of decay. There is nothing ready to supply its place. Eighteen centuries of physical research and philosophic inquiry have not provided

any substitute for Christian truth. It is Christ alone who can speak to us with authority upon God, upon sin, upon human life, upon the future; it is He alone that can give rest to heavy-laden souls. Christ is proving to be the eternal Saviour to whom mankind in every age can turn with trustful and thankful heart. To whom, if not to Him, shall we go? He only has the words of eternal life on His lips, and the gift of eternal life in His hand. But if we would find we must seek. It is "they who draw near to God through Him" that are saved. We must—1. Gladly and gratefully receive the great truth of God's Fatherhood as taught by Jesus Christ. 2. Confidently approach our heavenly Father through His mediation. 3. Eagerly accept the grace of God unto eternal life for His sake.—*Selected.*

Salvation to the Uttermost.—The writer is dealing with that continuous work of saving which was the ministry entrusted to the old Jewish priests, and is, in the highest senses, the ministry entrusted to our great High Priest. It needs to be well kept in mind, that the old priests did not merely do one great saving work for the people, they stood in constant saving relations with them. Every year, nay, every day, they were executing some saving ministry for them; and the very essence of their saving work consisted in this—they were the mediums through whom any one who wanted to come to God with a petition, or an act of devotion, found access to Him, and acceptance with Him. To express the work of the old priests in the language of this text, "they were able, in limited measures, to save those who came to God through them, seeing that they were the appointed persons for making intercession." When this is clearly seen, the contrast between the limitations of the old priestly ministries, and the perfections of the ministries of Jesus, our great High Priest, comes to view with a singular and surprising force. "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." "Wherefore" is the usual term for introducing the conclusion of an argument. And it is necessary to understand what the writer has been presenting, from which he draws this conclusion. He is writing to professing Christians about themselves. He knows the perils and temptations to which they are exposed, but he has every confidence in the sincerity and earnestness of their Christian life. He wants to help them to enter fully into all their Christian privileges. In this part of his epistle he is trying to show these Christian Jews that Christ, in His sublime spiritual work, as High Priest of the new and spiritual dispensation, must be in every respect superior to the old temporal high priests of the old formal and typical dispensation. In the verses immediately preceding this text the argument is brought to one point. These old Jewish priests were necessarily insufficient, because they could not continue in their office by reason of death. "The vacancies caused in their number by the ravages of death required to be constantly replenished." They cannot be thought of as altogether efficient when they entered on their office. They gained efficiency by practice and experience. But as they could not continue by reason of death, their practised efficiency could only reach a certain point, and then it was broken off. The dying priest could not transmit his efficiency to the new priest who took his office; the new man had to gain his efficiency in precisely the same way, and then to die as soon as he had gained it. But see how this affected the people, who sought the priest's sympathy and help in their "drawing near to God." They would get to know and love the priest; they would find one especially sympathetic and helpful, in dealing with their weaknesses and difficulties. But he would die, and they would feel

quite at sea with the new man, who would surely be of another temperament, and would surely adopt new methods. It would be a long time before they would quite fit to the new man and the new régime. I think it was in the Catholic Cathedral at Arundel that this came home to me with singular power. On one side of the nave there are recesses, partitioned off, with the partitions pierced by small grated windows. These are the confessional chambers, where souls confidentially seek the aid of a priest in securing their access to God, and confirming their relations with Him. Outside each recess is a card, with the name of the priest who could be consulted there. On one of the cards had been put the word "dead"; and I thought of the poor souls who had found him their spiritual helper coming to seek him in vain, and broken-heartedly trying to get another priest to understand and sympathise with them, as their old, and perhaps life-long, friend had done. It brought up vividly the insufficiency of the old priesthood, by reason of its limitations. It helped to the realisation of the infinite and unchangeable efficiency of our great High Priest, who is our Priest in the "power of an endless life." Christ continueth ever, and His priesthood continues with Him. He gains an efficiency of service to us which never breaks off, is never interrupted, and never stops. Of this we may be absolutely assured: we shall never be shifted off to another priest; we shall never be compelled to try and fit ourselves to another. He abideth our Priest continually, here and now, yonder and by-and-by. We need never think of our life under any conditions in which we shall not have Jesus as our Priest. We get full trust in Him, and that trust never will be broken off. See then why the Levitical priesthood, and every other human priesthood, must be considered as far inferior to that of Jesus. "As men in a frail and dying state are constituted priests, the consequence is, that the priesthood is liable to continual change, and must necessarily pass from the hands of one to another, in a short time. Not so in the case of Christ, who, being exalted above the heavens, and constituted High Priest in the temple not made with hands, hath an immutable priesthood, subject to no succession." Christ's endless life involves the continuity of His office, and this involves His ability to save His saved ones to the uttermost. Consider—

I. **Christ's continuous work of saving the saved.**—Scripture does not speak of a man's salvation as a thing completed at a given time, or in any single act. It is a Divine process in souls which has a beginning, but is of no value unless it is continued. Scripture speaks of "full salvation," of salvation in advance, "ready to be revealed." The term "saving" covers all that God does in the spiritual recovery and culture of men. It is true that we are saved. It is more true that we are being saved, that we are put into Christ's power for saving, and that He is now doing that saving work. When is a man saved? When the whole work of grace entrusted to the ministry of the great High Priest is fully wrought out in him. Then, and not till then. It is the hope of our life, it is the inspiration of all high endeavour, that we saved ones *are being saved.* And does not this way of stating truth come close home to us? Is not this just what we feel can alone satisfy us? We cannot be satisfied with that salvation which began our relations with Christ. In our best moments we want to know this—Is He following up His saving work? In a Christmas sermon by George Macdonald, the continued saving work that Jesus has to do in us is suggested in His inimitable way. "It is as if God spoke to each of us according to our need. My son, My daughter, you are growing old and cunning; you must grow a child again, with My Son, this blessed birth-time. You are growing old and selfish; you must become a child. You are growing old

and careful; you must become a child. You are growing old and distrustful; you must become a child. You are growing old, and petty, and weak, and foolish; you must become a child—My child, like the baby there, that strong sunrise of faith, and hope, and love, lying in his mother's arms in the stable." What is that but saying in a poetic way that Christ's continuous work is "saving the saved." In the text, however, the comprehensive word "save" is put into one particular relation, but it is the all-inclusive relation. Christ is saving us by helping us to "come to God," to "draw near to God," to keep in right and close relations with God, and to bring all our ever-varying and ever-multiplied needs and wants to Him. All the saving work will go on, if only we keep constantly "coming boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace." Our Priest keeps up the relations, is our constant medium; and so we go on towards the "full salvation."

II. **The ground of His ability to save the saved.**—It rests upon this, "He ever liveth." He has the power which belongs to an endless and indissoluble life. He is a priest for ever. There can be no question of His power to carry through what He has undertaken. Man's work never can be guaranteed as complete. Death comes to men at all times, and stops their work; and whenever he comes, he compels a man to cry out and say, "My purposes are broken off." The symbol of man's incomplete life undertakings is the broken pillar over the graves in the cemetery. Christ's work can be absolutely guaranteed as complete, for death can never arrest Him, can never pluck His priesthood away, and give it to another. It continues to the very uttermost of human need. It is unchangeable, since it keeps ever in the same all-wise, all-loving, and all-sympathetic hands. The ground of Christ's ability to save the saved is that experience of the needs of the saved which He gained by His own life among men. He *can* be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. It is that trust of the high-priestly office which God has made to Him, as the recognition of His infinite acceptableness and efficiency. Able—His ability is Divinely recognised in His trust. But what we need more especially to see is, that the adequate impression of His ability is made upon our hearts by the assurance that "He ever liveth." If death cannot touch Him, then we know that nothing else can. If death cannot put limits on His priesthood, nothing else can. The ability is unchangeable. He will never be other to us than we have proved Him to be, and He can save us to *our* "uttermost."

III. **The method of His work in saving the saved.**—"To make intercession for them." Sometimes we see that work as what the living Lord Jesus does, by His Spirit, in His people; and then we call it His *sanctifying* work. But here the writer dwells on another method in which the saving work is carried out. He secures the supply of all the need which the saved ones ever recognise, and want to carry to God, seeking its supply. No matter when or where, or for what, the saved one wants to draw near to God, to come to the throne of the heavenly grace, there is his High Priest, ready to take his prayer, to present it perfumed with the ever-acceptable incense of His own merit, and to guarantee him answers of blessing and of peace. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us"; and by that method of helping us He is ever carrying out His work of saving the saved. Our relations with God are never broken; our communications with God, our communications from God, are never stopped, and we are sure they never will be stopped, for our High Priest, our Intercessor, is there, and always will be there.

IV. **The limit of His efficiency in saving the saved.**—"Unto the uttermost." It is not possible even to suggest all the difficulties and anxieties

and distresses into which Christ's people may get; they never get into any which put them beyond the high-priestly power of Christ. We may have proved His power to strange and exceeding limits, but we have never gone beyond Him, and we never shall. He can save His saved ones to the uttermost. Think again of the poor souls that in their thousand-fold distresses go seeking the sympathy and help of some human priest. What a wealth of woe has been poured into the ears of father-confessors through all the long ages! But how often, oh how painfully often, the priest is helpless, agonisingly helpless! The suppliant goes utterly beyond him with his great cry for help. No saved one ever yet got beyond the great High Priest with the cry of his need. He has always been able to save the saved ones to the uttermost. And He always will be: for He ever lives. What He was yesterday, He is to-day, and He will be for ever; and never shall the hour come round when we may not draw near with our burdened hearts, and find Him there—there ready—there as He has ever been: "able to save unto the uttermost all that would draw near unto God, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

A Living Saviour, therefore a Complete Salvation.—The saint learns that salvation must be continuous, that he can no more keep than redeem himself, and that he needs a Saviour, not for once, but for always, not in the first stages of redemption only, but every step of the way—in a word, what we have in the text, One who is "able to save to the uttermost." And this His ability is because "He ever liveth to make intercession." Salvation will be to us what it might be in proportion as we look for it, not to the cross, but to Him who, once crucified, is now living—living for evermore, to continue in heaven the work begun on earth.

I. **The text reveals our Lord as living to save.**—The Atonement does not include the whole work of salvation. As Saviour Christ never rests. He ascended to carry on His work to further developments. 1. Nothing less than this reaches the perfection of grace. 2. Without this His work on earth were unavailing. 3. Only this explains our continued spiritual enrichment.

II. **The method by which our Lord carries on His saving work in heaven is that of ceaseless intercession.**—1. This intercession is for those that come unto God by Him. 2. It secures for them everything they ask. 3. And it includes all possible good.

III. **This intercession enables Him to save to the uttermost.**—1. To the uttermost depth of depravity. 2. To the uttermost limit of time. 3. To the uttermost measure of perfection.—*Charles New.*

Ver. 26. *Christ as Separate from the World.*—With us of to-day it is the commendation of Jesus that He is so profoundly humbled, identified so affectingly with our human state. But the power He had with the men of His time moved in exactly the opposite direction, being the impression He made of His remoteness and separateness from men, when He was, in fact, only a man as they supposed, under all human conditions. The contrast, however, between their position and ours is not so complete as may at first seem to us, for that which makes their impression makes, after all, a good part of ours. The present subject is—The separateness of Jesus from men; the immense power it had, and must ever have, on their feeling and character. Christ was not separated as being at all withdrawn, but only that, in drawing Himself most closely to them, He was felt by them never as being on their level of life and character, but as being parted from them by an immense chasm of distance. His disciples had no definite ideas as to His being a higher nature incarnate. His miracles, and the

expectation of Messiah, may have had something to do with their impressions. But there was nothing that should separate Him specially from mankind as being a more than humanly superlative character.

I. **Notice how the persons most remote and opposite, even they that finally conspired His death, were impressed or affected by Him.**—Spite of their treatment of Him, we can easily see that there is growing up, in their minds, a most peculiar awe of His person. And it appears to be excited more by His manners and doctrine, and a certain indescribable originality and sanctity in both, than by anything else. The public mind became gradually saturated with a kind of awe of His person, as if He might be some higher, finer nature come into the world. It grew until it became a general superstition. The problem with the officials was, not how to arrest any common man, or sinner of mankind, but a superior, mysterious, fearful One, and there wanted, as they imagined, some kind of magic to do it. They took up thus an impression that, if they could suborn one of His followers, it would break the spell of His power, and they could proceed safely. Pilate was profoundly impressed with the sense of something superior, more wise, or holy, or sacred, than he had seen before. The centurion, in presence of the cross, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

II. **Notice how the disciples were impressed or affected by the manner and spirit of Jesus.**—The remarkable thing is, that He took possession of them strangely, even at the very first, and yet they appear to be more and more impressed with the distance between Him and themselves, the longer they know Him, and the more intimate and familiar their acquaintance with Him. Of this St. Peter affords a striking example. This, in part, is their blessing; for, as they are humbled by it, so they are raised by it, feel the birth of new affinities, rise to higher thoughts, and are wakened to a conscious struggle after God.

III. **What is the solution of this profound impression of separateness made by Christ on the world?**—His miracles and the repute of His Messiahship do not wholly account for it. It may be said that He produced this impression artificially, by means of certain scenes and observances designed to widen out the distance between Him and the race. Were the really astounding assumptions put forth by Christ designed as declarations or assertions of a superhuman order in His natural person? Certainly He is challenging, in such utterances, honours and prerogatives that are not human. At the same time, if He had not before separated Himself heaven-wide from men, by His character, and produced, in that manner, a sense of some wonderful mystery in Him, He would have been utterly scouted and hooted out of the world for His preposterous assumptions. Indeed, the minds of His disciples were so much occupied with the impressions they felt, under the realities of His character, that they scarcely attended to the strange assumptions of His words, and did not even seem to have taken their meaning till after His death. The impression of Christ's separation was made, not by scenes, nor by words of assertion, nor by anything designed for that purpose, but it grew out of His life and character—His unworldliness, holiness, purity, truth, love; the dignity of His feeling, the transcendent wisdom and grace of His conduct. He was manifestly one that stood apart from the world in His profoundest human sympathy with it. He rose up out of humanity, or the human level, into Deity and the separate order of uncreated life, by the mere force of His manner and character, and achieved, as man, the sense of a Divine excellence before His personal order as the Son of God was conceived. And so it finally became established in men's feelings,

as it stood in His last prayer, that there was some inexplicable oneness where His inmost life and spirit merged in the Divine and became identical. How great a thing it is that such a Being has come into our world and lived in it! What is meant by holiness, and what especially is its power, or the law of its power? It is the sense of a separated quality in one who lives on a footing of intimacy and oneness with God. It means being drawn apart, or exalted, by being consecrated to God and filled with inspiration from God. This is holiness—the condition of a man when he is separated visibly from the world, and raised above it by a Divine participation. Christianity is a regenerative power upon the world only as it comes into the world in a separated character—as a revelation or sacred importation of holiness. In this lies the efficacy of Christ's mission, that He brings to men what is not in them, what is opposite to them—the separated glory, the holiness of God. We want a salvation which means a grace brought into the world that is not of it. So Christ will not be a popular Saviour. His profound singularity, as a Being superior to sin and to all human conventionalities, would offend men, and drive them quite away. There is no greater mistake, as regards the true manner of impression on the world, than that we impress it by being homogeneous with it. It is not the being popular that makes one a help to religion,—no holy man was ever a truly popular character. There is no just mode of life, no true holiness, or fruit of holy living, if we do not carry the conviction, by our self-denial, our sobriety in the matter of show, and our withholding from all that indicates our being under the world, that we are in a life separated to God. And there is most profound philosophy in this—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate."—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

The Divine Charm of Christ's Character.—"Holy, harmless [guileless, R.V.], undefiled, separate [separated, R.V.] from sinners." 1. The Christ whom the Jews expected was one whose *works* should be great—by no means one in whom there should be a humanly superlative *character*. 2. The separation of Christ from sinners was not one which came out of words of assertion, but one which grew out of His character and His life. 3. We have had among us a Visitor, living out in the moulds of human character, conduct, and feeling the perfections of God. Who, after this, can ever think it a low and common thing (1) to fill these human spheres; (2) walk these ranges of human life; and (3) do these common-place, every-day, human duties?—*After Bushnell.*

Ver. 27. *One Sacrifice suffices.*—"Once for all, when He offered up Himself." That sacrifice suffices for two good reasons: 1. It is the real thing, to which all the pictorial, illustrative, and typical sacrifices pointed. 2. It is so altogether satisfactory, that there cannot possibly ever be any call to have it repeated. Why should it be? The supreme question, in regard to any sacrifice, is this—Is it acceptable to God? Will He make it a basis on which to accept us? If it is acceptable to Him, if He does accept us on the ground of it, what more has to be said? Who has any right to complain? On what ground can any other sacrifice be asked for? And that is precisely what we claim to be the fact concerning the sublime self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, concerning the offering of Himself. God is infinitely satisfied with it: He is willing to accept us on the ground of it. And there is nothing more to be said, and nothing more can be required. God requires no other sacrifice; He has accepted this, and makes no other demand. We cannot possibly require any other sacrifice, for we have gained all the acceptance that we can ever want on

the ground of this. "By one offering" Christ has gained all-sufficient power to save unto the uttermost: "He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 5. *Tithes in the Christian Church.*—The revenue of the Church was increased by tithes or firstfruits. The primitive Church might be expected to have introduced this ordinance of the Jews from the beginning; but it was wholly unknown until the fourth or fifth century. Irenæus, indeed, speaks of firstfruits at an earlier period, but it is a disputed passage, and only relates to the wine and bread of the Eucharist as the firstfruits of Christ. Besides Irenæus, Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Hilary, Augustine, and others, all enjoin the paying of tithes as a duty, and not in imitation of the Jews. These tithes and firstfruits the primitive Christians gave as a free-will offering, and not by constraint of law, of which there appears no indication in the first five centuries. The Council of Maçon, in the year 585, ordered the payment of tithes in the Church, as the restoration of an ancient and venerable custom. This, it will be observed, was merely an ecclesiastical law. No mention is made of any enactment of the State. Charlemagne first required the payment of tithes by statute law, and enforced the duty by severe penalties. That emperor himself paid tithes from his private property and his Saxon possessions. His successors confirmed and completed the system of tithe by law, which was subsequently introduced into England and Sweden. —*L. Coleman.*

Ver. 25. "*He redeemed me!*"—The tears of a slave girl just going to be put up for sale drew the attention of a gentleman as he passed through the auction mart of a Southern slave state. The other slaves of the same group, standing in a line for sale like herself, did not seem to care about it, while each knock of the hammer made her shake. The kind man stopped to ask why she alone wept, and was told that the others were used to such things, and might be glad of a change from the hard, harsh homes they came from, but that she had been brought up with much care by a good owner, and she was terrified to think who might buy her. "Her price?" the stranger asked. He thought a little when he heard the great ransom, but paid it down. Yet no joy came to the poor slave's face when he told her she was free. She had been born a slave, and knew not what freedom meant. Her tears fell fast on the signed parchment, which her deliverer brought to prove it to her. She only looked at him with fear. At last he got ready to go his way, and as he told her what she must do when he was gone, it began to dawn on her what freedom was. With the first breath she said, "I will follow him! I will serve him all my days!" and to every reason against it she only cried, "He redeemed me! He redeemed me! He redeemed me!" When strangers used to visit that master's house, and noticed, as all did, the loving, constant service of the glad-hearted girl, and asked her why she was so eager with unbidden service night by night and day by day, she had but one answer, and she loved to give it—"He redeemed me! He redeemed me! He redeemed me!" "And so," said the servant of Christ, who spent a night on his journey in a Highland glen, and told this story in a meeting where every heart was thrilled, "let it be with you. Serve Jesus as sinners bought back with blood; and when men take notice of the way you serve Him, the joy that is in your looks, the love that is in your tone, the freedom of your service, have one answer to give—'He redeemed me!'"

Intercession.—"A child," saith Ambrose, "that is willing to present his father with a posy goes into the garden, and there gathers some flowers and some weeds together; but coming to his mother, she picks out the weeds, and binds the flowers, and so it is presented to the father." Thus, when we have put up our prayers, Christ comes and picks away the weeds, the *sin* of our prayers, and presents nothing but flowers to His Father, which are a sweet-smelling savour.—*Thomas Watson.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONTRAST OF THE TWO COVENANTS.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES

VIRTUALLY a new topic is dealt with in this chapter. Hitherto the personal characteristics of the high priest have occupied the chief place: from this point to chap. x. 18, the ministration of the high priest receives special attention. The writer first contrasts the two covenants. God, who entered into the old covenant, had promised, in Jeremiah, a new covenant. It would prove to be superior to the old in three respects: 1. Because the law of it would be written on the heart. 2. Because it would be a universal covenant, not limited to any one race. 3. Because it would be a covenant pledging forgiveness of *sins*: and so dealing with what, in every age, is found to be man's deepest need. "The decrepitude of the old covenant, indicated by its being called 'old,' is a sign of its approaching and final evanescence" (ver. 13).

Ver. 1. **The sum.**—κεφάλαιον; better, as R.V., "the chief point"; *Stuart*, "the most important thing"; *Theophylact*, "that I may say the greatest thing, and the most comprehensive." The idea of review, or recapitulation, is not suitable here. The superiority of Christ's person and office lead on to the superiority of Christ's work and sacrifice. The superiority lies in this—the work of Christ is spiritual. So the sacrifice He offered must be a spiritual sacrifice. Three new points are introduced: 1. The nature of Christ's sacrifice. 2. The place where it is offered. 3. Its efficacy to atone for sin. **Who is set.**—R.V. "who sat down"; perhaps with designed contrast. The older priests *stood* before God in His earthly sanctuary. But the contrast between the *places* is more important than between the attitudes. **In the heavens.**—Spiritual temple. "The one is seated on the throne of God in the heavens, while the other only ministers on earth, in a temple reared by the hands of men." Each is on the right side as ministrant, but Christ is in the true temple.

Ver. 2. **Sanctuary.**—The spiritual, heavenly counterpart of the Holy of Holies, in which the ancient high priest specially and alone ministered. Margin, R.V., gives "holy things." The word used for minister, λειτουργός, means public "minister," not merely "servant." **True tabernacle.**—Not as distinct from "false," but in our sense of "real"; "veritable" in contrast with "unsubstantial." The tabernacle in heaven is the "substance"; that on earth is the "accident," the "image," the illustration. "The Alexandrian Jews, as well as the Christian scholars of Alexandria, had adopted from Plato the doctrine of Ideas, which they regarded as Divine and eternal archetypes of which material and earthly things were but the imperfect copies. They regarded the Mosaic tabernacle as a mere sketch, copy, or outline of the Divine Idea or Pattern. The Idea is the perfected Reality of its material shadow" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 3. **Gifts.**—Oblations; firstfruits of grain, vegetables, etc. **Sacrifices.**—Offerings involving the devotion of animal life. "Both were presented to God by the priest, who acted as *internuntius* between Jehovah and the offerer."

Ver. 4. **On earth.**—In the ordinary earthly relations with men. Seeing there were divinely appointed priests for the earthly sphere, Christ could have no place as priest. In the Jewish Temple He was not wanted. Notice how carefully this writer guards the Divine claims of Judaism, while recognising the limitation of its sphere, and the temporary character of its mission.

Ver. 5. **Example and shadow.**—ὑπόδειγμα, image, effigy, copy, resemblance. "A token suggesting, and designed to suggest, the original." σκιά, shadow, slight and imperfect image, sketch. "The shadow has no substance or independent existence, but represents only the outline of a body." "The tabernacle is only a sketch, an outline, a ground pattern, as it were—at the best a representative image—of the heavenly Archetype." The words **of God** are not in the Greek. **Pattern.**—Exod. xxv. 40. The writer seems to have in mind the Jewish tradition, that a heavenly tabernacle was actually presented to the vision of Moses, and this model was to be imitated by him precisely. The passage in Exodus does not require us to assume a visible representation.

Ver. 6. **More excellent.**—In a higher range. Old priests kept in the material range; Christ belongs to the spiritual range. Read the clause, "A ministry more excellent in proportion as He is also." **Better covenant.**—Seen in one thing. Under the old there was law for the *eyes*; under the new there is law for the *heart*.

Ver. 7. **Faultless.**—Not merely "free from defect," but "incomplete," unable fully to meet man's case. The old system was complete enough for its limited sphere and purpose: fault was found with its limitations. **No place have been sought.**—There would have been

no occasion for introducing another. The ground would have been covered. It may be said, Why then did not God make Judaism fully efficient? The answer may be given in the words of St. Paul, "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." The spiritual always has to be prepared for.

Ver. 8. **He saith.**—See Jer. xxxi. 31-34. **I will make.**—Lit. "I will cut"; cutting a covenant was a familiar phrase, referring to the custom of slaying victims at the sealing of a covenant.

Ver. 9. **Not according to.**—But different from; having a different central idea. The proved infirmity of men called for some alteration of the covenant terms. They needed to be dealt with in another way.

Ver. 10. **Covenant, etc.**—This is the term of the *new* covenant; in it God undertook to inspire hearts, and not merely to guide conduct. **Into their mind.**—Deeply infix. This is fulfilled in Christ. His love is the best of all persuasions to righteousness. Contrast "law" and "love" as motive-powers; or obedience rendered from "fear" or from "affection." Notice how fully the writer brings out the *moral* value of the Redeemer's work.

Ver. 11. **Not teach, etc.**—This describes generally the contrast between the time when a difficult *law* covered conduct, and the time when the *love* of Christ constrained. We need not press this beyond the proprieties of the figure. See Isa. liv. 13.

Ver. 13. **A new.**—The writer fixes attention on this word. It involved the former covenant taking its place among things old and done with. If the new has come, and it is manifestly a fuller display of the Divine love and power, then the old is superseded. It is ready to vanish like a shadow. Let it go. **Ready to vanish away.**—Lit. "Now that which is becoming antiquated, and waxing aged, is near obliteration." R.V. "But that which is becoming old, and waxeth aged, is nigh unto vanishing away." "What is very old is near dissolution." Observe that this writer could not have thus expressed himself after the final Roman siege of Jerusalem, which resulted in the sweeping away of the formal Mosaic system.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

The Principal Thing concerning Christ.—"This is the sum" does not mean "this is a brief recapitulation." It means "this is the chief point": "this is the most important thing"; "this is the consideration upon which attention should be most anxiously fixed." It is virtually a new topic that is dealt with here. "The writer has treated of the superiority of Christ's priesthood, in respect to duration and succession. He has shown that Christ was made priest by the solemnity of an oath, while the Levites were not introduced to their office by such a solemnity. The priesthood of the latter was liable to continual interruption and vicissitude, from the frail and dying state of those who were invested with the office of priest; while the perpetuity of Christ's priestly office was never exposed to interruption from causes of this nature. And the Jewish priests were themselves not only peccable, but peccant men, and needed to offer sacrifices on their own account, as well as for the sake of others; while Christ was holy, and perfectly free from all sin, and exalted to a glorious state in which He was placed for ever beyond the reach of it, so that His sacrifice would endure solely to the benefit of sinful men. Now the writer comes to the consideration of the duties themselves: viz. the nature of the sacrifice which Jesus offers; the place where it is offered; the efficacy which it has, to atone for sin; and the difference, in regard to all these points, between the sacrifice offered by Christ, and that which was presented by the Jewish priests. The dignity of an office, and the particular qualifications of the person who is invested with it, are things which in their own nature are subordinate to the *great end* which is to be accomplished by the office itself" (*Moses Stuart*). The passage before us introduces the new subject by reaffirming the essentially *spiritual* range and sphere in which this new, and altogether greater, High Priest works.

I. **The sphere in which this great High Priest works is the spiritual tabernacle.**—Which was but represented and foreshadowed in the Jewish tabernacle. The points presented are—1. This High Priest is such by virtue of

His character, which is a spiritual thing. He is "holy, guileless, undefiled." 2. This High Priest is in heaven, the sphere in which God is and works, the sphere of spiritual interests and relations. 3. This High Priest ministers in "holy things"—that is, spiritual matters. (This is the marginal reading of the word "sanctuary.") Reference, however, may be intended to the spiritual counterpart of the Holy of Holies, which Jesus, having once entered for us, never leaves. If the spiritual is higher than the natural; if it is that which the material pictures; if it is the reality,—then the Jewish Christians need not hesitate to give up the shadow for the true, the spiritual tabernacle, and the spiritual Priest who ministers in it. But just what Christian teachers have found supremely difficult in every age, was found as difficult in the first Christian age: it is to awaken in the minds and hearts of men a fitting sense of the value of the spiritual; to deliver them from the deteriorating slavery of the "material."

II. **The office which the great High Priest holds is a spiritual priesthood.**—It is no question of rivalry with the Aaronic priests. Jesus cannot be compared with them at all. He does not lie in the same plane. There are priests, Divinely appointed, "who serve that which is a copy and shadow of heavenly things." Jesus has nothing to do with firstfruits of grain, oblations of meal or of wine; blood of bulls or goats, ashes of heifers, or sweet-smelling incense. "If He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all." A spiritual priesthood deals with the removal of sin, the effecting of reconciliation, the offering of men themselves to God, the covenant of soul-obedience, the maintenance of communion between God the Spirit and the spirits of men. A spiritual priesthood is the mediacy of spiritual affairs. As a priest Jesus must indeed have somewhat to offer. His offering was Himself. His sacrifice was this—"He offered Himself without spot to God." That is the true sacrifice, which every other sacrifice does but represent. St. Paul says, "Christ . . . hath *given Himself* for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. v. 2).

III. **The ministry in which the great High Priest is engaged is carrying out the conditions pledged in a spiritual covenant.**—He is established as Mediator of a better, because spiritual, covenant, which hath been enacted upon better, because spiritual, promises. "The first covenant only promised external purification, and the civil or ecclesiastical pardon of an offender who complied with the rites which it enjoined; but under the new covenant real pardon of sin by God is to be obtained, with purification and peace of conscience, the hope of eternal life, and union at last with the assembly of the redeemed in a better world." Christ keeps for God all the terms of the new covenant on *His* side, and graciously and efficiently helps *man* to keep all the terms of the new covenant on his side. "Judaism was but a shadow of which Christianity was the substance; Judaism was but a copy of which Christianity was the permanent idea and heavenly archetype; it was but a scaffolding within which the genuine temple had been built; it was (now) but a chrysalis from which the inward winged life had departed" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 2. *The Genuine Tabernacle.*—The word means "genuine," and in this epistle "ideal," "archetypal." It is the antithesis not to what is spurious, but to what is material, secondary, and transient. The Alexandrian Jews, as well as the Christian scholars of Alexandria, had adopted from Plato the doctrine of Ideas, which they regarded as Divine and eternal archetypes of which material and earthly things were but the imperfect copies. They found their chief support for this introduction of Platonic views into the interpretation of the Bible in Exod. xxv. 40, xxvi. 30 (quoted in ver. 5). Accordingly they regarded the Mosaic tabernacle as a mere sketch, copy, or outline of the Divine Idea or

Pattern. The Idea is the perfected Reality of its material shadow. They extended this conception much further :—

> "What if earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to the other like, more than on earth is thought?"

The "genuine tabernacle" is the heavenly Ideal (chap. ix. 24) shown to Moses. To interpret it of "the glorified body of Christ," by a mere verbal comparison of John ii. 19, is to adopt the all-but-universal method of perverting the meaning of Scripture by the artificial elaborations and inferential after-thoughts of a scholastic theology.—*Farrar.*

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Enthroned Servant Christ.*—In these two verses strikingly different representations of our Lord's heavenly state are given. In the one He is regarded as seated "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty." In the other He is regarded as being, notwithstanding that session, a "minister of the sanctuary," performing priestly functions there. The royal repose of Jesus is full of activity for us. Resting, He works; working, He rests. Reigning, He serves; serving, He reigns.

I. **The seated Christ.**—"Has taken His seat." The writer, addressing Hebrews, who were steeped in Rabbinical thought, takes one of their own words, and speaks of God as the "Majesty in the heavens," emphasising the idea of sovereignty, power, illimitable magnificence. "At the right hand" of this throned personal abstraction, "the Majesty," sits the Man Christ Jesus. His manhood is elevated to this supreme dignity. The eternal Word who was with the Father in the beginning, before all the worlds, went back to "the glory which He had with the Father." But the new thing was that there went, too, that human nature which Jesus Christ indissolubly united with Divinity in the mystery of the lowliness of His earthly life. We have a High Priest who, in His manhood, in which He is knit to us, hath taken His seat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. There is a profound sense in which that session of Jesus at the right hand of God proclaims both the localisation of His present corporeal humanity, and the ubiquity of His presence. And what is the deepest meaning of it all? What means that majestic session at "the right hand of the throne"? Before that throne "angels veil their faces." If in action, they stand; if in adoration, they fall before Him. Creatures bow prostrate. Who is He that, claiming and exercising a quality which in a creature is blasphemy and madness, *takes His seat* in that awful Presence? Other words of Scripture represent the same idea in a still more wonderful form when they speak of "the throne of God and of the Lamb," and when He Himself speaks from heaven of Himself as "set down with My Father on His throne." If we translate the symbol into colder words, it means that deep repose which, like the Divine rest after creation, is not for recuperation of exhausted powers, but is the sign of an accomplished purpose and achieved task, a share in the sovereignty of heaven, and the wielding of the energies of Deity—rest, royalty, and power belong now to the Man sitting at the right hand of the throne of God.

II. **The servant Christ.**—"A minister of the sanctuary." The word employed here for "minister," and which I have ventured variously to translate servant, means one who discharges some public official act of service, either to God or man, and it is especially, though by no means exclusively, employed in reference to the service of a ministering priest. The allusion in the second

portion of my text is plainly enough to the ritual of the great Day of Atonement, on which the high priest once a year went into the Holy Place; and there, in the presence of God throned between the cherubim, by the offering of the blood of the sacrifice, made atonement for the sins of the people. Thus says our writer, that throned and sovereign Man who, in token of His accomplished work, and in the participation of Deity, sits hard by the throne of God, is yet ministering at one and the same time within the veil, and presenting the might of His own sacrifice. Put away the metaphor, and we just come to this, a truth which is far too little dwelt upon in this generation, that the work which Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross, all-sufficient and eternal as it was, in the range and duration of its efficacy, is not *all* His work. The past, glorious as it is, needs to be supplemented by the present, no less wonderful and glorious, in which Jesus Christ within the veil, in manners all unknown to us, by His presence there in the power of the sacrifice that He has made, brings down upon men the blessings that flow from that sacrifice. Our salvation is not so secured by the death upon the cross as to make needless the life before the throne. Jesus that died is the Christ that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. In its implication the text suggests to us other ways in which the rest of Christ is full of activity. "I am among you as He that serveth" is true for the heavenly glory of the exalted Lord quite as much as for the lowly humiliation of His life upon earth. And no more really did He stoop to serve when, laying aside His garments, He girded Himself with the towel, and wiped the disciples' feet, than He does to-day when, having resumed the garments of His glorious Divinity, and having seated Himself in His place of authority above us, He comes forth, according to the wonderful condescension of His own parable, to serve His servants who have entered into rest, and those also who still toil. The glorified Christ is a ministering Christ. In us, on us, for us, He works, in all the activities of His exalted repose, as truly and more mightily than He did when here He helped the weaknesses, and healed the sicknesses, and soothed the sorrows, and supplied the wants, and washed the feet, of a handful of poor men. This vision of the ascended Christ is—1. For the past a seal. An ascended Christ forces us to believe in an atoning Christ. 2. For the present a strength. See Christ on the throne, and He interprets, dwindles, and yet ennobles the world and life. 3. For the future a prophecy. *There* is the measure of the possibilities of human nature. Whatever *that* Man is, we may be.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 3. *Gifts and Sacrifices.*—In chap. v. 1 the same distinction is made between "gifts," or oblations, or free-will offerings, or thank-offerings, and sacrifices for sin, which include the various sin- and trespass-offerings, that involved taking the life of some animal. The two words are put together in order that the work of the old priests should not be unduly limited. If it were, their anticipation of the work of Christ would seem to limit His work also. And, in fact, the attention which has been so exclusively given to the bloody sacrifices of Judaism has involved a too exclusive attention to the sacrificial side of our Redeemer's work. Christ also is "ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that He may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." The high priest acted the part of a mediator between God and men; he was to aid men in regard to their spiritual and religious concerns. It is infinitely important that our Lord should, by the offering of Himself as the sacrifice for sin, secure our reconciliation and acceptance with God. But we must beware of keeping our interest too exclusively to that. It is the most serious loss to lose Christ's relations to the *whole*

circle of our religious thought, and feeling, and expression, and relation.

Christ's Spiritual Offering.—"Wherefore it is necessary that this *High Priest* also have somewhat to offer." But His range is the *spiritual.* There is no place for Christ as a priest in the material and earthly spheres. "There are those who offer gifts according to the law." We can understand what gifts Christ can offer for us, if we can see what His own offering was. He offered Himself, in His human body, to God. He did not offer only something He possessed—He offered Himself, as a spiritual being. He offered to God His love, His trust, His obedience, His will, His life—Himself. No matter what was the medium through which the offering was made, that, and nothing less than that, was the offering. It carried with it everything He possessed, but it *was* Himself. And the offering which Christ makes for us as our High Priest is a spiritual offering—it is ourselves. He offers us to God even as He offered Himself—our love, our trust, our obedience, our will, our life; but the offering carries with it all our possessions, all we have, and all we can do. The apostle Paul finds the precise term for the spiritual offering which Christ, as our Priest, presents for us when He says, "I beseech you that ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice.*" Christ offers us to God even as He offered Himself.

Ver. 6. *The Spiritual is Every Way Better.*—"A more excellent ministry." We can hardly wonder that the apostles found it so difficult to lift men into the region of spiritual thoughts, and feelings, and associations, seeing that, in these advanced times, we still find it so supremely difficult to do the same thing. Materialistic conceptions of the redemption work hamper earnest and enlightened Christian teachers to-day, and such men are called vague and mystical when they try to do the same work that the writer of this epistle did. Still the work must be done, whatever may be the personal sacrifice involved in the doing. The spiritual is the real. Christ is a spiritual being; His mission is to spiritual beings; He deals with spiritual matters; He deals with them in spiritual ways; and He works towards spiritual ends. The salvation He provides is a *soul* salvation for men who are souls. And the old salvations of Judaism, and the bodily healings of our Lord's earthly life, are strictly pictorial and illustrative; they are but "figures of the true," and the spiritual is every way the better. Writing of the antipathies of Jesus to the formalising, materialising, and outward teachings of the Pharisees, so mischievous because not only so unspiritual, but so opposed to the spiritual, Dr. A. B. Bruce says: "The spirit of Pharisaism lives on through the ages, ever embodying itself in new forms, and growing like a fungus on every manifestation of the Divine in human life, not excepting evangelic religion itself, which might be supposed to be its natural antithesis. The protest of the Founder of our faith did not slay the evil thing; it only clearly revealed its nature, and made manifest to the whole world that Christianity and it have nothing in common. Therefore the protest needs to be continually renewed." We must demand that our Lord Himself, His life-work on earth, and His continuous work in the heavenlies, shall all be seen in the spiritual light. Getting what illustrative help we may from material things and relations, we must see that He is spiritual. His atonement was a spiritual one, and His intercession is spiritual; and for us the spiritual is better; it bears relation to the spiritual beings that we are.

Vers. 6-13. *Hand Guidance and Heart Guidance.*—The first covenant was not found faultless; therefore place was found for another and a better covenant.

I. The first covenant was the guid-

ance of the hand (ver. 9).—It was very condescending and gracious on the part of God thus to conduct Israel, but such guidance is suggestive of many imperfections. 1. *The guidance of the hand is the guidance of childhood.* Thus the parent leads the child. So the first dispensation dealt with a people in a state of childhood. When I was a child I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things. How often may we be reminded of these words in reading the history of Israel! How often do we feel that they were but children in moral understanding and strength, and that God dealt with them as such! This is the precise argument of the apostle (Gal. iv. 1-5). 2. *The guidance of the hand is the guidance of blindness.* Thus do we lead a blind man. Israel was guided by precepts and ceremonies, "seeing through a glass darkly." How imperfectly they apprehended the spirituality of the law, the real glory of atonement, the highest perfection of character, the future life! And God guided them as a blind man is guided. 3. *The guidance of the hand is the guidance of weakness.* You stretch out the hand to support the old or sick who walk with tottering step. Thus Israel was "without strength." "The law was weak through the flesh," and God by many gracious expedients sought to hold up the ever-fainting, sinking race. This economy was evidently not the best, although it was the best possible for the period, and the fact that Israel on such a large scale lapsed into idolatry and sin proved the weakness and unprofitableness of their carnal dispensation.

II. The second covenant was the guidance of the heart.—1. *It is the guidance of manhood* (ver. 10). The child is controlled by what is external, the man by what is internal and spiritual. So the Christian dispensation makes the mind and affections the grand source of obedience. It puts the love of God and the love of God's law deep into the soul, and trusts everything to this. It speaks to our rational, affectional, immortal nature, and seeks to harmonise that nature with the Divine nature, so that we may instinctively walk in the right path. 2. *The guidance of knowledge* (ver. 11). All shall possess a true spiritual knowledge of God. In this dispensation the Spirit illuminates the soul, and we know the things which are freely given to us of God. 3. *The guidance of power* (ver. 12). It gives that purity which is only another name for power. It pardons sin, cleanses from sin, and by imparting righteousness to the soul enables us to go from strength to strength. The Jews are condemned for failing under the first dispensation, although it has so many limitations and defects, but how much more shall we be condemned if we fail under this best of covenants!—*W. L. Watkinson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—13.

The Spirituality of the New Covenant.—Here is an important fact, which the Jewish Christians are called to face. They boasted of the old covenant. They clung to it tenaciously. They were even tempted by the bigoted party to return to their older form of allegiance to it; and yet their own Scriptures declared that God was dissatisfied with it, and with what had been accomplished by means of it, and had promised to establish with His people a new and better covenant. Already this writer had spoken of the older covenant as "weak, unprofitable, and earthly" (chap. vii. 18). It is a great addition to his argument to be able to add, that Scripture declares God Himself to have been dissatisfied with its working. In support of his position the passage Jer. xxxi. 31-34 is quoted. There is an important difference between the way in which the old system is dealt with in this epistle and in the recognised Pauline epistles. "To St. Paul the contrast

between the law and the gospel was that between the letter and the spirit, between bondage and freedom, between works and faith, between command and promise, between threatening and mercy. All these polemical elements disappear almost entirely from the epistle to the Hebrews, which regards the two dispensations as furnishing a contrast between type and reality. This was the more possible to Apollos (if he was the writer), because he regards Judaism not so much in the light of a law as in the light of a priesthood, and a system of worship." In three respects, according to the promise given to Jeremiah, the new covenant would be better than the old. And each respect is an advantage on the *spiritual side.*

I. **The laws of the new covenant were to be written on men's hearts.**—The laws of the old covenant were engraven on stone slabs, or written in books, to be read by men's eyes; and a thousand things would blind them to, or hinder them from, reading and obeying. And the obedience offered to outward and written law need only be formal and perfunctory. In the new covenant God's laws get into man's will through man's love. The persuasion of "I ought" is changed into the sweet constraint of "I wish to." Christ, the ministrant of the new covenant, gets His power in men's hearts, and sways motives and will to an obedience which is a holy joy.

II. **The privileges of the new covenant will be universally enjoyed.**—A covenant that is spiritual is free from all local, national, or race restrictions. It is something for man as a spiritual being, and therefore something for universal man. Exclusiveness was characteristic of the Mosaic dispensation; it was a necessary feature, because the covenant was formal, and the terms purely material privilege. All barriers between Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female, are removed when God graciously makes spiritual covenant with spiritual beings.

III. **The working of the new covenant involves free forgiveness of the sins of the older covenant.**—This difficulty might come to the minds of those who were called to enter into the new and spiritual covenant—What is to be done with the penalties which rest on us because of the breaking of the old? The promise of Jehovah through Jeremiah is, that when men come into the new covenant, their sins and inquities shall be remembered no more. When men are brought into right relations with God, their past can be dealt with in a way of free forgiveness. Their sins can be blotted out. As the application of his point the writer urges, that to call the former covenant *old* implies that it had done its work, had become effete, and was ready to be put aside. The old covenant did not match the new times. Nobody need regret the putting aside of that *old* covenant, if they would enter fully into all the high spiritual privileges of the *new.* "What is very old is near dissolution." "If 'nigh unto vanishing' at the time when Jeremiah wrote, well might it now be believed to have passed away." Accept fully the new covenant, which pledges on your part the *obedience of love.*

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 10. *God's Side in the New Covenant.*—"Called of God a high priest." One of the grave perils of the evangelical setting of the redemption truths lies in the misapprehension of its teaching which men only too readily make. Fixing such exclusive attention on what Christ suffered and did, many persons are found to cherish the notion that the Atonement is something which Christ devised and carried through, if not in opposition to God, yet in some

way to get over difficulties which, for some inscrutable reason, God could not surmount Himself. Notions of appeasing wrath, and uncareful settings of the idea of propitiating, tend to nourish such untrue and unworthy notions. It is the absolutely primary and essential truth of Christianity that the Redemption is *God's* redemption, the Atonement is God's own providing, and the Sacrifice is God Himself in sacrifice. There is no ground whatever for separating God from Christ in the work of the Atonement, either in the Scriptures, or in the doctrine of the Church. What has to be dealt with is the cherished sentiment of many persons, and the evil influence of undisciplined and enthusiastic teachers. It may therefore be shown—1. That throughout our Lord's life, and as a marked characteristic of all His teachings, He put Himself in the second place, and the Father-God first. His supreme idea was to get men to think well of God. It is to dishonour Christ to attempt to put Him in a place which He wholly refused to occupy. This kind of thing He asserted continually: "The Father's who sent Me"; "Thou hast sent Me." 2. The apostles, in their teaching, carefully keep Christ in the ministerial and mediatorial place, and ascribe all the glory of the world's redemption to God. One passage may guide the Bible student to many. St. Peter, speaking of Christ, says, "Who by Him *do believe in God*, who raised Him up from the dead." 3. A redemption for man could not be satisfactory unless it were God's devising. This may be shown by the figure of a *covenant*. It were of little account to us if God were forced, by something Christ did, to enter into covenant with us. The persuasion is on us to enter into covenant, because God so graciously offers it, and provides the Person for negotiating it.

Ver. 12. *The Considerateness of the New Covenant.*—"For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more." This is part of the anticipative description of the covenant that was to be made in the latter days; and it gives the supreme point of interest in that covenant. In a sense the old covenant of works had in it no considerateness. It demanded an absolute and perfect formal obedience to formal rules, and took no account whatever of human frailties. Its terms concerned conduct; every man was assumed to be able to order his conduct; and he must order it so as to secure a perfect obedience, or he must endure the punishment that must come on the disobedient. How inconsiderate of human infirmity the old covenant of works was comes into full view when the Pharisees try to translate that covenant for their day, and exaggerate its characteristics. They elaborated its demands until they put men's lives into prison bonds. They allowed no excuses for failure, and so bound grievous burdens on men's shoulders beyond their power to bear. The sin of Rabbinism lies in its exaggeration of the inconsiderateness of the formal covenant of works. Or the weakness of the old covenant, and the superiority of the new, may be seen from another point of view. It dealt with men's legal offences, not with their moral conditions. It dealt with their sins against rules, but not with their sins against God. It did not take into its consideration the iniquities which burdened men's consciences, but did not find expression in acts which disturbed relations. The considerateness of the new covenant is seen in its contrast with the old in both these respects. It does take account of men's frailties. It seeks a response of good-will from men, and is pitiful and compassionate when the good-will is thwarted from adequate expression by human infirmities. Nay, in view of human frailty, it proposes to be a power *in* men. "The method of the kingdom is to have the law written on the heart. Thereby the keeping of all that is essential is effectually provided for." And the covenant does deal with men's iniquities, with men's sins before God, assur-

ing a full Divine forgiveness for the things which burden the conscience and oppress the heart.

Ver. 13, taken with chap. x. 9. *The True Sacrifice.*—Simply a theological expression of the unvarying and unvaried process of all things pertaining to human life. From the embryo to the decaying time of life, all constitutions of men everywhere obey this law. As soon as life comes, it begins to grow, grows to greatness, and then passes on to decay. The writer distinctly states that these "tables of stone," "written by the finger of God," the goat's hair, and the rams' skins dyed red, and the badgers' skins, and all these things, said to be ordered by God, are worn out. "Finding fault" with them, he tells us that they are no longer of any possible utility; that though asserted to be of Divine origin, yet they were human in their conditions, and when they got down to earth they were subject to moth, rust, and decay. And, holding up the old covenant as a worn-out vesture, he says, "it is ready to vanish away." Necessity has ordered it so, that all things shall seem Divine to men which are accepted as such by the wisest men of the time; and, on the other hand, nothing ought to be Divine to any man except the soul of the wisest sees it to be so. Do we really believe that God instituted these sacrifices? The conception of God which led to sacrifice was like most of our thoughts about God. It was born in the human heart. It was of humanity. It is impossible that man can conceive of any God except in his own likeness. The thought of sacrifice proceeds out of sinful hearts, addresses itself to sinful souls, and it belongs to the morning-time of the world, when men were unable to think of a restoration to favour without a material guarantee. Those who are weak require the crutch of Forms. Man grows slowly out of the childish trappings of a time when only through these outward things could be made visible the unseen. The prophets arose, and cast scorn upon the useless system of sacrifices. The people still clung to it, because they thought that all this outward business was a very good substitute for inward repentance and purity; but their wise men knew that there can be no sacrifice of any avail without a penitent soul and a sad heart. Now in this manner of religion you can have habits and forms without any true religion at all; skeletons without any life; substitutes for thought. And the mere observances of such outward forms, things that are done from mere habit, are done at the expense of the soul. Men come to fast without caring or fearing, to bow without reverence, to sing without enthusiasm. Isaiah scorned the Sodom-apple of outward purity when there was no heart of reality within. At last these forms came to be looked upon as dead. Then began the bloodless religion. Wheresoever Paul went, there the knife was sheathed, the fire died down, the beast ceased to be offered up. Wheresoever Christ was preached, and the religion of Christ was introduced, this wonderful effect always followed—the ascending smoke of the sacrifice on the altar was for ever done away with. Even in the Romish Church, they do not offer sacrifice, but only a bloodless offering, in memory of a sacrifice. The orthodox belief touching the death of Jesus Christ is the sublimest progress that man has ever made, up to the time when, through the very sublimity of this progress, it became necessary to go much further. What a wonderful difference there is in the spiritual conception of sacrifice! When the beast died, he died unwillingly; but when the Divine sacrifice was made, it was the sacrifice of Christ's own will. To come forth freely to save the people is one thing, but to be the unwilling victim of the sacrificing priest is quite another. Therefore the whole thought of the death of Christ, as a free-will offering laid down by Himself in the midst of perfect power

to refuse, is an amazing gain, a wonderful improvement in spiritual conception. If we look at it from the other side of it, what a gain! In the old times man supplied the victim; in the new times, God. In the old days the sinner found the sacrificial lamb; in the new days the God against whom man had sinned found "the Lamb of God." This was the greatest gain that ever theology made, and so complete was it that man dare not afterwards offer his little pitiful sacrifices. God had sent a sacrifice, and it was impossible after that to be offering rams and lambs and bulls. When a man has been sacrificed, when for sinning man the only begotten Son, the beloved of God, has been sacrificed, when He has died, man sees at once that all other sacrifices now are dust and ashes. After the Son of God had been given, what could come? After this great High Priest had sacrificed His own life, after this Son of man had entered into the "Holy of Holies" and sacrificed Himself, the knife must be sheathed for ever, and the altar become cold. "There remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin." Doth God require any sacrifice before He can forgive? There is the life of Christ, and there is the death of Christ. That throws light upon the old Jewish history. He is perfect manhood filled with Divineness, who laid down His own will in order that the will of God might be all in all. From what direction shall we gather the light in which we are to view the death of Christ? Shall the light be borrowed from Paganism, Judaism, and the old world, or developed from the whole life and spirit of Christ Himself? The Atonement is the reconcilement in a man of the Divine and the human so perfectly, that men following its laws are necessarily redeemed? In them the hostility between heaven and earth has ceased; the will of God has been perfectly done; and therefore all the ends at which religion has ever aimed have been attained, and the supreme victory won at last—the victory of the Spirit over the flesh, of duty over pleasure, of the will of God over the weak wishes and desires of man.—*George Dawson, M.A.*

ILLUSTRATION TO CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 11. *From the Least to the Greatest.*—Why this order, "from the least to the greatest"? We might have expected the gospel to come into the world as the sun begins to shine, first tipping with gold the summits of the loftiest hills, and thence finding its way down to the depths of the valleys. No, it is "from the least to the greatest," as if that were the natural way for Christianity to work. And so it is—it is God's way. He chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfects His praise." And this, by the way, affords an answer to an objection which may be made to our Sabbath-school operations abroad. It may be said, What good can your little work do there? This is the old objection—"Master, we have here five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" Yes, what are they in man's hands? We know what they were in the hands of our Lord. "From the least even to the greatest," that is the history of Christianity. It is the little grain of mustard seed dropped into the ground, which indeed is the least of seeds, but afterwards becomes a tree affording shelter for the birds of the air: it is like the pebble from the brook, which once felled the Philistine giant; it is like the stone cut from the mountain, which destroyed the great image, and filled the whole earth.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THE writer proceeds to compare, or rather contrast, the ordinances of ministration under the two priesthoods. 1. The older ceremonial indicated that the way into the holiest was not made plain. In Christ it is made plain. 2. The whole service of Judaism was outward and ceremonial. That of Christ is spiritual. 3. The older sacrifices were of unwilling beasts. That of Christ was the sacrifice of His own will, "His own consenting personality." 4. Salvation and pardon were associated with blood or yielded life. This is, in the deepest, the most spiritual sense, true of Christ's salvation. 5. The older sacrifices were numerous. Christ's was a single sacrifice, and offered once for all. 6. The old sacrifices had their spiritual power only as typical of Christ's sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice is the antitype. 7. The cleansing efficacy of the old sacrifice was only partial and temporary. In Christ is perfect and final cleansing. 8. The old priests were ever at the altar. Christ, having offered, is seated on His throne. Vers. 1-10 contain descriptions of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies; but it should be noticed that only a brief, *not a complete*, recapitulation of the furniture and service of the Temple is attempted.

Ver. 1. **Then verily.**—Or, "to resume our comparison then." **The first.**—Some would supply the word "tent," "tabernacle," but the word "covenant" is preferable. See chap. viii. 6, 7, 13. **Ordinances of Divine service.**—Or, "a service conducted by definite rules." λατρεία signifies the public service of the tabernacle; δικαιώματα the formal rules which regulated it. **Worldly.**—Or material, as opposed to "heavenly," or spiritual. A rhetorical description of the enclosed sacred area, with its tent, in which the daily Divine service was carried on. κοσμικόν means, "of a terrestrial nature." If the meaning had been "ornate," "elegant," the adjectival form would have been κόσμιος.

Ver. 2. **Tabernacle.**—This was made after the pattern showed to Moses in the mount; the later Temples were but enlarged copies of it. It is to the point, therefore, that the writer should take his illustrations from the original work. It was an oblong tent divided, by thick veils, into two chambers. **The first.**—Not the most important one, but the one that presents itself first to a visitor. For the furniture of the σκηνή, see Exod. xxv. 23-29, 31-39, xxxvii. 17-24; Lev. xxiv. 4-9; 1 Kings vi. The altar of incense is omitted, and the altar of burnt-offering. This was in front of the tent, not within it. **Candlestick.**—Exod. xxv. 31-39, xxxvii. 17-24. **Table.**—Exod. xxv. 23-29; bread consecrated to Jehovah was regularly placed upon it. For exhibition of the bread, see Exod. xxv. 30; Lev. xxiv. 5-9. The earlier Hebrew name was "presence-bread." **Sanctuary.**—ἅγια, Holy Place. Distinguished from ἅγια ἁγίων of ver. 3.

Ver. 3. **Second veil.**—One was at the outer door of the Holy Place; the second, which was a double one, divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy. The Hebrew name of the inner veil is given in Exod. xxvi. 31-33; Lev. xvi. 2. The Hebrew name of the outer veil is given, Exod. xxvi. 31-33, xxxvi. 35, 36. **Holiest of all.**—R.V. "Holy of Holies"; ἅγια ἁγίων. "A common form of expression in Hebrew, in order to denote intensity." This apartment was regarded as the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah. In Solomon's Temple the inner chamber was called the "Oracle."

Ver. 4. **Golden censer.**—No such utensil is mentioned by Moses. *Moulton* renders "having a golden altar of incense," but the altar of incense was in the Holy Place, not in the Holy of Holies. The Rabbins say that a golden censer was used by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. *Alford* suggests reading "having belonging to it," rather than "having in it." *Farrar* suggests some sort of stand on which the priest placed the incense-pot, or censer. Or the altar of incense may be referred to, and treated as "belonging to" the special ceremonies of the Holy of Holies. See 1 Kings vi. 22. **Ark of the covenant.**—κιβωτός, a chest made of wood, and covered with laminæ of gold (Exod. xxv. 10-16, xxxvii. 1-5). Within it were placed the two tables of the covenant, and the lid was regarded as the mercy-seat. **Golden pot.**—See Exod. xvi. 32-34. It is not spoken of as "golden" in the Hebrew, but the LXX. render στάμνον χρυσοῦν. Other ancient religions represent their supreme mystery by a closed box. The idea may have been Egyptian. It is disputable whether the pot and the rod were within the box, or placed beside it—but this writer distinctly understands the original arrangement to have included all within the box. **Aaron's rod.**—See Num. xvii. 1-10. The manna and the rod were Divine covenant seals. **Tables.**—Stone tablets; best represented by modern slates.

Ver. 5. **Cherubims of glory.**—*Stuart*, "splendid cherubim." *Barker*, "not splendid

cherubim, but cherubim that were recipients of the glory, *i.e.* of the Divine manifestation, the Shekinah." *Farrar*, "cherubim of the Shekinah." (Exod. xxv. 18-22, xxix. 43; Num. vii. 89; Ezek. x. 19, 20.) The glory-cloud was the visible symbol of God's presence, and was regarded as resting, protected by the outspread wings of these representative figures. The cherubim were "emblems of all that was highest and best in animated nature—the grandest products of creation combined in one living angelic symbol." **Mercy-seat.**—The lid or covering of the ark, which was of pure gold (Exod. xxv. 17, 21). The place of propitiation whence mercy was dispensed. "Over this mercy-seat the Divine glory was seen, *i.e.* a supernatural, excessive brightness, and hence God was supposed to be seated on it, as His throne, and from it to dispense His mercy, when atonement was made for the sins of the people, by sprinkling it with blood." **Particularly.**—In minute detail. The writer does not propose to deal with all the Mosaic service; he can illustrate his point from the greatest day of the ritual—the Day of Atonement.

Ver. 6. **Thus ordained.**—Prepared, or adapted to their several purposes. **Went always.**—Regularly, systematically. **Service.**—Public religious services; λατρείας. These included morning and evening oblations, sacrifices for special occasions, and private offerings of individuals.

Ver. 7. **Second.**—Inner chamber. "There was a graduated sanctity in the tabernacle and in the Temple. In the Temple any one may go into the outer court, or court of the Gentiles; Jews into the second court; men only into the third; priests only in their robes into the Holy Place; and only the high priest into the inmost shrine." **Once every year.**—On the tenth day of the seventh month, Tisri, the Day of Atonement. The several times of entrance on that day are treated as one. He went in (1) with the incense; (2) with the blood of the bullock offered for his own sins; (3) with the blood of the goat offered for the sins of the people; and it is probable that he also went in again to fetch out the censer (Lev. xvi. 12-16). **Not without blood.**—The type of self-surrender, full consecration. The blood was sprinkled seven times on and before the mercy-seat. **Errors.**—Ceremonial mistakes, involving ceremonial uncleanness; sins of ignorance and frailty.

Ver. 8. **Made manifest.**—Not yet laid open. "It was obstructed by numerous ceremonial rites, and limited as to times and persons." "Hence the deep significance of the rending of the veil from the top to the bottom at the Crucifixion" (Matt. xxvii. 51).

Ver. 9. **Figure.**—παραβολή, symbolical presentation: compare τύπος. **To the conscience.**—This was not their sphere. The old economy did not deal with the inward sense of sin; only with disturbed outward relations caused by sin, in the sense of infringement of formal rules. *Stuart* thus paraphrases: "The Jewish ritual, from the commencement of it down to the present moment, has never been, and still is not, anything more than a *type* of the Christian dispensation, which has already commenced. All its oblations and sacrifices were ineffectual, as to removing the penalty due to sin in the sight of Heaven, or procuring real peace of conscience."

Ver. 10. **Carnal ordinances.**—Omit "and." R.V. "*being* only carnal ordinances," *i.e.* "ordinances of flesh"; which "relate to the outward state of things only; closely connected with the maintenance of external privileges and relations, but (in themselves) nothing more." Outward, transitory, superficial. **Imposed.**—Compare Acts xv. 10, 28; Gal. v. 1.

Ver. 11. **Good things to come.**—Lit. "who procures future blessings"; in the sense of spiritual blessings. *Farrar* suggests the reading "of the good things that have come." Compare the expressions "last days," "latter days." **Tabernacle.**—Representing heaven, the spiritual sphere, after the figure of the material tent. **Made with hands.**—A rhetorical way of showing its distinction from the Jewish tabernacle.

Ver. 12. **Neither by the blood, etc.**—Referring to the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. **Goats and calves.**—A summarising of the victims offered, not a precise detail. Bullocks may be put for calves. **His own blood.**—As the heavenly sanctuary cannot be thought of as admitting actual blood, that spiritual thing which the blood represented must be meant. What then was that spiritual thing which Christ, as spiritual High Priest, presented, which answers to the symbol of the blood? What is the *soul sacrifice* that has "blood" for its earthly figure? This is the great question to be solved, if this portion of the epistle is to be understood. "His own blood was the offering by which He was admitted as our High Priest and eternal Redeemer into the Holy of Holies of God's immediate presence." **Eternal redemption.**—Compare the temporary redemption which was all that the old priest could accomplish. The spiritual is the permanent. Omit the words "for us." The λύτρωσις effected by Christ needs no repetition.

Ver. 13. **Ashes, etc.**—Num. xix. 2-9. These were distinctly for purification from ceremonial offences. **Flesh.**—*I.e.* from uncleanness according to Mosaic ideas and rules; ritual disabilities.

Ver. 14. **How much more.**—The form of argument characteristic of this epistle. The argument recalls to mind what has already been said concerning the dignity of the person of Christ. **Through the eternal Spirit.**—One of the most difficult expressions in the epistle.

It may mean either (1) by the help of the Holy Spirit; or (2) in an eternal, that is a spiritual, nature or manner; or (3) by His own Divine nature, *i.e.* with the full concurrence of His own eternal spirit or will. *Ellicott* says, "in spirit, in the higher sphere of His Divine life; the πνεῦμα of Christ is not here the Holy Spirit, but the higher principle of spiritual life." Through this spirit, a spirit of holiness, a spirit of indissoluble life, He offered Himself to God. This made such a self-offering possible, this gave to the offering infinite worth. It must refer to Christ's own spirit, the consenting act of His Divine personality. This expression, **offered Himself,** explains the reference to the blood; the offering of the blood is the figure, the offering of Himself is the fact. **Without spot.**—ἄμωμον, with allusion to the ground of acceptance for Jewish victims. Christ's offering of Himself, if it had been that of a stained sinner, could not have been acceptable. Spotless, it could be representative. **Dead works.**—The term "dead" is used because the *ashes*, referred to above, cleansed those who were made unclean by contact with the dead. "Dead works" may mean generally sinful works, since it is from the pollution as well as the penalty of sin that Christ's offering of Himself delivers and cleanses.

Ver. 15.—The writer now proceeds to show that this *real* sacrifice of Christ was the medium through which full forgiveness and personal acceptance were vouchsafed under the old covenant. "The doctrine of vers. 15, 26, together with the passage Rom. iii. 25, 26, is clear and conclusive to the point, that from the fall of Adam to the end of time the way of salvation is one, viz. God's free grace manifested through the Redeemer's self-sacrifice, responded to by the thankful trust of the sinner in undeserved Divine mercy, and in the medium of that mercy according to the degree of its revelation." *Stuart* gives the sentiment of this verse thus: "As Jewish sacrifices rendered the offerer externally clean, so the blood of Christ purifies the moral or internal man, and removes the consequences of sin. On this account (διὰ τοῦτο), *i.e.* because the sacrifice of Christ produces an effect such as the Jewish sacrifices did not, He may justly be called the 'Mediator of a new covenant,' differing greatly from the old." **For this cause.**—Either "on account of the grandeur of His offering," or "as bearing relation to conscience" (see ver. 14). **New testament.**—The Greek word is "covenant," διαθήκη; *testament* is the confusing translation of the A.V.; in the R.V. the word "covenant" is restored. For **mediator** with idea of "negotiator," see Moses (Gal. iii. 19). The idea expressed is, that this new covenant is retrospective as well as prospective, and is the explanation of the *spiritual* relationship with God that could be attained under the old, and preparatory, and formal covenant. The new covenant, in fact, underlay, and was involved in, the old covenant. *That* was indeed such an expression of *it* as was possible in the age to which it was given. **By means of death.**—Christ's surrender of Himself in death. In the light of it as the covenant acceptance and seal. **Redemption, etc.**—Those spiritual transgressions (including penalties) which the old covenant did not touch; concerning *them* God promised forgiveness on the condition of Christ's obedience. When that obedience was rendered the promise was actually fulfilled. **They which are called.**—The Scripture figure for the sincerely believing and pious. **Eternal.**—Equivalent to "spiritual," which includes that idea of permanence. **Inheritance.**—*Stuart* renders "blessings"; "proffered good." Compare chap. iii. 1, "partakers of a heavenly calling." *Farrar* renders "eternal heritage."

Vers. 16, 17. **Testament.**—διαθήκη. Here rhetorically used in its Greek and Roman sense of "a will," the idea being suggested by the mention of the "inheritance" (ver. 15), and of the necessity of a "death." The covenant ratified by the death of Christ is compared with a testament proved valid, and rendered operative, by the death of the testator. But the argument is rhetorical rather than logical. **Death of the testator.**—It lies over as a promise, but the testator's death alone gives possession. **Of force.**—Comes into power and operation. It is an inoperative thing, a mere promise through all the long ages, until Christ's death brings it into operation. This is *one* view of the death of Christ, but it appeals much more forcibly to Jewish minds than to ours.

Ver. 18. **The first covenant.**—Reverting to the older and safer term. Vers. 16, 17, are a sort of aside, a sudden thought that came to the writer, somewhat in the Pauline manner. **Dedicated.**—Or "initiated." There was a foreshadowing of the death of Christ in the blood-sealings of the covenant.

Ver. 19. **Spoken.**—Read aloud the commandments which were the covenant requirements and conditions. **Of calves and of goats.**—A general expression for the "sacrificial victims." Goats are not especially mentioned on this occasion (Exod. xxiv. 5). **Scarlet wool, and hyssop.**—Not mentioned in Exod. xxiv. "The water (itself an emblem and means of cleansing) was designed to prevent the coagulation of the blood, and to increase the quantity of the purifying fluid. The 'scarlet wool' may have been used to bind the hyssop to the stick of cedar-wood, which was the instrument of sprinkling" (*Moulton*). **The book.**—Not specially mentioned in Exod. xxiv. 6-8. ("This is one of several instances in which the writer shows himself learned in the Jewish legends, *Hagadoth*.) Book and people may be taken as representing the two parties to the covenant.

Ver. 21. **Tabernacle.**—Nothing is actually said of their being so sprinkled; only of their being anointed with oil. Josephus, however, confirms the text. See Exod. xi. 9-11.

Ver. 22. **Almost all.**—Some were cleansed by water (Lev. xvi. 26, 28; Num. xxxi. 22, 23). The cleansing efficacy of blood is a symbol, not a fact. **Is no remission.**—The writer does not say "of sins," and these words should not be added to the verse. He is stating a historical fact with regard to the old Mosaic system, and refers entirely to ceremonial offences. The Rabbins have a proverb, "No expiation except by blood."

Ver. 23. **Patterns.**—Copies, outlines, earthly representations. **These.**—Blood-sheddings; sacrifices of beasts. **Heavenly things.**—Spiritual things; things of conscience and will; the spiritual realities of sin against God and broken relations with Him. **Better sacrifices.**—Spiritual as contrasted with material. The argument of the writer is that Christ's sacrifice must be better, because it is the Divine Man's surrendered will; and that is the very highest, sublimest thing in God's universe.

Ver. 24. **Made with hands.**—Touchable, so earthly. **Figures of the true.**—Observe the writer's frequent repetition of this idea. He was most anxious to get the Christian Jews thoroughly to loosen their hold on that old Mosaic system. **Heaven itself.**—The holy place of God; the spiritual realm. **For us.**—As the high priest did. First position: Christ is in the spiritual world as our Mediator. Second position: One such spiritual sacrifice suffices. Imperfection is shown by the need for repetition. Repetition is needed for "picture teaching," which prepares for the reception of something that can be final.

Ver. 26. **Often have suffered.**—Our Redeemer's work is still regarded as covering sin from the earliest ages. **In the end of the world.**—Not "absolute end." It fits in with the apostolic idea of the "last times." **Put away sin.**—Clearly a moral work.

Ver. 27. **Once to die.**—As the seal of sin. **Judgment.**—As the Divine recognition of sin.

Ver. 28. **Once offered.**—Only the sacrifice of one whole, representative life could be needed. **Bear the sins.**—*I.e.* bear the burden or work of putting them away. **Without sin.**—Or apart from sin; apart from all connection with it, because, when He comes, His redemptive work will be complete. "To return for our salvation as the everlasting Victor over sin and over death."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—5.

The Mission of the Symbolical.—It must have been a cause of much pain to the pious Jews that it had been found impossible fully to restore the old tabernacle conditions in the Temple built after the Captivity. "When Pompey profanely forced his way into the Holy of Holies, he found, to his great astonishment, *nothing* whatever (*vacua omnia*)." This writer does not therefore refer to any of the Temples—not even to Solomon's—but deals only with the original tabernacle of Moses, that was fully fashioned and furnished "according to the pattern shewn him in the mount." There only could the symbolic system be seen in its completeness. In making comparison between the old material and the new spiritual dispensations, it was quite possible for the writer to leave the impression that he underrated the old, and this impression might cause offence, and hinder men from receiving his teachings and persuasions. Christian teachers need to be anxious not only concerning the precision with which they state the truth, but also concerning the impressions that are received, and the ideas that are taken up, by those who hear them. They should watchfully avoid all occasions of offence, while keeping absolutely loyal to God's truth. This fear influences the writer here, and leads him to give, in a very reverent and sympathetic way, his estimate of the real value and significance, as religious teaching, of the old symbolic system. True, it was temporary, educative, and preparatory, but it was the precisely fitting thing for its time and place; and it enshrined the great primary truths connected with God's actual and possible relations with men, that could be liberated, illustrated, glorified, and made the universal heritage of men, when the spiritual High Priest had come, and had taken His place in the spiritual and eternal temple. This paragraph brings before us the furniture of the two chambers of the first tabernacle, and reminds us that each article carried a spiritual suggestion.

I. **The symbolical meanings of the things in the first chamber, or Holy Place.**—It is singular that the writer does not mention the "altar of incense," which stood in the centre of the Holy Place, immediately before the veil, but brings in the golden censer, which carried fire from this altar into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, and so was thought of as properly belonging to the "Most Holy Place." There were three principal articles of furniture in the first chamber, or Holy Place. 1. *The altar of incense.* A double cube, with horns, made of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold. No burnt-offering, meat-offering, or drink-offering was to be laid upon it; but the blood of the sin-offering of atonement was sprinkled upon its horns once a year. Incense, a sacred composition of spices, was offered by burning every morning and evening, as a symbol of the daily thanksgiving and prayer of the people. 2. *The table of shewbread.* This was placed on the right, or north side of the chamber. The table was oblong, and stood on legs. It was of shittim-wood, and was furnished with dishes, spoons, covers, and bowls, of pure gold. Upon this table were placed, every Sabbath Day, twelve cakes of fine flour, in two rows of six each, with frankincense upon each row. This constant offering of a representative of the people's food before the Lord sanctified their common eating and drinking. Man's *time* was consecrated to God by the separation of the Sabbath for His entire service. Man's *body* was consecrated to God by the devotion of his possessions as sacrifices. Man's food was sanctified by the presentation of this shewbread, this representative bread, before the Lord.

"How can I, Lord, withhold
Life's brightest hour
From Thee; or gathered gold,
Or any power?
Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,
When Thou hast given Thine own dear Self for me?"
C. E. Mudie.

3. *The golden candlestick.* Placed on the left or south side of the altar of incense. Made of pure beaten gold, having a straight centre rising from the stand, and three curved branches on either side. The lamps were lighted at the time of the evening oblation. The Rabbins say that only the central lamp was kept alight during the daytime. The famous figure of the candlestick on the Arch of Titus cannot be an exact representation, seeing that it has marine monsters carved upon its pediment, which would have been a direct violation of the second commandment. "As in a house light is as necessary as food, and the lampstand with its lighted lamp was a piece of furniture as necessary as the bread-vessel, so in the house of Jehovah the candlestick symbolised the spiritual *light of life*, which He gives to His servants with the *words* by which they live." The candlestick symbolised the people, who were thus represented as always in the presence of Jehovah, and as always alight, with the light of their faith, and love, and obedience.

II. **The symbolical meanings of the things in the second chamber, the Holy of Holies.**—That chamber itself represented the truth that, while man's sin had not so broken relations with God that he might not offer worship, or the service of his life, it had made impossible those close relations of personal friendship which God gave His creatures in Eden. Man's sin had made the "veil" necessary, which could be passed only on well-defined conditions, and only representatively by the priest. The chamber was without windows, or ventilators, and absolutely dark, save for the glory of the Shekinah-cloud. The ark was the chief thing in it. It symbolised Jehovah's throne; the cover was the seat, or mercy-seat; the cherubims represented the attendants on the throne; and the tables of the law inside the ark declared the foundation principles on which He who sat on the throne ruled His people and dispensed His mercy.

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne." The golden pot with the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, may have been placed beside the ark, rather than within it, and were representative of the history of God's people, and of His special dealings with them. They, as it were, kept God reminded of the people's *needs* and the people's *frailties*. Perhaps the golden censer is mentioned with a special purpose. The writer wants to make clear how limited access to God was under the old system, and how free it is under the new; so he reminds us that even the old high priest could not go into the Holy of Holies without the shading of the glory of God with the smoke of incense. He must take the censer, and put incense on the coals just as he took the veil aside, so that he might not see undimmed the glory over the mercy-seat. The old symbols dealt with the primary truths that are now fully brought to light by Jesus Christ.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 2. *Types in the Holy Place.*—"The candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread." The furniture of the court was connected with sacrifice, that of the sanctuary itself with the deeper mysteries of mediation and access to God. The first sanctuary contained three objects: the altar of incense in the centre, so as to be directly in front of the ark of the covenant; the table of shewbread on its right or north side; and the golden candlestick on the left or south side. These objects were all considered as being placed before the presence of Jehovah, who dwelt in the "Holiest of all," though with the veil between. The daily rite for the altar of incense was as follows: The priest took some of the sacred fire off the altar of burnt-offering in his censer, and threw the incense upon it; then, entering the Holy Place, he emptied the censer upon the altar, prayed, and performed the other duties of his office. Meanwhile the people prayed outside; and thus was typified the intercession of Christ in heaven, making His people's prayers on earth acceptable. The shewbread (and, connected with it, the drink-offering of wine placed in the covered bowls upon the table) represented under the old covenant the same truths which are set forth by the sacrament of the Lord's Supper under the new.—*From "Student's Scripture History."*

Ministry in the Holy Place.—The Holy Place was used for the more delicate sacrifices which the priests alone offered, and the rest of the people, including the Levites, never saw with their own eyes. The Holy Place was a dark chamber, and a lamp was necessary to enable the priests to discharge their functions. The golden altar became an altar for the priests alone, at which nothing but the most delicate substances might be offered—namely, incense. It is significant that the shewbread was called "bread of the face," "bread of the Divine presence," "loaves of the setting-forth."

Ver. 3. *The Typology of the Veils.*—Inside, the Holy of Holies was separated off only by a drop-curtain. This was made of byssus, and was fastened by golden hooks to four pillars of acacia-wood, which, like the planks, were covered with gold-leaf, and carefully secured in the ground with silver sockets. The drop-curtain was undoubtedly fixed behind them, so that the pillars would stand outside the ten ells, while a trifle farther to the front hung the ornamental junction of the curtains of byssus. In front of the whole tabernacle an outer drop-curtain of greater strength, probably twofold, was hung on to five pillars of acacia wood, which were set up across the entire breadth

of the tabernacle. It displayed the same colours as the internal curtain, but no embroidered cherubs; the pillars were in other respects adorned like the four internal ones, but had only brazen sockets.—*Ewald.*

The Use of Veils.—Curtains, or veils, must be studied in view of their use, and of the sentiments concerning them in tent life. They were in effect as our shut and locked doors. They represent—1. Claim to privacy 2. Hindrance to admittance, which can be only on conditions. 3. And they suggest mystery, something purposely hidden from view.

Ver. 4. *Types in the Holy of Holies.*—There was but one object, the ark of the covenant, a sacred chest, containing the two tables of the law, the cover of it being called the "mercy-seat," and the cherub figures making a sort of canopy over it. The cover was a plate of pure gold. This was the very throne of Jehovah, who was therefore said to "dwell between the cherubim." It was also called the "mercy-seat," or "propitiatory," because Jehovah there revealed Himself, especially on the great Day of Atonement, as "God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin." Nor was it without the profoundest allusion to the coming dispensation of the gospel that God's *throne of mercy* covered and hid the tables of the *law*. The attitude of the cherubim was significant of the desire of angels to learn the gospel mysteries that were hidden in the law.

Contents of the Ark.—"Nothing is more characteristic of the earliest Jahveism, nor yet of greater historical truth and certainty, than that in place of the idols in which common heathenism took delight, and of certain artificial symbols which served the same purpose for a heathenism which was aiming at something higher, it was only the documents of these purest truths, and of these contracts, concluded as it were for all eternity, which acquired the most precious value, and the highest sanctity," by being placed in the sacred chest.—*Ewald.*

Ver. 5. *The Suggestion of the Cherubim.*—No actual knowledge of the *forms* of the figures which shadowed the mercy-seat can be obtained. The common Jewish tradition is, that they were human figures, each having two wings. They must have been of small size, proportioned to the area of the mercy-seat. Comparing the different references to form, in this verse, in 2 Sam. xxii. 11 (Ps. xviii. 10); Ezek. i., x.; Rev. iv., it would appear that the name "cherub" was applied to various combinations of animal forms. Similar combinations were made by most ancient peoples in order to represent conceivable combinations of powers, such as are denied to man in his earthly state of existence. It is remarkable that amongst the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, the creatures by very far most frequently introduced into these composite figures were man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle. These are evidently types of the most important of familiarly known classes of living material beings. The Rabbinists recognised this in the cherubim as described by Ezekiel, which they regarded as representing the whole creation engaged in the worship and service of God (Rev. iv. 9-11, v. 13). It would be in harmony with this view to suppose that the more strictly human shape of the cherubim of the mercy-seat represented the highest form of created intelligence engaged in the devout contemplation of the Divine law of love and justice (1 Pet. i. 12). They were thus symbols of worship rendered by the creature in the most exalted condition. It is worthy of notice that the golden cherubim, from between which Jehovah spoke to His people, bore witness, by their place on the mercy-seat, to His redeeming

mercy; while the cherubim that took their stand with the flaming sword at the gate of Eden, to keep the way of the tree of life, witnessed to His condemnation of sin in man. The most perfect finite intelligence seems thus to be yielding assent to the Divine law in its twofold manifestation.—*Speaker's Commentary.*

The Offices of Cherubim.—The special offices of the cherubic figures in the tabernacle appear to have been, first, the watching and guarding of the ark, and the sacred law deposited within the ark, towards which they are represented as looking, and over which they spread their outstretched wings; and, secondly, to attend and bear up that mystic presence of God which appeared in the cloud of glory over the mercy-seat. When the tabernacle is set up, the law is deposited in the ark, the cloud is promised to rest upon the covering of the ark, and, as the cherubim guard the law, and the testimony of God, so they may be supposed reverently to surround the throne of His glory, perhaps they were supposed to bear up the throne of God upon their wings, and to carry Him when He appeared in His glory.—*Ibid.*

Cherubim as Guardians.—As this chest was to have contents so precious, two cherubim were fixed over it, to symbolise the fact that Jahveh had, as it were, descended upon it, and eternally protected what was contained in the chest. For the cherub signified in the first instance the descent of the Deity, and consequently the spot whither it had descended and would again descend perpetually, and there manifest itself. In this symbolical application the cherub was also much utilised elsewhere—in the sacred tent and in the Temple. But its primary and most significant position was over the ark of the covenant, where, for artistic reasons, two were placed face to face, and in this application they indicate, in the first instance, how strict is Jahveh's watch and guard over the sacred words contained therein. So far, no doubt, the sphynxes lying facing one another over a sacred shrine or sepulchre, etc., are very similar. There is a remarkable representation of Garuda (*i.e.* a cherub) as the altar for the ancient Indian horse-sacrifice, Râmâyana. But the greatest resemblance of all is found in some lately discovered Assyrian pictures. See Layard.—*Ewald.*

Cherubim as Representative Worshippers.—The cherubim were representatives of the angelic hierarchy worshipping the Divine Majesty, and adoring His love to man in Christ, and devoutly looking down into the mysteries of the gospel. *Josephus* says that they were not like any creatures ever seen on earth by human eyes, but that Moses had seen their prototypes near the throne of God.—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—10.

The Limitations of the Symbolical.—Since the Jewish Christians were tempted to exaggerate the value and importance of the Mosaic ceremonial system, because it had been unquestionably given directly by God, the writer does them good service by pointing out that it was essentially a symbolical system, illustrative of spiritual things by its suggestive and symbolical rites and ceremonies. But the symbolical is always limited. It is never a thing itself; it is always the representation of a thing, or the suggestion of a thing. When once this is gripped, the Old Testament economy is readily recognised as limited in sphere, and limited in time. This may be opened up somewhat fully and with present applications, because a symbolic system has been allowed to grow up in association with Christianity, which threatens to absorb men's

attention, and take them back from the elevations of spiritual religion to the old formal Jewish ideas and standpoints. *Our* attention will be confined to a general consideration of the limited nature of a symbolical religion.

I. **The symbolical is temporary.**—The symbols must be in precise adaptation to the thoughts, ideas, mental and circumstantial associations of a nation at a particular time. Another nation, with other associations, can do nothing with the symbols. The nation itself will soon grow out of them, look on them as ancient relics, and replace them with new ones. The temporary character of the Old Testament symbols is seen in the fact—1. That much of the ceremonial system we are now unable effectively to explain, because we cannot recover the early associations; 2. That much of prophetical and apocalyptic Scripture, being based on the early symbols, is closed to us, so that we can only with uncertainty guess its meaning, and oftentimes have to manufacture a meaning of our own. The truths taught by the symbols remain as the heritage of the nation and the race for ever, but the forms which at a given time illustrated the truths pass away, as do our nursery books when we have gained the power to deal with moral principles in plain statements.

II. **The symbolical is materialistic.**—It is essentially in the range of the senses. It is the sight of sacrifice and ceremony; it is the smell of incense; it is the work of hands; it is the movement of body; it is change of garments; it is solemn service. It is altogether outward. But the material is not the real; it is only the *seeming*, the *showing*, of the real which is spiritual. "The things which are not seen are eternal." True, man is a dual being,—a spirit clothed upon with a body, in order that he might come into relations with a material world; but the spirit is the man, not the body. And we must take care not to press the interests of the body—which wants symbolical religion—so as to stifle the cry of the man himself, which is for a spiritual religion. So long as man finds he needs the help of religious symbols, he is in a low spiritual range. Or to speak in the manner of the passage before us he is having no direct access to God in the Most Holy Place of His spiritual presence; he is only in outer courts, getting some sort of access through priests, and sacrifices, and representative rites.

III. **The symbolical is preparatory.**—It has no value in itself. Its value lies in what it leads to. It has a stage, and a necessary stage, in an educative process. It is the "kinder-garten" stage of the world's training in religion. It may be likened to the parabolic form in which so much of our Lord's teaching was given. The educative value of the parabolical, and of the symbolical, are not sufficiently recognised. Both start and culture the power of religious, spiritual thinking. The parabolical wraps something up, and half hides it, in a word-picture; the symbolical wraps something up, and half hides it, in some acted rite. In both cases the little show of something hidden arouses attention, wakens thought, inquiry, research, and so both parabolical and symbolical become distinctly educative of spiritual discernment. It is no fatal objection to this fact, that so often the symbolical is allowed to satisfy us, and then our moral education ends with it. The wrong use of a thing affords no proof that it was never intended to be used aright. The symbolical is only used aright when it is treated as a preparatory stage. To come back on it when spiritual levels have been reached is altogether to mistake its mission.

IV. **The symbolical is suggestive.**—But it is manifestly limited if it points to something beyond, and better than itself. In this passage certain things are recalled to mind. 1. The people might not go into the Holy Place. That was suggestive. Because they were sinful, even their *worship* could only be presented to God through mediators, and by appointed ceremonies. 2. The priests might not go into the Holy of Holies. That was suggestive. So far

from the people having direct access to God, their representatives, the priests, had none. They dared not go into the immediate presence; they dared not take aside the veil. 3. Only the high priest might go into the Holy of Holies; and he only once a year, and only on the most solemn conditions. That was suggestive; those conditions represented the spiritual conditions which were to be met, not for a nation, but for humanity, in the infinitely acceptable sacrifice, and the living mediation, of the Son of God.

But the limitation of the symbolical is seen in the fact that its suggestiveness is dependent on—1. *Capacity to deal with it.* We have seen that one nation cannot do with the symbolism of another, and one age cannot do with the symbolism of another; but it is also true, that within a nation it may be but a select few who can get at the meanings of the symbols—the many simply take them as they are. Heathen customs are kept by the thousands without their attaching any meaning to them: the few keep them with understanding of their inner significance. We have to awaken in men's minds the interest in truth-symbols, for the sake of the truth they symbolise. 2. *Sensitive moods.* The poet sees meanings in prosaic things, because of his poetic moods. The artist sees beauty in prosaic forms, because of his artistic moods. And similarly the spiritual mind finds and feels the truth in symbols, according to his sensitive spiritual moods. Then the highest ministerial work is cultivating the spiritual faculties of men.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 6. *Faithfulness required in the "Usual."*—"The priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services." There is the constant danger of supreme interest in the *unusual* taking off men's interest from the *usual* and the commonplace. Attention is fixed on the sublime ceremonies in which, occasionally, the high priest officiated; and so attention is taken from the importance, and the significance, of those daily ministries which bore so close a relation to the daily religious life and thought and feeling of the people. And so it always is with frail man. He delights in the astonishing, but wearies with the ordinary. But the ordinary, and not the astonishing, is man's real life, for which he needs upholding grace. Illustrate from—1. Our effort to meet times of great affliction, our failure to meet daily worries. 2. Our response to the sacredness of Sunday, our failure to respond to the sacredness of the Christian weekday. 3. Our close attention in times of "missions" and "revival services," our easy neglect of the usual means of grace. 4. Our concern to culture graces that make a show, and indifference to the every-day sweetness of common relations.

Ver. 7. *The Condition of the Sprinkled Blood.*—The significance of the sprinkling of the blood is not generally apprehended. Attention is so exclusively given to the sacrifice, as the burning of the victim, or parts of the victim, that attention is diverted from what was the very essence of the sacrifice, which was taking the victim's blood, which was its *life*, and offering that life to God, by the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar. To burn a sacrifice was to give a *body* to God, and it typified man's devotion of his body and powers and relations to God. But to sprinkle the blood was to give a *life* to God, and it typified man's soul-surrender, the gift of *himself* to God. When this is rightly apprehended, the sprinkling of the blood is seen to be the very essence of the old sacrifice, and to carry its deepest meaning. *Ewald* suggests fresh lines of thought in relation to this intensely interesting, but unfamiliar, subject. In the spiritual antitype of the sprinkled blood may be found the most satisfactory settings of

our spiritual Redeemer's atonement work. *Ewald* says: "Under any circumstances the sacerdotal function commenced with the slaughter, in so far that the priest caught the fresh blood with the sacrificial bowls, in order to employ it, while it was yet warm, in that usage which formed the essential kernel of the whole sacred rite. In later times, as we know for certain, the inferior priests caught the blood, and handed it over to a sacrificial priest to sprinkle it. The sprinkling of the blood was itself the most solemn moment: in ordinary cases the priest sprinkled it only on the corners, and the sides, and the foot of the altar, but all round the latter; just as in general the ancient custom required on the most solemn occasions the party to go round the altar, in a circle, praying, singing, and otherwise fervently soliciting the divinity. What the priest said while going round the altar to sprinkle it with the most sacred element of the sacrifice, how he supplicated thereby the Divine grace for the sacrificer, and how he announced it, we no longer can tell in detail, but that it did take place in this way there can be no doubt. A stalk of the shrub hyssôp (*tsop*) was, in accordance with ancient custom, used for the sprinkling, one end of it being dipped in the blood. This wood must once in early times have passed for pure and cleansing, just as among the Hindoos and Persians the sôma (*hôma*) alone is used as a sacrificial drink; and only by means of this instrument did it seem possible to complete properly the cleansing atonement. It was in the sprinkling of the blood, the proper sacrament of sacrifice, that the distinction between the guilt-offering, and the expiatory offering in the narrow sense, came most clearly to the front; and it is easy to understand why it would reveal itself most plainly there. As it was right that the blood of an expiatory offering for public transgression (as we may term it for the sake of brevity) should be made far more conspicuous to eyes and sense, so it was sprinkled on an elevated place, or even on one which was extraordinarily sacred. The way, too, in which this was done was marked by three stages. If the atonement was made for an ordinary man or for a prince, the priest sprinkled the blood against the high-towering horns of the outer altar, and poured the remainder as usual out at its base; if it was made for the community or for the high priest, some of the blood was seven times sprinkled against the veil of the Holy of Holies, then some more against the horns of the inner altar, and only what was then left was poured out as usual at the base of the outer altar. The third and highest stage of the expiation was adopted on the yearly Day of Atonement. On the other hand, in the case of guilt-offering, no reason existed for adopting any unusual mode of sprinkling the blood. It was sprinkled just as in other cases round the sides and foot of the outer altar. But as soon as this most sacred ceremony of the sprinkling of the blood was completed, then, according to the ancient belief, the impurity and guilt were already shaken off from the object to which they had clung. It seemed as though the drops of blood, sprinkled by the mighty hand of One who was pure, had called them up, and irresistibly drawn them forth; for thus we must plainly interpret this procedure in accordance with the feeling of antiquity. Yet shaken off as they were, they only passed in the first instance, according to the same view, into that body whose blood had so irresistibly driven them forth (as well as into the officiating priest). The rest of this body, therefore, was now deemed to have become in its turn unclean, and was regarded with all the dread with which anything that was unclean before God was looked upon, nay, even with yet stronger dread; it was just here that the dark side of this whole order of sacrifices was felt most keenly. Consequently all the remainder of the body, just as it was, together with the dung, was burned far away from the sanctuary at some common, but in other respects clean, spot (outside of the camp or city), as though it was an object of

horror, which could only be disposed of and annihilated in this way."

Ver. 8. *For a While no Open Way to God.*—"The way into the Holy Place hath not yet been made manifest." The old tabernacle and its limitations were picture-teachings of spiritual conditions and relations. They taught the people God's nearness to them, but made them feel that there was something which prevented the nearness from being closeness; which necessitated the raising of a thin and slight, but effective, barrier; which made impossible that sort of free access to God which Adam enjoyed in Paradise, and which should have been man's birthright. That hindrance was not something placed by God, in the exercise of His Divine sovereignty. It was a gracious and necessary response of God to the condition in which man had placed himself. It could be no kindness in an earthly father to keep smiling on a child while that child was wayward and wilful. The cherubim were put at the gates of Eden in considerate love. The veils hid from the people the Holy Place, and from the priests the Holy of Holies, in considerate love. God must make His relation to man's wilfulness apparent; and man must be made symbolically and representatively right, as a beginning of his becoming really right, before an open way to God could be made.

Ver. 9. *Conscience under the Old Covenant.*—"Cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect." If we speak precisely concerning conscience, we keep its sphere to that which belongs to God—God's will, God's standard, God's revelation. It is not perhaps strictly correct to state it in this way, but it helps by suggesting an important distinction—Conscience is concerned only with our idea of what is absolutely right, or with laws, not with rules. Men make a slavery of the moral life when they bring conscience into the spheres of rule, and custom, and rite, and etiquette. It follows from this, that any amount of attention to rules and rites will fail to satisfy the conscience as the witness in us to what is absolutely right—right in the sight of God. But in moral education it seems that conscience of the eternally right is trained through cultivating conscience in relation to formal rules. It is so in the case of the Jews; it is so in the case of our children The Jew's conscience of the clean and unclean was educating him to a conscience of absolute right before God.

Ver. 10. *Divers Washings.*—The religious rites of the Mosaic ceremonial must have involved the use of enormous quantities of water; and it has always been found difficult to explain how the water necessary for ablutions could have been obtained during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. It is just possible that, as the following facts suggest, their ablutions were performed during the journey by other means than that of water. An old traveller relates that the Arabs, if they cannot come by any water, then they must *wipe* [themselves] as clean as they can, till water may conveniently be had; or else it suffices to take Abdees [purification] upon a stone, which I call an imaginary Abdees, *i.e.* to smooth their hands over a stone two or three times, and rub them one with the other, as if they were washing with water—the like Abdees sufficeth when any are sickly, so that water might endanger their life—and after they have so wiped, it is *guise*, *i.e.* lawful, for them to do as they would had their purification been really done by water. In a Mohammedan treatise on prayer it is said, "In case water is not to be had, that defect may be supplied by earth, a stone, or any product of the earth." It has been asserted that sand was frequently used for the same purpose, and even poured over the hands like water. It is possible that thus, or in some similar way, the

Israelites in the desert purified themselves when water was scarce. It has also been suggested that it might have been for a similar purpose that Naaman the Syrian took two mules' loads of earth back with him from Palestine. He might have taken Jordan water, but that would not last. The earth, however, would serve the same purpose for many years (2 Kings v. 17). In the old tabernacle the lowest grade of purification demanded a washing of the body and changing of the clothes, as well as the removal of any objects of heathen superstition which might be about. For the priests on duty purifications wholly special to themselves were necessary; they must, *e.g.*, bathe with hands and feet, *i.e.* with the whole body, in the fore-court of the sanctuary, when they desired to enter the sanctuary, or approach the altar.

Religion an Imposition, and Religion a Willing Service.—"Imposed until a time of reformation." Two kinds of religion are possible to the moral beings which God has made. And the two kinds are represented in every age and every land—just as truly represented in our day as in any other. Man's religion may be the obedience of rules imposed by a competent and recognised authority. Man's religion may be the natural and free expression of his own good will, swayed by the persuasions of the Divine love. It is manifest that the second form of religion is altogether a higher form than the first. It is the religion of a cultured being, who has gained control of himself, and is, in a sense, become an independent being—a man indeed. But the second form of religion can never come first in the case of man. "First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual," is the ever-working and all-round law for humanity. A moral education begins with rules imposed. A man's religion begins with things to be done in response to authority. Only in an advanced time, a "time of reformation," can a man manage his own religion. The mistake is made when men are content to stop with a religion of impositions. 1. This the Jewish Christians were tempted to do, in the first Christian age. They could not quite give up, indeed they were sorely tempted to fall back upon, the impositional religion of Judaism, and even upon that religion as exaggerated by Rabbinism. 2. This ritual religions, in all the Christian ages, have tempted men to do. For the satisfaction of undeveloped spiritual men and women, claims of authority to impose opinions, duties, and rites have been made on behalf of a Church, or of particular orders of men; and many have been, and are to-day, kept in the first and child stages of religion. They belong to Judaism; they are not lifted into the free life of Christianity. 3. But it is necessary to add that, since our modern "Time of the Reformation," Protestant Christians have been subject to the same peril. Careful thinking will reveal the fact, that the verbal inspiration theory of the Bible has made it, practically, to thousands of Christians the text-book of a merely impositional religion.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—17.

The High Priest of Spiritual Things.—The greater involves the less. If it can be shown that Christ has gained for a man a right of free personal access to God Himself, it is involved that He has gained for him the right to offer his worship himself. If He has opened the way into the Holy of Holies, He must have opened the way into the Holy Place. This explains why the writer carries his reference to the Holy Place no further, but fixes attention on the Most Holy. Recall the symbolical ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. 1. The attention of the priest to personal cleanliness and suitable clothing. 2. The

sacrificial ceremonies by means of which he gained personal acceptance with God, before undertaking to represent anybody else. 3. The precise acts associated with his passing, as standing for the people, into the presence of Jehovah. (1) Taking the golden censer out; (2) putting in it live coals; (3) dropping on the coals the handful of incense, just as he took the veil aside; (4) sprinkling the blood of the goat on the mercy-seat; (5) waiting, anxiously watching for, the sign of Divine acceptance; (6) coming forth to declare unto the people the Divine forgiveness and favour. But notice that, when he came forth, he closed the veil behind him, and it remained closed for another year. Now see resemblances and differences between the work of the old high priest of symbols, and the new High Priest of spiritual realities.

I. **Christ, as High Priest, entered the spiritual Holy of Holies.**—The spiritual counterpart of that material chamber. By the spiritual presence of God we mean that presence which we, as spirits, may realise in a spiritual way. Direct access of spirit to spirit. In using the term "heavenly," there is some danger of our making material figures in our minds of the eternal abode of the Eternal. God is a spirit. His heaven is spiritual. And it is the loss of free spiritual access to the spiritual God which is man's supreme loss; and it is that lost access which Christ set Himself to restore. Man's humanity, as the medium of his sin, is the veil which shuts him out of the spiritual Holy of Holies, even as the gates and the cherubim shut our first parents out of Eden. Christ entered through the veil, "His flesh," by winning His humanity wholly for God, and because of His sinlessness He could go right in; there was no hindering veil of a sinful body.

II. **Christ, as High Priest, took in His own spiritual blood.**—The figure is taken from the blood of the goat which the high priest took in, but we must see the spiritual thing which the figure symbolised. And the blood that Jesus took was His own *life*. "The blood is the life." In ver. 14 it is precisely explained for us. He "offered Himself without spot to God." He had fully won His body and His earthly life for God. And now He gave *Himself*,—sinless body, obedient will, devoted self—Priest and sacrifice: Himself, as it were, the old high priest; and Himself, as it were, the blood which the old high priest took.

III. **Christ, as High Priest, gained spiritual rights and privileges for us.**—1. Rights of free, open, permanent access to God. Our being human, and having these sin-experienced human bodies, no longer makes a veil hiding God away, for any of us whose wills are renewed and made as Christ's. His representative body-triumph stands for us; and the veil is gone for us, as it was for Him, and we have "boldness of access." 2. Privileges of cleansed consciences. Relief from that sense of constraint to sin which distresses every man so long as his will is unrenewed. Jewish ceremonies brought removal of certain penalties of *sins*. Christ by His sacrifice and mediation brings deliverance from the *sinfulness* which works out into sins. 3. Privileges and rights of a new and spiritual covenant; which pledges, on God's part, spiritual power for maintaining spiritual life; and, on man's part, spiritual service, the constant holding of himself as a "living sacrifice" unto God. And these rights and privileges are kept up for us by the abiding presence of our High Priest in the heavenly Holy of Holies, where He is *with His blood*, Himself, fully surrendered to God in our name, and as our pledge.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 11. *The Greater Tabernacle.*—The tabernacle of old was the dwelling of God in the midst of His people: "Let them make Me a sanctuary where I may dwell among them"; "I will set My tabernacle among you

and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people" (Exod. xxv. 8; Lev. xxvi. 11, 12). Whatever other thoughts, therefore, the tabernacle may have suggested, this was its first and most important aspect; and it need only further be observed that, when it is spoken of as the dwelling-place of God, it is of God, not in His abstract Being, but as He makes Himself known to, as He comes into contact with, us. It is not a model upon a small scale of the universe, as if He of whom Solomon at the dedication of the Temple sublimely said, "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee," desired an earthly representation of His boundless abode. We have to do with God in the relation in which He stands to man. Of that relation as it existed toward Israel the σκηνή was a type. Yet, further, the other name by which the structure was known, and which is even more frequently given it than that of tabernacle, has to be taken into account. It was the "tent of meeting," words unhappily rendered in the A.V., though corrected in the R.V., the "tabernacle of the congregation"; and it received this name because there God met with Israel. "This," it is said, "shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations at the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there will I meet with the children of Israel" (Exod. xxix. 42, 43). This, then, was the meaning of the tabernacle. It was the place in which God dwelt, and at which He met with His people, and they with Him. It had relation to the Almighty, not as the Ruler of the universe, but as One who desired to bring His children nearer to Himself, that they might be sanctified for His service, and be made to rejoice in His favour. It spoke to man, not as a creature to be bowed down beneath the thought of infinite power, but to be elevated to communion and fellowship with that holy yet merciful Being who had formed him to show forth His praise, and to find in doing so his true dignity and joy. If this was the meaning of the tabernacle to Israel, there can be no doubt as to what is expressed by the word when filled with Christian thought. Christ Himself is the Christian tabernacle. In Him the Father dwells with men, meets with them, and makes Himself in ever-increasing measure known to them. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also" (John xiv. 9, viii. 19). It ought to be unnecessary to remind the reader that this idea of meeting God, of His drawing nigh on His side to us, and of our drawing nigh to Him, is the distinguishing feature of the Christian dispensation, and that it is dwelt upon with remarkable frequency and emphasis in the epistle to the Hebrews. Putting these considerations together, we appear to be justified in coming to the conclusion that by "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" we are to understand the human nature of our Lord, or our Lord in His incarnate state; and the only question comes to be, whether we are to think simply of His humanity, as it was on earth, or (with Hofmann) of that humanity as it exists in its glorified state in heaven. There is little room for hesitation as to the answer. That the writer of this epistle could never have spoken of the *earthly* body of Christ as "not made with hands—that is to say, not of this creation"—is clear from the statement of chap. x. 20, where he refers to "the new and living way which Jesus has dedicated for us through the veil—that is to say, His flesh"—words founded upon that rending asunder of the veil of the Temple at the Crucifixion, by which the veil was not so much *opened* as *abrogated and thrown aside*—words also in which it is not without interest to notice that the human name "Jesus" is used, not, as now, the higher name "Christ." The "flesh" of our Lord, then, *i.e.* His humanity under its earthly conditions

and limitations, was in like manner something, so far at least as these conditions were concerned, which needed to be thrown aside, something not spiritual, heavenly, and unlimited, and of which we give a true description when we say that it was "of this creation." It was a body of flesh, and what the writer understands by that word we see from his use, in chap. vii. 16, of the word σάρκινος, made of flesh (not σαρκικός, fleshly), when he employs it to express the character of that Old Testament dispensation which had been superseded by the higher, to which Christ belonged. Nor is this all: for throughout his epistle the redeeming work of our Lord is conceived of as that not of an earthly, but of a heavenly High Priest, and the writer would certainly not depart from that conception at the moment when he is contrasting the very essence of Christ's work with that of the high priest of Israel. Once admit, therefore, that the "greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands—that is to say, not of this creation"—is the incarnate Lord, and it is impossible to pause there. We must also admit that it is that Lord in His human nature exalted and glorified. In the nature which He possessed, when He returned, after His resurrection and ascension, to His Father in heaven, He carries out the great work of bringing God and man into perfect union and communion with one another. In the *glorified* Redeemer God and man have their true and everlasting meeting-place.—*Prof. W. Milligan.*

Ver. 14. *The Offering of Himself.*—Our Lord's death was a voluntary offering, a sacrifice, a sacrifice of Himself. But the word "sacrifice," and the associations of the text, bring up before us the Jewish tabernacle and ritual. We see the smoking altars, the slain beasts, the waiting worshippers. And it must be with the imagery of these altar forms in our minds that we approach the consideration of the "self-offering" of Christ. But it is evident that our Lord's death was not a sacrifice after the precise Jewish pattern. We visit Calvary on that ever-memorable day, and we say, Where is the Temple? Where is the altar? Where are the officiating priests? Where is the flowing blood? Where is the floating incense? We can find none of them. In the outward seeming there is no sacrifice here. That prætorium, this knoll, are no temples. That howling mob was no devout company of worshippers. Pilate was no priest. The cross is no altar. At first we are bewildered, and it is only as we search deeper that we recover our confidence, and find that within this strange appearance there is the great spiritual reality of sacrifice. In expecting Christ's sacrifice to answer precisely to the Jewish model we have mistaken the proper relations of "type" and "antitype." A type is a representation, taking some material form, for an earlier and undeveloped age, of some spiritual thing, which is to be afterwards realised as antitpye. The type and antitype cannot be of the same material and form. A picture may be the type of a man, but the man differs from the picture. Earth is the type of heaven, but we may not therefore conclude that in everything heaven is like earth; it is the spiritual realisation of the type. Properly a type is the representation, in other forms and modes, of some spiritual reality which either cannot get outward expression at all, or only in modes which could not be understood when the type was given. In treating of Christ's sacrifice as the antitype to which the Jewish typical sacrifices pointed, we have not perhaps made due account of this fact: the sacrifice of Judaism was a pictured material representation; the sacrifice of Christ is an inward spiritual reality. The type was a kind of drama, wrought out with scenes and representative figures. The antitype was the very life-story itself, wrought out in mental agony, and soul-struggling; and ending in sublime moral victory. We ought not, therefore, to seek any precise

reproduction of the Jewish altar-forms in connection with the antitypical and spiritual sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

I. **Christ's offering was a sacrifice.**—The pious Jew sought to offer a spiritual sacrifice by means of the victim he brought in accordance with Mosaic rules. And though the days of Judaism are long past, and no altars smoke with burning victims now, it is as possible as it ever was for true hearts to make oblation of themselves to God; and when we say that the death of Christ was a *sacrifice*, we mean that it was such a sacrifice as a *man* may make, not merely such a special and peculiar sacrifice as only a Jew may make. As the Jew brought his very costliest and best, and surrendered it wholly to God in testimony that he held all he was and all he had as God's and for Him, so Christ brought Himself, He *had* nothing, so He brought all He *was*, and surrendered it wholly, "a living sacrifice"—devoted Himself to the obedience of the will of God.

II. **Christ's offering was a self-sacrifice.**—The only true sacrifice is *self*-sacrifice. No gift reaches the dignity of a sacrifice until, to give it, a man has deprived himself, given up his own will and pleasure. Every human gift is measured by the self-sacrifice in it. No redemptions can ever come out of the mere giving of things. But even upon God a kind of power may be gained by self-sacrifice. Mere gifts of things may become acceptable, and even propitiatory, when they serve to express devotion and self-sacrifice. If a man can suffer for God, can give up for God, can die for God, putting his inmost soul to agony in order to do the will and accomplish the purpose of God, he gains, as it were, a kind of holy moral power with God. And how will this kind of power be increased when it is the self-sacrifice of the only begotten Son, for the sake of the honour of the eternal Father?

III. **Christ's offering was a spotless self-sacrifice.**—In the preceding chapter the sinlessness of Christ has been treated. The sacrifices of Judaism had to be "without blemish." A perfect service God demands of every creature He has made. Not an absolutely, only a relatively, perfect service. From a man God asks the full devotion and sacrifice of all that belongs to his manhood. The claim is just and good; but man, by his wilfulness, has rendered himself incapable of meeting it. Jesus Christ, as man, brings the proof that man can meet God's claim. He lifts up into view the great law of our life, and shows it to be "holy, and just, and good." He submitted to human conditions, and in them worked out a perfect obedience, presenting himself to God as a man without spot. In Him God accepted what He had vainly sought for through all the generations of humanity—the perfect, spotless obedience and service of a man. The perfectness of Christ's sacrifice was the ennobling of the human race. It lifted its burden, and gave it hope. To the view of God it was a salvation for the race.

IV. **Christ's offering was a spotless self-sacrifice on behalf of others.**—Christ is our Representative, our Vicar. As Adam dealt with God *for* the human race, not *instead* of it, in the first great moral trial, carrying weaknesses and moral evils to the race in his failure, so Christ, as the second Adam, dealt with God for the race in the second great moral trial, carrying salvation, forgiveness, life, and hope to the race by His spotless obedience unto, and through, death. Christ's righteousness does not supersede ours; it involves, and demands, and pledges ours. His sacrifice was not made in order that we might never have to make any; but He, in fulness, offered what we, in our measure, also should offer. And in acknowledging Christ's offering *as ours* we declare ourselves to be not our own, and we testify our determination to strive also to offer ourselves without spot to God. "Real human life is a perpetual completion and repetition of the sacrifice of Christ."

Christ's Eternal Spirit.—This fact must be fully faced—there is no instance, in the New Testament, in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as the "eternal Spirit." The assumption therefore is, that the Holy Ghost is not referred to in this verse. Moreover, this writer uses the term "Holy Ghost" (Heb. ii. 4, iii. 7, vi. 4, ix. 8, x. 15); and if on one occasion he uses another term, the assumption is that he had in his mind another idea. It may also be shown that there was nothing to suggest the Holy Ghost to the writer at this point. He was dealing with Christ's voluntary offering of Himself to God. His own will, His own spirit, inspired the surrender, and made it so infinitely acceptable. It was the real, genuine, willing, entire devotion of a man's self to God in obedience and submission; and this was the representative Man. If the Holy Ghost, conceived in any sense as separate from Christ, really inspired our Lord's surrender, then it was not, genuinely and simply, Christ's offering of Himself. The real merit of the offering belongs to the Holy Ghost who inspired it, not to Jesus—the Man Christ Jesus—who made it. We cannot use the term "spiritual spirit," though that might best convey the idea that is in the term "eternal spirit." We may say "Divine spirit"—the holy will and resolve of a Divine Being. So understanding the term, the point of the writer's reference to it comes fully into view. "By His own spirit—by that burning love which proceeded from His own spirit." *Moses Stuart* translates, "in an eternal spiritual nature"; and he explains thus: "It is in the heavenly world, in the tabernacle not made with hands, that the offering of our great High Priest is made. There He has presented Himself, in His heavenly or glorified state, in His eternal spiritual condition, or possessed of an eternal spiritual nature." *Dr. Moulton* says: "For the opinion that the reference is to the Holy Spirit there seems to be no foundation in the usage of the New Testament, and it is not indicated by anything in the context. The explanation of the words must rather be sought in the nature of our Lord, or in some attribute of that nature. The πνεῦμα of Christ is not the Holy Spirit, but the *higher principle* of spiritual life, which was not the Divinity (this would be an Apollinarian assertion), but especially and intimately united with it."

Ver. 15. *The Old and the New.*—It was a part of the mission of the apostles not to transfer the allegiance of the Jews from one God to another, but to teach them how to serve the same God in a higher dispensation, under a noble disclosure of His character and attributes by new and better methods. The Old was good; the New was better. We could scarcely conceive of Christianity as a system developed in this world, if it had not been preceded by the Mosaic economy. The Old was local and national in its prime intents and in its results. The New was for all ages. The Old was a system of practices; the New is a system of principles. The Old built men for this world. Therefore it hardly looked beyond this world. The whole force of the New is derived from its supereminent doctrine of the future. The Old addressed the conscience through fear. The New aims at the very springs of moral power in the soul, and that through love. The Old sought to build up around the man physical helps. It was a system of crutches and canes. The New strikes straight for character, by the force of a man's own will. The Old Testament was not wholly without its natural religion. To the Hebrew mind nature was one vast symbolism. With a far lower aim in character, the Old kept men in bondage. With immeasurably higher aim and larger requisition, the New yields liberty. The Old was a dispensation of secular morals. It lived in the past. The New is a system of aspiration. It lives in the future.

The Old was a system in which men remembered; the New is a system in which men aspire. The Old Testament was God hidden; the New Testament is God made known through Jesus Christ—a living force. We are the children of the New Testament, and not of the Old. Woe be to us if, living in these latter days, we find ourselves groping in the imperfections of the Old Testament, instead of springing up with all the vitality and supereminent manhood which belongs to the New Testament! We are the children of a living Saviour. To be a disciple of the New Testament is to have a living Head. It is to have a vital connection with that Head. It is to be conscious, while all nature speaks of God, and while all the exercises of religion assist indirectly, that the main power of a true religion in the soul is the soul's connection with a living God. Let your life mount up toward God.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

Redemption through Death.—Read "that, death having taken place for redemption from the transgressions," etc. The first covenant had been broken by "transgressions": unless there be redemption from these—that is, from the bondage of penalty which has resulted from these—there can be no promise, and no new covenant. In respect of this bondage, this penalty, the death of Christ was a ransom—an offering to God looked at in the light of a payment in the place of debt, service, or penalty due. When debt and payment are changed into the corresponding ideas of sin and punishment, the *ransom* gives place to the *sin-offering*, of which the principle was the acknowledgment of death deserved, and the vicarious suffering of death. So far our thought has rested on the removal of the results of the past. The covenant and the promise relate to the establishment of the better future. Death was necessary alike for both. "The offering of Christ's life (Matt. xx. 28) was a ransom or an offering for sin; it was also a sacrifice inaugurating a new covenant, which contained the promise of the eternal inheritance" (*Dr. Moulton*). It will be seen that this is a setting of truth designed to meet the ideas and associations of Jews, who would want to be assured that every obligation of the old covenant had been fully and honourably met. What precisely does the term "ransom" teach us when applied to the death of Christ? This much at least: that the death of Jesus, voluntarily endured, is somehow the means of delivering from death the souls of the many; He died, that they might live; He died willingly, because He believed that thereby He could render this service. This much, and perhaps not much more. How the death of the Son of man brings life to others, and whether the life thus procured could not be obtained in any other way, does not appear. We may have recourse to the sacrificial system in search of the needful supplementary explanations.—*Dr. A. B. Bruce.*

Ver. 16. *The Ratification of God's Covenant.*—For "testator," R.V. reads "Him that made it." Doddridge has paraphrased thus: "For where a covenant is, it necessarily imports the death of that by which the covenant is confirmed: since sacrificial rites have ever attended the most celebrated covenants which God hath made with man, so that a covenant is confirmed over the dead." And it is evident from the line of reasoning which the author of the epistle follows, that if διαθήκη is to be taken as equivalent to "covenant," then the death of the pacifier, or confirming instrument, is implied. Parkhurst and others suggest that "institution," or "dispensation," gives greater force, and is a just rendering. And though the idea of a will or testamentary document (as given in our A.V.) seems to fit in with vers. 16, 17, there is much difficulty in harmonising it with the whole passage.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18—22.

The Blood of the Covenant.—The word "testament" used in the previous verses is supplied in ver. 18, and it would have been better to have put in the old and familiar term "covenant." This is done in the R.V. Any arrangement made between two parties for their mutual benefit, which may be ratified by some common act, is called a "covenant." In the simple society of the ancient East, covenants could only be ratified by the taking of mutual vows and pledges, or by the sharing together in some symbolical and suggestive act. Sometimes a bargain was ratified by the two parties joining hands, before witnesses, in the gate of the city; at other times by mutually raising a heap of stones, and calling it by a particular name. There was also a custom of this kind: Wine was poured into an earthen vessel, and the contracting parties, cutting their arms with a knife, let some of the blood run into the wine, with which they stained their armour, and of which both parties drank, uttering at the same time the most dreadful curses upon the party that violated the treaty. In this passage the ratification of the Old Testament covenant with God is in part described. The great leader and lawgiver, Moses, had been in the mount with God, had received the law as from the Divine hand, and on his return to the camp he had gathered the tribes in a solemn assembly, and received from them the emphatic declaration of their resolve, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Then Moses prepared for a solemn act of ratification. He built an altar under the hill; that altar was to represent Jehovah, the one party to the covenant. He also set up twelve pillars, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. These represented the people, the other party to the covenant, the party to whom the covenant terms were offered. Then Moses slew certain animals, and divided the blood that flowed from them, sprinkling some on the altar, in token of God's making a vow to observe and keep all that He had pledged and promised in the covenant. The other half of the blood he kept back awhile, until he had again read to the people the covenant terms and the covenant sanctions, and had again received the people's acceptance in their united exclamation, "All that the Lord hath said unto us will we do, and be obedient." Then he took that half of the blood, and sprinkled it on those twelve representative pillars, expressing thus the solemn vow of the people, and making the vow take this impressive form: "We pledge our very *life* to our obedience. If we fail to keep this covenant, let our life be forfeited, let that life be taken, as has been taken the life of these beasts." Now in this ancient and formal Jewish covenant we are to see the model of the spiritual covenant which God makes with man in creating him, and arranging his sustenance and circumstance—the covenant which man makes with God in accepting life at His hands. Nobody is obliged to live: to choose to live is to accept God's covenant terms. We may not, as individuals, be able to appeal to a personal scene of ratification. That was done for our humanity by our first human father, Adam—just as it was done for all the Jewish race by that one Mosaic generation. And it was broken for us by that first father, as representing us. So we all come into the world with the claims of the everlasting covenant as strong upon us as upon Adam, but with all those disturbed conditions about us which have followed upon breaking the covenant, and with our life forfeit (as part of the life of humanity), in accordance with the solemn vow and pledge of that covenant. If then we are to be restored to gracious relations with God, we need—

I. **That God should be honoured by the surrender of the life that was pledged, if the covenant was broken.**—The Israelites sealed their covenant with blood. They thus expressed their readiness to surrender their own blood if they

broke the covenant. They did break it, and their lives we forfeited. God might have demanded the life of every Israelite, in vindication of His broken covenant. The fact that it was a covenant of mercy offered by God, and freely accepted by man, only makes the conditions more solemn. God can righteously demand one of two things—obedience to the covenant conditions, or the yielding of the forfeit. No man can save his honour, if he permits a covenant made with him to be broken, without taking any notice of the forfeit or penalty. Meeting us in our human sphere, and graciously using our human language, God shows us that He could not. The life of all Israel stood forfeited unto God. In this we have a model—a representation in material things of spiritual realities—of the great human covenant. To that also life is vowed and pledged. And that covenant too is broken. Our life, our whole life, is forfeit unto God. God cannot pass by that dishonoured covenant of His mercy. The penalty to which man pledged himself to submit must be exacted. Covenant-breakers must die,—die the death of the Divine absence from them; die the second, the spiritual death. Or else such satisfaction must be offered as shall uphold the Divine honour, declare the righteousness and worth of the Divine covenant in a most glorious manner, and so allow the penalty to be remitted. God can make no new covenant with men until, in some altogether satisfactory way, the old is honoured. And this every man feels is necessary to meet his deepest sense of right. How then has the difficulty been met? God has been pleased to permit the penalty to be exacted from one person only, a great race-head, a second Adam. Instead of demanding the forfeited life of every man, He required only the death of the representative man. And then comes in the marvel of all marvels. The God of the broken covenant was willing Himself to provide that one representative man. Here is a glimpse at least into the mystery of Christ's death. God saw humanity in Him—God accepted Him as the yielded life that was forfeit by the terms of the broken human covenant In that one God-man's voluntary death the old covenant is honoured, even while it is put away for ever. We could have no sure ground of hope, if that old covenant had not been so gloriously vindicated and honoured, or if God had not released the Sin-bearer from the grave, and accepted Him as the great human representative

II. **We need that the covenant should be newly made and newly ratified.**—And that also is done for us in Christ. He who bears for us the forfeit of the old is the gracious Mediator of the new. And the new covenant is a better covenant,—a covenant not of formal terms, but of gracious promises; not of particular deeds, but of the inner heart, and of the whole life. And this second, or new, covenant was also ratified by blood-shedding. It was taken under the same tremendous vows as the old; it was sealed by an infinitely more worthy sacrifice. "The patterns of things in the heavenlies were purified with blood of bulls and goats, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Yielding His life, as at once the forfeit of the old covenant and the solemn vow of the new, behold God and man are now one again, in Christ. "Ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

III. **The new covenant must be definitely accepted by each individual.**—We must personally and voluntarily enter into covenant. Its reconciliation, its access, its privileges, its status, cannot be ours until we willingly and lovingly accept the covenant made for us, and sealed for us, by the Lord Jesus Christ. He stands for men; by his own act of surrender each man must ensure that He stands for *him*, and is his Representative, his Mediator, and his Lord. But each must enter into the covenant for himself. No man can do it for him. No covenant of any fellow-creature will stand for him. Those who are within the privileges and responsibilities of the new covenant are counted one by one.

The Blood is the Life.—The warm blood of men, and of quadrupeds and birds, seemed to contain the very soul or life of the living earthly creature—to be almost identical with his soul. Now when the life and the soul were held to be something sacred, and the more tender feelings of certain nations took this view very early, it would follow that the blood too must be considered a sacred thing, and be regarded quite differently from the rest of the body. The sight of that which was held to be the soul itself carried the mind immediately to thoughts of God, placed directly before it something full of mystery, and filled it with profound awe.—*Ewald.*

Death for Remission.—How can the death of Christ be a condition of the remission of sins? This the *crux* of the whole subject. 1. The writer never suggests that Christ liberates us from liability to punishment by being Himself punished in our stead. It is true he said that Christ "was offered to bear the sins of many" (chap. ix. 28), but he does not say that this was to bear the punishment of sins; on the contrary, he carries our thoughts away to ideas of sacrifices in his use of the word "offered." 2. Neither does the writer teach that the value of the Atonement was derived from the amount of pain endured by our Lord. As we have seen, he attaches great importance to the sufferings of Christ, but this is in regard to His priesthood, not His sacrifice. He became a perfect priest, fully able to sympathise with His people, by means of the things which He suffered. Certainly the spirit of surrender requisite where much suffering has to be faced is proportionately greater than where the sacrifice is easily made. Thus suffering comes to enhance the value of sacrifice. But it does this indirectly, and it is not the suffering itself, but the refusal to shrink from it, which is valued. In the Hebrew ritual the death of the victims was as painless as possible; there is not a hint that their sufferings entered into the consideration of the worshippers. The real sacrifice was made by the offerer in the surrender of his property. The case of our Lord is entirely different—for one thing, because He appears in the two functions of sacrificing priest and sacrificial victim. It is in regard to the former of these functions, as the priest making the offering, that His sufferings come to be considered with supreme interest. 3. Where, then, is the specific value of His sacrifice? The author emphatically contrasts the tabernacle sacrifices with the sacrifice of our Lord, affirming that the former could only have a subjective influence on the worshippers as reminders of sin, not any objective efficacy in expiration thereof, because "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (chap. x. 4). That is to say, he saw quite clearly that no animal sacrifice could constitute a real atonement. Coming to the very different sacrifice of Christ, he quotes from Ps. xl., "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body didst Thou prepare for Me" (chap. x. 5). The first step, then, is the Incarnation. Christ comes in a human body. The following words in the quotation from the psalm are cited to indicate the purpose of the Incarnation in this connection: "Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God" (chap. x. 7). Christ was incarnate in order that, among other things, He might be subject to obedience. We are reminded of St. Paul's thought that He took on Him the "form of a servant" when He was "found in fashion as a man" in order that He might become "obedient even unto death" (Phil. ii. 7, 8). Further on the author tells us distinctly that our sanctification—and the whole course of the argument shows that by this he means our consecration to God in the cleansing of our consciences, *i.e.* the effecting of the Atonement—is accomplished by our Lord doing the will of God: "By the which will we have been sanctified" (chap. x. 10). The whole of our Lord's life was a course of perfect obedience to the will of God; that obedience was most severely tested, and, standing the test triumphantly, reached its crown and

climax at the cross. We need not search through regions of theological speculation; the truth is writ large upon the plain facts of our Lord's history. He would have been false to His mission if He had turned aside at the last, and fled into some safe retreat out of the reach of His enemies to end His days in obscurity. He was a martyr to His mission. His death was more than martyrdom, because He was more than man, and so through martyrdom could effect what no merely human martyr ever accomplished. His obedience was a superhuman obedience in a human life. Hence its supreme value. Can we not understand how God would accept this as the most precious of all offerings? Primitive man presents fruits from his farm and animals from his flock. These are simple, childlike gifts. Christ offers the one real sacrifice God cares for. God has no delight in blood. Mere death cannot be any satisfaction to Him. But He rejoices in obedience to His will; and when that obedience climbs to its highest pinnacle in an unflinching submission to death, He has the greatest offering that can be made. It is in response to such an offering, the obedience unto death of His own Son, that God grants remission of sins. This seems to be the idea of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, and I venture to say it is a nearer approach to a theory of the Atonement than is to be found anywhere else in the New Testament.—*Prof. W. F. Adeney, M.A.*

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 22. *No Remission save by Blood-shedding.*—Heathen and Jewish sacrifices rather show us what the sacrifice of Christ is *not* than what it is.—*Jowett.*

Repentance insufficient. — By the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, the notion of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt appears to be contrary to the general sense of mankind.—*Bishop Butler.*

Taking the Blood.—The death of the victim, instead of being a vicarious punishment, was no essential part of the transaction, but merely incidental as a means of affording the blood. The essence of the whole sacrificial service was the sprinkling of the blood, as the bearer of the life, upon God's altar, thus symbolising the giving away of the offerer's life to God; in other words, his returning back again to God, by repentance and faith and self-dedication, after being separated from Him by sin.—*Bähr.*

The Blood as a Type.—Nearly all things were purged with blood; certainly without blood was no remission —that peculiar thing "remission" was inseparable from blood. Sin-offerings were not merely tokens of the restoration of friendship between God and the offender; but the blood was the type of the great propitiation, and an acknowledgment, on the part of the offerer, that he had himself deserved death. It showed also that the death and suffering, not of the offender, but of one perfectly guiltless and incapable of sin, alone could procure remission.—*Webster and Wilkinson.*

Sin and Tresvass were atoned for, in a civil and ecclesiastical point of view, by appropriate sacrifices which bore the like names. But in this case the remission was only from a temporal penalty or calamity. It was not possible that such sacrifices could atone for sin, as viewed by the righteous governor of the world. God, as the head and king of the Jewish nation, granted remission of the penalty which Jewish law inflicted in many cases, on certain conditions. But this had respect merely to this present world, and not to the accountability of transgressors before the tribunal of the universe, in the world above. Even temporal forgiveness could not be obtained without

shedding of blood—so the necessity of atoning blood which possessed a higher virtue than that of beasts, in order to remove the penalty against sin, that was threatened in respect of a future world.—*Moses Stuart.*

Remission and Blood-shedding.—In these words, "apart from shedding of blood is no remission," we may find a fact stated and a fact suggested. The fact stated is that, under the Old Testament dispensation, the particular thing called "remission" was always attended with "blood-shedding." The fact suggested is that, under the New Testament dispensation, Jesus Christ did actually shed His blood for the remission of sins. It is possible to sweep away all the deeper meanings of the Jewish sacrifices by regarding them only as expressions of dependence and trust. We have to ask, not what is sacrifice to a *man*, but what to a *sinful* man, one who carries the burden of conscious transgression, and the fear of just penalty. In the Jewish sacrifices the sin of the individual or the nation was symbolically transferred, by confession, to the victim that was sacrificed. The Jewish view of sacrifice is thus stated by Abrabanel: "The blood of the offerer deserved to be shed, and his body to be burned, for his sin; only the mercy of the Divine Name accepted this offering from him as a substitute and propitiation, whose blood should be instead of his blood, and its life instead of his life." In the New Testament is given the historical fact that Jesus did die; or, to use the familiar figure, did "shed His blood." These two facts, the blood-shedding of Judaism and the blood-shedding of Jesus, answer to each other, as do type and antitype. "The patterns of things in the heavens (spiritual things) were purified with these (the blood of animals); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these"—even with the life, the will, the surrender, the sacrifice, of a spiritual being. The reality was not found in the Jewish sacrifices. They were but pictures of the reality. They bore relation to ceremonial offences, not to sin, in a spiritual sense. In the Old Testament economy there was a figure and an underlying reality. And in the New Testament sacrifice there is a corresponding outward figure and underlying spiritual reality. The Jewish system required of its worshipper a sacrifice which could have a twofold relation: (1) Could die as the bearer of his penalty, and (2) in its spotlessness could be accepted in his stead. That was the figure; but the man who rightly apprehended that ceremonial penalty and pollution saw it to represent the *moral* penalty under which his sin had brought him, and the moral pollution with which his sin had defiled him. A spiritually minded Jew must have said, "Restored to the tabernacle service, I am not restored to God: looked upon as clean by the priests, I am not looked upon as clean before God. No blood of beasts can touch moral pollution: no death of bulls or goats can carry away moral penalty." And so in the infinite sacrifice and meritorious blood-shedding of the Son of God there is a figure and an answering reality. If the sacrifice of Jesus had been *only* a spiritual sacrifice, if it had found no expression in bodily sufferings and bodily death, we men, so imprisoned in the senses, could never have realised it, could never have reached the blessing of it. Christ's bodily sufferings and blood-shedding are not, in themselves, His great sacrifice. They are the form it took for bodily eyes to see, the body it wore for this mortal sphere, the temple within which the real sacrifice of an obedient will was offered. And as the Jewish worshipper looked past the blood of bulls and of goats, and rested in the spiritual sacrifice, which was to be made in the person of Messiah, so the Christian worshipper now goes in behind the bodily sufferings and human death of our Divine Lord, which are to him somewhat as the outward ceremonies

were to the Jew, and discerns the inner, spiritual, infinitely satisfying sacrifice presented by Him when He made "His *soul* an offering for sin." Sin is a spiritual thing. It may express itself in deeds done in the body; but, in its essence, it is a thing of the spirit and the will. The sin is a soul-sin. The penalty is a soul-death. The remission can only come by a soul-sacrifice. When we say that Christ, as our sacrifice, bore the penalty for us, we mean the *spiritual* penalty. It found fitting outward expression in the agonies of an ignominious and violent death, but the infinite depth of suffering lay hidden—in behind—in the Redeemer's soul. Finding only once what seemed a suitable utterance in human language, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The chief objection against the truth of our Lord's substitutionary sacrifice is, that it represents the innocent as suffering for the guilty, which is supposed to override our natural sense of justice. But higher laws do affect lower ones. Abraham in loyal obedience to God put aside parental justice, and assayed to offer his son. Are there no cases in which our sense of justice permits the innocent to suffer for the guilty? Is there any law, in heaven or earth, that prevents an innocent man from *voluntarily* taking the place of the guilty? Is our sense of justice wronged when a man knowingly and willingly marries an almost bankrupt woman, and makes himself legally responsible for all her debts? And may not the Lord Jesus, knowingly, and willingly, and lovingly, marry this poor bankrupt bride of Humanity, and, with His eternal riches, bear all the burden of her debt? May not the Lord Jesus sustain such a relation to us, of His own free, generous, pitying sympathy, that, most righteously, our penalty should be transferred to Him? In the voluntary sacrifice of Christ; in that yielding of His soul, through the body, to the sinner's spiritual death, all men may see God's authority vindicated, God's honour established, sin exhibited in its hatefulness, sin smitten and broken in its power, and men deterred from loving and seeking it. And since it is God Himself who provided the sacrifice—nay, God Himself who is in the sacrifice—the revelations of the Divine glory and justice do not affright us; the disclosures of the infinite hatefulness of sin do not overwhelm us. The sacrifice of Jesus brings us full remission—holiness and mercy hand in hand: in it "righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Christ's Voluntary Sin-bearing.—When we see the offended God, the injured Sovereign, holy, just, and good—when we see Him at such a cost Himself provide the expiation which the dignity of His own law demands, and actually send His Son to die in our room, it is then that we begin to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the beauty and majesty of the Divine character, and the generous tears which suffuse our eyes are the first tears of true repentance which we have ever shed. That cross of Christ, with its great atoning sacrifice, lets me see God to be so great, and man so little—the Sovereign to be so good, and the rebel to be so bad: it shows on the one side such holiness and such love, whilst it shows on the other guilt so heinous, wickedness so inexcusable, and ruin so complete, that we need not wonder though we find man's pride reject the humbling truth. Orthodox people are charged with teaching that the philosophy of sacrifice consists in the necessity of punishing—that it is justice to let the blow fall somewhere, no matter where; blood must flow. But we never affirm that God visited our sins on the head of one who had no connection with these sins at all. God visited the sin on the head of One who, though personally innocent of it, did nevertheless put Himself voluntarily into such a relationship to the sinners as involved Him in the fullest legal responsibility for the sin. A man is beheaded for crimes that his

hands have committed—the body is a whole. So Christ and His Church are one body; He is the Head. When God the Father exacted the penalty of His people's sins from Jesus, He did so from One who, as the Head of the body, was as righteously responsible for them as if He had committed them all. —*Article, "Family Treasury," August* 1868.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23—28.

One Spiritual Sacrifice is Enough.—The point of the paragraph is evidently this—if you have symbolical, teaching sacrifices, you must repeat your object-lessons over and over again. If you have a spiritual sacrifice, embodying the principle which you have been teaching, once will do, and there is no call for repetition; your whole energy can be put into applying, adapting, and working out the principle. Christ's was a spiritual sacrifice; "once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself." "Christ also having been once offered to bear the sins of many."

I. **Christ's sacrifice is the better sacrifice.**—So much better as is represented by the difference between the dumb, unintelligent animal, and the speaking, thinking, feeling man, who has both will, and affections, and religious instincts. The gift of an animal could not interest God or win His favour, save as it stood for something, expressed something, carried to God a man's devotion and love. Then when a man was able to give that devotion and love directly, as Jesus Christ did, without the need of any animal to express His surrender, then we have the "better sacrifice." When we have that better sacrifice to represent our devotion and our love, we can contentedly let the lower forms of sacrifice pass away. We are satisfied; we are now worthily represented; it is enough.

II. **Christ, with His sacrifice, remains in the spiritual Holy of Holies.**—The old high priest went into the second chamber, taking the blood of the goat, but he did not stay in there; only the few drops that were sprinkled remained there. He came out, and must needs go in again by-and-by, when gathering human wilfulness and sin had broken off, or made uncertain, the relations of the people with God. But our spiritual High Priest went into the most secret chamber of the "temple not made with hands," took His sacrifice, which was Himself, with Him, and has never come out, and never will. He, our Priest, is there; He, our sacrifice, is there. And our standing with God abides; it cannot be imperilled. It is a standing on the ground of His acceptance, of the merit of His sacrifice. It is a standing secured and maintained by His priestly mediation. There is no call for any repetition of the sacrifice, for any renewal of the atonement day. The day never comes to an end. That is the better, the all-satisfying sacrifice which God has always before Him. That is the all-sufficient priest, who never has to *go* into the Holy of Holies, because He *is* there, and *abides* there, ever ministering in His unchangeable priesthood.

III. **Christ's sacrifice is the climax of sacrifices.**—For humanity it is the perfect sacrifice. It is inconceivable that man can ever have, to give to God, a better sacrifice than Christ gave. And it is as inconceivable that God, dissatisfied with that, can ever want another from man. And why? Because the absolutely perfect sacrifice which the creature man can make to God is "*himself, and himself at the very best that man can possibly be.*" But that is precisely the sacrifice which Christ offered to God. It was the "sacrifice of Himself," the "Man Christ Jesus." It was Himself as tested and proved, by the strains of a human life, and the agony of a painful and shameful death, to be the very best man that could possibly be. That cannot be repeated. It is

a climax once reached, and it stands for us for ever. Man has offered to God at last the sacrifice which God demands, and which through the long ages his sacrifices of bulls and goats did but vainly aim to reach. This is the "Lamb of God" who offered Himself for man, and, infinitely acceptable to God, "takes away the sin of the world." It is not only the better sacrifice; it is the best. Let man think the matter fully out, and he will surely fail to conceive a better sacrifice for humanity than Jesus *is*.

IV. **Christ's sacrifice need not be repeated, because it fully accomplished its ends.**—This is intimated in the reference to the judgment in vers. 27, 28. Death and the judgment represent all the woes brought into the world by sin. A redemption can do everything else, if it can deliver us from the death we dread, and give us salvation in the day when our earthly life is Divinely appraised. This is the power of the redemption in Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. "Because He lives we shall live also." And when before the throne, He, our Daysman, will be there for us, not now having to deal with our sin, "apart from sin," but to secure our full and final "salvation." Actual repetitions of the sacrifice of Christ there cannot be, there need not be, for the sacrifice is made once for all. Pictorial and symbolical representations of the sacrifice may be perilous, as suggesting doubts of the infinite value and sufficiency of the one offering once offered, which our High Priest is ever in the act of offering. The spiritual reality of the sacrifice needs to be fully realised, and then our interest in the historical occasion of the sacrifice, or the sublime occasion of the cross, would be felt to need no repetition in fact, and no pictorial or mystical reproduction. The "once" of the sacrifice is "once for all"; it is enough for ever.

Ver. 24. *Heaven itself.*—It is manifestly not in accordance with the writer's purpose to show that Christ has entered into the place of future bliss prepared for God's redeemed people. By heaven itself he means the spiritual world, the realm of spiritual realities. Heaven itself is contrasted with the "holy places made with hands." The tabernacle was a material tabernacle; Christ's mediation belongs to the spiritual tabernacle. Priests ministered with material things, the patterns and pictures of spiritual, heavenly things; the great High Priest with the spiritual, heavenly things themselves. In the earthly tabernacle there was the symbol of the Divine Presence; in heaven, in the spiritual world, is the Presence itself. Christ's work wholly belongs to the *spiritual* spheres.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 23. *The Better Sacrifice is Christ Himself.*—After we have made the most of the ancient sacrificial system, we are still much in the dark as to the connection between the death of the sacrificial victim and the pardon of sin. The Levitical sacrifices did not deal effectually with the problem. They were merely putative atonements for artificial sins—for the ignorances or ritual errors of the people, not for their great moral transgressions. More light comes to us by reflection on the nature of the sacrifice by which the new covenant is inaugurated than from the whole Levitical system. Here for the first time we have priest and victim united in one. Christ's sacrifice is Himself. Here the virtue lies not in the blood, though that is formally mentioned, but in the offering of a perfect will through the eternal spirit of holy love. In this offering God can take pleasure, not because of the pain and the blood-shedding, but in spite of these. By the virtue of this offering God is reconciled to the world, and can regard with a benignant eye a guilty race. We are accepted in the Beloved, the Messianic

King and His subjects being an organic unity in God's sight.—*Dr. A. B. Bruce.*

Ver. 24. *The Ascension.*—"Into heaven itself." We celebrate on this day the foundation, or rather the first manifestation to the world, of a great kingdom, of which our Lord is the supreme Head. He who was a perfect Man, the Exemplar of all goodness, at His departure was only removed from us in respect of sensible presence, and did not cease to be connected with us; He was transplanted to an invisible throne in heaven, where He reigns over us now, the King both of the living and the dead. He reigns over the Church triumphant. He reigns over this world below in which man still struggles with temptation and sin. What ought to be our feelings who know that our Lord and God, who reigns in heaven, is *man* too—that He is man now, and will be for ever in the fulness of glorified human nature? Different feelings possess us as we contemplate this glorified human nature in Christ our Judge, or our Intercessor. How would great numbers of men who follow their wills in this world, pursue through life an avaricious and selfish scheme, give all the strength of their faculties to gain worldly ends, but who do it all under a specious outside, and have explanations and justifications of their own conduct to themselves, feel if they knew that they had to undergo an examination and an estimate from a very wise, sagacious, and discerning *man* here, in this world? Would they not immediately be in a state of the most painful fear and apprehension? The *Man* Christ Jesus now scrutinises these men. However we may fear the countenance of man, we cannot escape being judged by One who is man. What a motive this ought to be to us to examine ourselves, to be true to ourselves, not to tamper with our own consciences, not to cloak our sins, not to dissemble and walk in crooked ways! But we also celebrate the entrance into heaven of our Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate. He sits there as High Priest to present to the Father His own atonement and sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He thus sits as High Priest and Mediator between God and man because He *is man*. He who is man could plead *for* man. It is our Lord's supreme place in the universe *now*, and His reign now in the worlds visible and invisible, which we commemorate in His ascension. We are specially told in Scripture never to think of our Lord as having gone away and left His Church, but always to think of Him as now reigning, now occupying His throne in heaven, and from thence ruling over all. This day especially puts before us our Lord in His human nature, because it was in that He ascended up to heaven. As Judge, He sees into all hearts; as Intercessor, He pleads our cause.—*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*

Ver. 27. *The Death-law for Humanity.*—"It is appointed unto men once to die." In this man does but take rank with the animals, and share natural conditions with them. The law of creation is that the living things, vegetable and animal, shall have possession of the earth in a constant succession, no one creature holding possession long, but producing its successor, and then itself passing away in what is called "death." So far as man is an animal, there is nothing to be said. It would be a woe for creation if man broke into the natural order as an exception. What has to be seriously considered is—How does the death-law affect man as a moral being, a being into whom is breath d a Divine life? This subject demands a treatise, and it can receive but a hint. At first sight we incline to think that God might have arrested the death-law, and given man an immortality on earth, in which he might grow into moral perfection. The reader must think out how certainly, for various reasons, moral man could never have reached moral perfection here on earth. The death certainty

and uncertainty are the mightiest moral forces acting on man.

Ver. 28. *Christ bearing the Sins of Transgressors.*—In what sense or manner is it that Christ bears the sins of the world? They were not put upon Him, or transferred to Him, so as to be His? That is impossible. Guilt is a matter so strictly and eternally personal, that nobody can be in it but the transgressor himself to whom it belongs. Apart from him it is nothing. Christ does not bear our sins in the sense that He bears our punishment. Everlasting justice forbids any such commutation of places in punishment. It is not conceivable that Christ bears our sin, in the sense that the abhorrence of God to our sin is laid upon Him, and expressed through and by means of His sufferings. How can God lay abhorrence upon what is not abhorrent? Christ, in bearing the sins of transgressors, simply fulfils principles of duty or holiness that are common to all moral beings, and does it as being obliged by those principles. If there is any fundamental truth in morals, it is that there is no superlative *kind* of merit or excellence; that so far as kind is concerned, the same kind is for us all, and there is no other. We are not then to look for some artificial, theologically contrived, never before heard of kind of good in the bearing of sins, but simply to look after what lies in the first principles of religious love and devotion, as related to the conduct of all.

I. **A general answer is this**—that Christ bears the sins of the world in a certain representative sense, analogous to that in which the priests and the sacrifices of the former altar-service bore the sins of the people worshipping. The phrase, "he shall bear his sin," or "bear his iniquity," when applied to the priests and sacrifices, cannot mean that they have the guilt actually put upon them: the words are to be taken in an accommodated, ritually formal sense, where the same thing is true representatively; the design being to let the people feel or believe that their sins are being taken away, *as if* put over upon the priests or upon the head of the victims. When the iniquities of Israel were put upon the head of their scape-goat, and he was driven out into the desert, they knew not where, there was neither any sin upon the goat nor any punishment. The reality of the whole matter stood in what was representatively signified, viz. the removal and clearance of their sin.

II. **A more particular statement of the subject-matter included under the general answer** embraces three particular modes, or distinctly and rationally conceived methods, of bearing sin by Him in His mission as a Redeemer. 1. He bears the sin of the world, by that assumption which His love must needs make of it. Love puts every being, from the eternal God downwards, into the case of all wrong-doers, sufferers, and enemies, to assume their evil, and be concerned for them. Being love, it assumes their loss, danger, present suffering, suffering to be; all their want, sorrow, shame, and disorder; and goes into their case to restore and save. When it is said that Christ "bare our sicknesses," it cannot mean that He literally bore the fevers, leprosies, etc., that He healed; it means that He took them upon His sympathy, bore them as a burden upon His compassionate love. In that sense, exactly, He assumed and bore the sins of the world. He took them on His love, and put Himself, by mighty throes of feeling, and sacrifice, and mortal passion, to the working out of their deliverance. Because the world in sin took hold of His feeling, was He able, in turn, to get hold of the feeling of the world, and become its true Deliverer and Saviour. In this fact lay embosomed the everlasting gospel. This must in no way be apprehended as if all meant was, that Christ came into such a life of sympathy and death of passion just to give us an example which we are

to copy. Nothing could be more impotent or further from the truth. Giving and copying examples is too tame a matter to be conceived as making out a gospel. 2. It is another and equally true conception of the bearing of sins by Christ, that He is incarnated into the state of sin, including all the corporate woes of penalty or natural retribution under it—woes that infest the world, the body, and the social and political departments of human affairs. The "curse," as a Scripture term, means that state of retributive disorder and disjunction that follows, under natural laws, the outbreak of sin. When Christ comes down into the world, to be incarnate in it and do His work of love, He enters Himself into its corporate evils, and takes them just as they are. His body, as being born in the flesh, has the mortal maladies and temptations of the curse working subtlely in it. The jealousy of Herod is the curse before which He flies into Egypt. The chief priests, and the rabbins, and the council, and Pilate, and Herod, all combined against Him, only represent the corporate wrath, and wrong, and curse of the world. 3. Christ bears the sin of the world, in the sense that He bears, consentingly, the direct attacks of wrong or sin upon His person; doing it, of course, in but a few instances, such as may have been included in His comparatively short life, but showing in these few instances how all the human wrongs are related to His feeling, or would be if He suffered them all. And here again it is that He gets an amazing power, as a Redeemer, over the sin of the world. He did not come into the world to suffer these wrongs as an end, or to brave them by an ostentation of patience. Coming into the world as the incarnate Word of God, God manifest in the flesh, He bears the wrong-doing of sin, not deficiently, but as feeling after the sin; letting it see what wrong it has in its nature to do, when the Son of God comes to it ministering love and forgiveness. When the sin found such a Being, even the incarnate Word of the Father, taking its blows in such patience, and dying under the blows, how dreadful the recoil of feeling it suffered! How wild, and weak, and low was it made to appear in its own sight. Thus it was that, in His bearing of sin upon the cross, Christ broke it down for ever. That death of His was great in power, not because He bore it, but because He was in the work of God's love, and bore it on His way, unable to be diverted from His end by that or any other death. In just that manner and degree it was in His heart to bear sin.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

Christ's Second Appearing.—"Shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation." Some care is necessary if we are to see why, and for what purpose, the writer introduced this reference to our Lord's second appearing. Moses Stuart helps us by translating, "Shall make His appearance a second time, without a sin-offering, for the salvation of those who wait for Him." Having died once for sin, Jesus will never repeat His sacrifice, and there can be no possible reason why He should. When He comes again it will be for another purpose, even to bestow rewards on those who trust in Him, and wait for His coming. Then we are left to consider what sort of a coming it must be which distributes rewards to His faithful ones, whose life-stories get completed at all sorts of times through all the Christian ages. It sets us upon serious thought how it is that the martyrs of the first age can be made to wait for their reward until Christ shall come again, in some material way, in some wondrous day that is yet to dawn. And it is puzzling to think how a bodily appearance of Christ, with temporal rewards, can possibly meet the needs of redeemed souls who have, for long ages, been in the spiritual

world as spiritual beings. It is evident that our apprehensions of the second coming of Christ need to be reconsidered, and need to be spiritualised. There can be no doubt that the early Christian disciples and Christian teachers anticipated the bodily reappearance of Christ in their time. If they were right in that anticipation, then Jesus did come to earth again in bodily form before the last of His apostles died. But we have to face the fact, that He did *not* come again in any bodily form in those times, and He has never come in such form at any time since then. What can we do in face of this fact, but say that the disciples must have misunderstood His promise, and translated literally what He meant to be taken spiritually. "The words which I speak unto you are spirit and are life." Christ does come again, and come with rewards. But He belongs to the spiritual world; His rewards are spiritual rewards; He gives them to spiritual men when they are free from the entanglements of the human body. He appears again to the soul in the moments of its freedom—appears for perfecting its salvation.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 14. *Philo's Divine Spirit.*—Professor Bruce aptly illustrates this passage by a citation from Philo. The question in the verse is this—How should the blood of Christ have so unlimited value as compared with that of bulls and goats? The reply is found in the phrase "by an eternal spirit." Philo in one place says that a man has two souls: the blood, the soul of the man as a whole; the Divine spirit, the soul of his higher nature. "We may conceive our author as consciously or unconsciously re-echoing the sentiment, and saying: 'Yes, the blood, according to the Scriptures, is the soul of a living animal, and in the blood of the slain victim its soul or life was presented as an offering to God by the officiating priest. But in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, we must think of the higher human soul, the Divine spirit. It was as a spirit He offered Himself, as a self-conscious, free, moral personality; and His offering was a spirit revealed through a never-to-be-forgotten act of self-surrender, not the literal blood shed on Calvary, which in itself possessed no more intrinsic value than the blood of Levitical victims.'"

Ver. 22. *Propitiation by Sacrifice.*—It has often been remarked that the idea of propitiation by sacrifice is to be found in connection with all the sacrifices of heathen nations. This is strikingly illustrated by the following account of one of the festivals of the North American Indians:—Dr. Edward Walsh describes a village, the houses of which surrounded a large green or common, in the centre of which the council-house or temple was erected. "It was lighted," he says, "by a few small, square apertures, close to the eaves, which also let out the smoke; consequently, it was somewhat dark. The door facing the west had a rude but spacious portico. The roof, which had a high pitch, was propped up within by four strong posts, between which was the hearth, with a large kettle over it. There was a seat all round, and the walls, which were formed of split plank, were half-way up covered with mats. Here we found a great number of Indians assembled. The women were ranged outside the wall, and the men surrounded the fire inside, at the head of whom was the high priest in his pontificals. His face was painted like the quarterings of a coat of arms, and he was furnished with a beard: he wore on his head a high tiara of beaver fur, stuck round with dyed porcupine quills: he had over his chest a kind of stomacher, worked in figures, and ornamented with wampum, which was supposed to represent the Jewish Urim and Thummim; in this, the Indians imagine some little spirit resides, which they talk to and consult in dubious events. Whilst the usual dance or chorus was performing, a dog which had been previously selected and fattened was boiling in the kettle: when cooked, the flesh was cut off, and the bones scraped clean and wrapped up in its skin. The flesh was then divided into small bits, and handed round on a wooden platter, to all those that surrounded the fire: at the same time, the high priest dipped a branch of hemlock pine in the broth, and sprinkled it everywhere, as well on the people as on the walls. The ceremony concluded with the circular dance and chant, in which the women joined. This chant, or hymn, is sung by all the Indian nations in North America, however they may differ in custom and language. Humboldt even heard it in Mexico, and it is supposed to be synonymous with the hallelujah of the Psalms. It was pricked down for me by a gentleman who understood

musical composition. To my ears it sounds like the lullaby of the nursery:—

'Tam le yah al lah le lu lah tam ye lah yo
ha wah ha ha hah!'

It must be admitted that this ceremony bears some rude resemblance to the feast of the Passover, substituting a dog for a lamb, of which they have none; but dogs are sacrificed on all solemn occasions."

Eastern Covenant Customs.—While in Abyssinia, Bruce the traveller wished to go from one place to another, and the sheikh had assured him that the journey might be undertaken with safety. "But," said Bruce, "suppose your people meet us in the desert, how shall we fare in that case? Should we fight?" "I have told you, sheikh, already," said he, "cursed be the man that lifts his hand against you, or even does not defend and befriend you to his own loss, even were it Ibrahim, my own son." Then after some conversation, the old man muttered something to his sons in a dialect Bruce did not understand, and in a little time the whole hut was filled with people, the priests and monks of their religion, and the heads of families. "The great people joined hands, and uttered a kind of prayer—really the oath—about two minutes long, by which they declared themselves and their children accursed if ever they lifted their hands against me in the field, in the desert, or on the river; or, in case that I or mine should fly to them for refuge, if they did not protect us at the risk of their lives, their families, and their fortunes, or as they emphatically expressed it, 'to the death of the last male child among them.' Medicines and advice were given on my part, faith and promises pledged on theirs; then two bushels of wheat and seven sheep were carried down to my boat."

Classical Covenant Customs.—An ancient writer relates that Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks at the siege of Troy, "to confirm his faith sworn to Achilles, ordered victims to be brought. He took one, and with his sword divided it in the midst, placed the pieces opposite to each other, and holding his sword, reeking with blood, passed between the separated pieces." Livy, the Roman historian, relates that in the time of Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, it was the custom, at the lustration or purification of the armies, to cut off the head of a dog, and then make the whole army file between the head and the trunk. Compare Jer. xxxiv. 18.

The Scottish League and Covenant.—The most remarkable modern reproduction of the ancient covenant may be found in Scottish history. It was a confession of faith made in the year 557, A.D., and a mutual agreement to maintain that confession even at peril of death. "As the hour drew near people from all quarters flocked to the spot, and before the commissioners appeared the Greyfriars Church and Churchyard, Edinburgh, were densely filled with the gravest, the wisest, and the best of Scotland's pious sons and daughters. The long roll of parchment was brought, the meaning and purpose of the covenant explained. Then a deep and solemn pause ensued; not the pause of irresolution, but of modest diffidence, each thinking every other more worthy than himself to place the first name upon this sacred bond. An aged nobleman, the venerable Earl of Sutherland, at last stepped slowly and reverentially forward, and with throbbing heart and trembling hand subscribed Scotland's covenant with God. All hesitation in a moment disappeared. Name followed name in quick succession, till all within the Church had given their signatures. It was then removed into the churchyard, and spread out on a level gravestone. Here the scene became still more impressive. The intense emotions of many became irrepressible. Some wept aloud; some burst into a shout of exultation; some after their names added the words 'till death'; and some, opening a vein, subscribed with their own warm blood. And when every particle of space was filled, there was another solemn pause. The nation had framed a covenant in former days, and had violated its engagements; if they, too, should break this sacred bond, how deep would be their guilt! Such seems to have been their thought; for, as if moved by one spirit—the one eternal Spirit—with low, heart-wrung groans, and faces bathed in tears, they lifted, with one consent, their right hands to heaven, avowing by this sublime appeal that they had now joined themselves unto the Lord in an everlasting covenant, which should not be forgotten."—*T. Guthrie.*

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST'S ONE SACRIFICE IS ALTOGETHER SUFFICIENT.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THE first eighteen verses of this chapter are in the nature of a summary of what has already been presented, with some further unfoldings of the argument. One point is made especially prominent; it is that the repetition of the olden sacrifices testified to their inadequacy, while Christ's one offering is perpetually availing to complete the purification of those who are affected by it. The main thesis of the writer should be kept well before the mind. He argues that the Jewish sacrifices availed for nothing more than external or ceremonial purifications, but the one offering of the obedient will of Christ purifies the soul or mind (*συνείδησιν*) from the uncleanness of sin, and renders it capable of offering acceptable service to the living God.

Ver. 1. **The law.**—Used here for the Mosaic system or dispensation. The term is used in the New Testament with other meanings, such as the Ten Commandments, the general law relations of God with man. See St. Paul's use of the word in Romans and Galatians. **Shadow.**—Imperfect sketch. **Very image.**—Full representation. The words *σκιάν* and *εἰκών* are related, as the Latin *umbra* and *effigies* are. See chap. i. 3. *Stuart* gives the point of the sentence thus: "The law did not go so far as to exhibit a full image of future blessings, but only a slight adumbration." *Farrar* quotes the following sentence from St. Ambrose: "The Law had the Shadow; the Gospel the Image; the Reality itself is in Heaven." **Good things to come.**—See chap. ix. 11. The spiritual things of the new dispensation. Christ is the very image of God. Christ's work is the very image of heavenly realities. Only it is the *image*, not the *reality*. **Can never.**—This vital imperfection lay in those older sacrifices. **Perfect.**—Much importance attaches to the writer's use of this word. Compare chap. ix. 9, 10. It is used here in the sense of fully meeting the whole circle of our spiritual need. The ineffectiveness of the sacrifices is shown in the fact that the sense of sin which they are supposed to remove recurs again, so that fresh sacrifices are found necessary.

Ver. 2. **Not have ceased.**—The Mosaic ritual might have been retained if it had proved efficient. The precise thought here is, however, rather this—"If the offerings could have perfected those who presented them, would not the offerings have ceased?" It might be answered, "They would have ceased so far as concerned the offerers once purged, but they would have had to be constantly renewed for the sake of *other* worshippers." **Conscience.**—*συνείδησιν*; apprehension of the consequences of sin; consciousness of guilt. Pardon does not remove the fact of our guilt, nor destroy the memory of it, but it does remove the fear of penalty, and bring a sense of freedom.

Ver. 3. **Remembrance.**—By the repetition of the same sacrifice for the same person. The writer dwells on his point so fully, because this view of the essential imperfection of Judaism would be exceedingly distasteful to his Jewish readers. But the inefficiency would not be apparent to those who lived under the Mosaic dispensation. It came to view only when the higher and spiritual dispensation was introduced. In the light of Christianity the weakness of Judaism appears. *Farrar's* note on this verse is specially suggestive: "This view of sacrifices—that they are 'a calling to mind of sins yearly'—is very remarkable. It seems to be derived from Num. v. 15, where 'the offering of jealousy' is called 'an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.' Philo also speaks of sacrifices as providing, 'not an oblivion of sins, but a reminder of them.' But if the sacrifices thus called sins to remembrance, they also daily symbolised the means of their removal, so that when offered obediently with repentance and faith they became valid symbols."

Ver. 4.—"This verse explains those which precede. No inconsistency really belonged to these sacrifices and this ceremonial, though so often repeated; for it was impossible that any such sacrifice should really remove sin. The offering was necessary, and it answered its purpose; but it could not remove the necessity for another and a better offering" (*Moulton*). **Not possible.**—Compare 1 Sam. xv. 22; Isa. i. 11-17; Jer. vi. 20, vii. 21-23; Amos v. 21-24; Mic. vi. 6-8; Hos. vi. 6; Ps. xl. 6-8, etc. "Sins" and "blood of animals" have no necessary relation to each other; none save that which, for teaching purposes, God pleases to fix to them. Sins can only be taken away by spritual influences exerted on spiritual conditions. All physical, material sacrifices are symbols of spiritual things. So is Christ's *bodily* sacrifice. (See Outline Homily on chap. ix. 22.) **Sins.**—Properly and precisely speaking, sin is not a particular act which is done, but the wilful condition of the mind, for which the act only finds expression. In this verse not *penalties* are dealt with, but *sins*. All sacrifices had their value, not in themselves, but in the spiritual condition of the worshippers, as is clearly seen in the cases of Cain and Abel, the first sacrificers.

Ver. 5. **When He cometh.**—As antitype; spiritual realisation. See Ps. xl. 7. **Sacrifice and offering.**—The two classes of sacrifice that Judaism demanded. Victims sacrificed; slaughtered beasts; and unbloody offerings expressing gratitude and dependence. **Wouldest not.**—See ver. 7. No desire for any more such; desire now is for the reality that was symbolised in them. **A body hast Thou prepared Me.**—The Hebrew seems to mean, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," or "ears hast Thou dug, or hollowed out, for Me." The Hebrews speak of "opening the ears," and of "uncovering the ears," in order to designate the idea of prompt obedience, of attentive listening to the commands of any one. The idea, "Mine ears hast Thou bored through in token of My servitude," does not appear at all suitable here. Better read, "Thou hast given Me the power of hearing, so as to obey. A channel of communication has been opened, through which the knowledge of God's true will can reach the heart, and excite the desire to obey." The obedience (sacrifice) of Christ was the full surrender of His will to the will of God: but to be a human obedience, bearing relation to us, it must have a *body* sphere. This explains the physical phase of the great sacrifice.

Ver. 6. **Burnt-offerings.**—Should be "whole burnt-offerings." These represented the full surrender of himself by the offerer, when they were made really spiritual sacrifices. Usually they were regarded but as ceremonials. The idea of corrupt Judaism is, that God is pleased with burnt-offerings as offerings, and for their own sake.

Ver. 7. **In the volume of the book.**—Besides the reference to Ps. xl., the writer intimates that this is the general burden of the Messianic allusions in the Old Testament Scriptures. **Come to do Thy will.**—Clearly stating wherein consists the true spiritual sacrifice, even in the full surrender of Christ's whole self in obedience to God, through life and death. Perfect human obedience in human spheres God required. He who rendered it made the "great sacrifice."

Ver. 10. **By the which will.**—Or by the yielding to the will, in obedience unto death. Or by the voluntary self-sacrifice of Christ. **We are sanctified.**—Set right and made right. Observe how entirely this is conceived by the writer in a spiritual sense. The antitypical sacrifice is the offering of the will of Jesus, in obedience to the Divine will. But our wills can only act, and gain expression, through our bodies and our bodily relations, and therefore our Lord's sublime self-surrender took a bodily form.

Ver. 12. **This man.**—The expression is intended to remind us of His relation to us as federal Head. **For ever.**—Or as we use the word, "finally." Never again to be repeated. **Sat down.**—Implying two things: (1) the acknowledgment of the acceptance of His sacrifice; and (2) the delegation to Him of the right and the power to apply to men the benefits gained by the sacrifice.

Ver. 14. **Perfected for ever.**—As above, "finally." Not "at once," "entirely," "as soon as they believe." The word stands in relation to the "repetition" spoken of above.

Vers. 15-18. **Holy Ghost.**—As the seal and witness. The redemption wrought by Christ alters, once for all, our standing with God. But this writer is evidently supremely anxious to impress the moral value and sphere of the redemptive work. Our vital and saving relations of faith and love, with Christ, bring to us a new principle of obedience, and inspiration to righteousness. With these established in us, all the past of our sin can be freely and fully forgiven. This concludes the doctrinal portion of the epistle, and the writer proceeds to give further exhortations, and fresh appeals and encouragements, all clearly intimating that his main purpose was not speculative or theological, but practical and moral. Indeed, the writer is rather a rhetorician than a theologian, with a keener eye to the setting of truth that tells than to the abstract value or argumentative soundness of the setting. Under the influence of the Alexandrian School, he is under constant temptation to overpress the significance of single words. And, altogether, his argument must be regarded as much better suited to the mystical mind of the East than to the logical mind of the West.

Ver. 19.—Compare chaps. iv. 14-16. **Brethren.**—A sign of the conciliatory tone which the writer is anxious to preserve. **Boldness.**—See on chaps. iii. 6, iv. 16. **Enter into the holiest.**—Free access to the sanctuary. This point the writer has argued. **By the blood of Jesus.**—*ἐν τῷ αἵματι. Moulton* says, "It is not that we enter with the blood, as the high priest entered the Holy of Holies (chap. ix. 25); no comparison is made between Christ's people and the Jewish high priest. But as when he entered within the veil the whole people symbolically entered in with him, so do we enter with our High Priest, who 'by means of His own blood' entered for us into the immediate presence of God. In that through which He entered we have our 'boldness to enter.'"

Ver. 20. **Consecrated.**—Or "inaugurated." **His flesh.**—"Through His suffering humanity He passed to His glory."

Ver. 21. **An high priest.**—*ἱερέα μέγαν*, a great priest. See Zech. vi. 11-13.

Ver. 22. **Sprinkled, etc.**—Allusion is to the ceremonies by which the Jewish priests were cleansed from ceremonial defilements. The writer thinks of Christian believers as being "priests unto God" (Rev. i. 5, 6).

Ver. 23.—For **faith**, R.V. properly reads "hope." **Without wavering.**—Or, "so that it do not bend."

Ver. 24. **Provoke.**—A singular word to use here, because it is generally employed in a bad sense. There seems to be an implied reproof of the contentions of the disciples, which had been "provocations" in a *bad* sense.

Ver. 26. **Sin wilfully.**—Such sins contrast with sins of ignorance, frailty, and error. Involving the *will*, they put men outside the influence of remedial or recovering agencies. **No more sacrifice for sins.**—Lit. "no sacrifice for sins is any longer left to them." They wilfully reject that, and there is no other for them. It is distinctly assumed that the man *keeps* in this wilful mind. If he comes to a better mind, he comes within the range of the sacrifice that has been provided. "The writer does not say that they have exhausted the infinite mercy of God, nor can we justly assert that he held such a conclusion; he only says that they have, so long as they continue in such a state, put themselves out of God's covenant, and that there are no other covenanted means of grace."

Ver. 27. **Fiery indignation.**—R.V. "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire." Lit. "a jealousy of fire." The Hebrew suggests "vehement displeasure." Compare chap. xii. 29; Ps. lxxix. 5. **Devour the adversaries.**—Not sinners generally, but specifically the impenitent Jews and the wilful apostates from the Christian faith. "All who oppose themselves to the character, claims, and kingdom of Christ." *Farrar's* hint concerning the limitation of this threatening deserves careful consideration: "It is at least doubtful whether the writer meant to imply anything beyond that prophecy of doom to the heirs of the old covenant which was fulfilled a few years later, when the fire of God's wrath consumed the whole system of a Judaism which had rejected its own Messiah."

Ver. 29. **Punishment.**—Here the word used (τιμωρίας) means "vengeance," or "retribution." "Vindictive punishment can only be attributed to God by the figure of speech known as *anthropopathy*, *i.e.* the representation of God by metaphors drawn from human passions." **Trodden underfoot.**—A strong figure taken from our way of treating a thing that we despise. **Blood of the covenant.**—See chap. xiii. 20. **Done despite unto.**—Openly insulted; ἐνυβρίσας, only here in New Testament; treating with spite, malignity, or contempt. **Spirit of grace.**—The Spirit who bestows grace, *i.e.* gospel favours and privileges. It is not, however, quite clear that the Holy Ghost is referred to.

Ver. 32. **Illuminated.**—Enlightened, by the preaching of the Christian truth. (Compare 2 Cor. iv. 6; 1 Pet. ii. 9.) At a later period the word φωτισθέντες became a synonym for "to baptise."

Ver. 33. **Gazing-stock.**—Lit. "as one set on a theatrical stage."

Ver. 34. **In heaven.**—An incorrect reading. R.V. has, "knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one." *Moulton* thinks the translation should be, "perceiving that ye have your own selves for a better possession and one that abideth." "He points them to the tranquil self-possession of a holy heart, the acquisition of our own souls, as a sufficient present consolation for the loss of earthly goods, independently of the illimitable future hope."

Ver. 38. **The just shall live by faith.**—A much-disputed sentence. In some manuscripts the word μου is found, which alters the idea of the clause. ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, would mean, "But My righteous one shall live by faith." In the Hebrew of Habakkuk the word "faith" means "faithfulness" or "fidelity"; and that is probably the writer's meaning here. He is commending steadfastness as opposed to defection from the faith. "But the thought of faithful constancy to God is inseparably connected with trustful clinging to Him." A man *lives* indeed if he is faithful.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—10.

The Shadow and Image of Sacrifice.—The law of all effective teaching is, "Simplify and repeat." This writer does not hesitate to repeat, endeavouring to fix on attention the points which he regards as of supreme importance. In the first portion of this chapter there is a summary of previous teachings. He had previously spoken of the "law," or ceremonial and sacrificial system of Judaism, as a copy, or shadow, of heavenly or spiritual things (chap. viii. 5). He does not deny the value of the shadow, but it is a value which strictly belongs to it as a shadow, and we must never get to value it for its own sake, only for the sake of the reality, whose existence, and whose presence, it indicates. "Shadow" is an imperfect sketch, a mere outline, a slight representation or resemblance. "Image" is a picture filled out or completed,

and made, in all its minuter parts, to resemble the original. Illustration may be found by contrasting the black outline portraits, which were the fashion fifty years ago—mere shadows of our friends—and the modern photographs, which give us their very image. But we need not be so strictly limited to the exact meaning of the terms which this writer uses. And this explanation hardly seems to catch his point of distinction. A shadow is not an independent thing. It is thrown by something. Something real, substantial, exists, which casts the shadow, and which the shadow, in some imperfect way, represents. To this writer the spiritual relations of men with God, as secured by the spiritual sacrifice of the spiritual High Priest, form the reality, the thing itself, the "image"; and the material, outward, ceremonial system of Judaism was the shadow which it flung on earth beforehand, to give men some outline idea of it, and prepare them for realising it fully by-and-by. Taking this view, we inquire—

I. **What the "shadow" was.**—A system of rules, rites, sacrifices; involving a material tabernacle, articles of furniture, and an order of priesthood. All Divinely arranged, and bearing Divine authority. In no sense to be thought of as an independent system, or an independent revelation. It was the shadow that belonged to something, and told of what it belonged to. No man ever saw it aright without saying, "What can that be which has caused this shadow?"

II. **What the "shadow" could do.**—Meet the needs of the hour, which were not purely spiritual needs. Religious education was then in no sense complete. It was in its pictorial stage. The nation of Israel was then in its formative period. It was getting all its civil, social, and governmental relations put into order. All its interest was in outward things, and its religion had to be in harmony, and to be concerned also with outward things. So the "shadow" religious system was occupied with arranging religious affairs, and rectifying them when they became disturbed.

III. **What the "shadow" could not do.**—Satisfy spiritual needs. Deal with the personal, the soul, relations of men with God, who bore on them the conscience of sin. The shadow could take away ceremonial penalties: it could not take away sin. It could not "make the comers thereunto perfect." It might help the spiritually-minded to enter into that spiritual reality, that eternal meaning of things, which its outline could only suggest.

IV. **What the "Image" was.**—A spiritual High Priest, abiding ever in the presence of God mediating for man. The spiritual and infinitely acceptable sacrifice of the High Priest Himself. The offering of a spotless life of obedience, tested and proved by the strain of an awful death. That sacrifice ever in God's view, because the Priest is always before Him. And a spiritual covenant which pledges, not the mere shaping of conduct, but the renewal of men's hearts and wills; the implanting of a love which will make obedience both easy and acceptable.

V. **What the "Image" could not do.**—Fit to the age that was past; or to those who persisted in keeping the attitude, and limited capacity, that properly belonged to the past. The times were changed; men's spiritual instincts were awakened; and the system that was called for could do nothing for those who kept down on the materialistic, symbolical, and ceremonial levels. *Farrar* illustrates the awakened spiritual feeling of the times in which the epistle to the Hebrews was written when he says: "Philo, in one of his finest passages, shows how deeply he had realised that sacrifices were valueless, apart from holiness, and that no mere external acts can cleanse the soul from moral guilt. He adds that God accepts the innocent even when they offer no sacrifices, and delights in unkindled altars if the virtues dance around them. The heathen had learnt the same high truths."

VI. **What the "Image" could do.**—Remove *sins*—the spiritual penalties that necessarily follow sins: the conscience of sins which always burdens when the

spiritual nature of sin is apprehended. It effected the purging, or cleansing away, of sinfulness, which in its essence is child-wilfulness; and this goes when into the child-heart is put again, through the sacrifice, mediation, and grace of Christ, the spirit of child-obedience. The dispensation which is the very image and reality can make men and women once again, and once for ever, "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty."*

The relativity of a religion of shadows.—The efficiency of a religion of shadows lies in its relativity to a particular age, and a particular people. The Syrian Version gives the first sentence of ver. 1 thus: "The law—not having the reality of the things." The Greek word for "image" means, not a resemblance or likeness, but the essential form of a thing. It stands as the representative of σῶμα, the body or substance.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *The Imperfect Efficiency of the Jewish Sacrifices.*—"They can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh" (R.V.). *Dr. J. Harris* says: "What is the Jewish economy, if we desire to reach its interior truths, but a vast, profound, elaborated enigma—to which the gospel, indeed, brings us the key, but the opening and exploration of which is yet incomplete?" The legal sacrifices, being offered year by year, could never make the comers thereunto perfect, for then there would have been an end of offering them. Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity—could they have purified and pacified conscience—then they had ceased, as being no further necessary, since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case; after one day of atonement was over, the sinner would fall again into one fault or another, and so there would be need of another day of atonement, and of one every year, besides the daily ministrations. Whereas now, under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated, and the sinner, once pardoned, is ever pardoned as to his state, and only needs to renew his repentance and faith, that he may have a comfortable sense of a continued pardon. As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should (ver. 4). There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with those who sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to the justice and government of God. They were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. Much less were they of the same nature that was offended, and nothing less than the nature that was offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 2. *The Bad Consciousness taken away.*—The reading is, not "conscience of no more sins," as if the sins were stopped, but "no more conscience of sins," as if the conscience of sins already past were somehow extirpated,

* An image is an exact draft of the thing represented thereby. The law did not go so far, but was only a shadow, as the image of a person in a looking-glass is a much more perfect representation than his shadow upon the wall. The law was a very rough draft of the great design of Divine grace, and therefore not to be so much doted on.—*Matthew Henry.*

or else the sins taken quite away from it, and for ever extirpated themselves, as facts, or factors of the life. How is it, or how is it to be imagined, that Christ, by His sacrifice, takes away the condemning conscience, or the felt dishonour of transgression?

I. **The supposed answers that are not sufficient.**—When it is conceived that Christ has borne our punishment, that, if it were true, might take away our fear of punishment; but fear is one thing, and mortified honour, self-condemning guilt, self-chastising remorse, another and very different thing. Neither will it bring any relief to show that the justice of God is satisfied. Be it so; the transgressor is none the better satisfied with himself. Is it conceived that what has satisfied the justice of God has also atoned the guilty conscience? Will it then make the guilty conscience less guilty, or say sweeter things of itself, that it sees innocence, purity, goodness Divine, put to suffering for it? Is it then brought forward to quell the guilt of the conscience that Christ has evened our account legally by His sacrifice, and that we are even justified of God for Christ's sake? But if God calls us just, do we any the less certainly disapprove ourselves? Forgiveness, taken as a mere release of claim, or a negative letting go of right against transgression, brings, if possible, even less help to the conscience. Christ had forgiven His crucifiers in His dying prayer, but it was the very crime of the cross, nevertheless, that pricked so many hundred hearts on the Day of Pentecost. But Christ renews the soul itself, it will be said, and makes it just within, when, of course, it will be justified. That does not follow. But the fatherhood of God—the disciple of another school will take refuge under that, and say that here, at least, there is truly no more conscience of sin. Conscience, in man, is God's throne of judgment in the man. If God, in His fatherhood, were a being dealing in laxities and fond accommodations, having no care for His rectoral honour, as the defender of right and order, we certainly are not such to ourselves.

II. **The answer that is given by the Scriptures of God.**—Is it possible, and how far possible, to change the consciousness of a soul, without any breach of its identity? In this manner, we shall find, the gospel undertakes to remove, and assumes the fact of the removal of, the dishonour and self-condemnation of sin. See first certain analogies. A thoroughly venal, low-principled man, elected President of the United States, will undergo, not unlikely, an inward lifting of sentiment and impulse, corresponding with the immense lift of his position. He wants to deserve the place, and begins to act in character in it. How many thousand soldiers, who before were living in the low, mean vices, lost to character and self-respect, have been raised, in like manner, in our armies, to quite another grade of being! The same is true, in a different way, of all the gifted ones in art and speech and poetry when they are taken by the inspirations of genius. When such a soul, that was down upon the level of uses, torturing itself into production for applause, begins to behold God's signature upon His works, then he becomes to himself quite another creature. In such examples we are made familiar with the possibility of remarkable liftings in the consciousness of men, such as make them really other to themselves, and set them in a higher range of being; and we are prepared for that more wonderful ascent above ourselves which is accomplished in Christ, when He takes us away from the conscience of sins. He does it by so communicating God, or Himself as the express Image of God, that He changes, in fact, the plane of our existence. The very thing that Christianity proposes is to bring us up into another level, where the consciousness shall take in other matter, and have a higher range. But you will not conceive how very essential this idea of a raising of the consciousness

may be, if you do not bring up distinctly the immense fall of our moral consciousness in the precipitation of our sin. In their true normal condition, as originally created, human souls are inherently related to God, made permeable and inspirable by Him, intended to move in His Divine impulse for ever. A sponge in the sea is not more truly made to be filled and permeated by the water in which it grows, than a soul to be permeated and possessed by the infinite Life. It is so made that, over and above the little tiny consciousness it has of itself, it may have a grand, all-inclusive consciousness of God. In that consciousness it was to be, and be lifted and blessed evermore. But this higher consciousness, the consciousness of God, is exactly what was lost in transgression, and nothing was left of course but the little defiled consciousness of ourselves, in which we are all contriving how to get some particles of good, or pleasure, or pride, or passion, that will comfort us. The true normal footing or plane of our humanity was thus let down, and it is exactly this which Christ undertakes to restore. As soon as the soul is opened to God, by the faith of Jesus Christ, and is truly born of God, it begins to be the higher creature God meant it to be—the same yet another. The disciple, raised thus in his plane, has the same consciousness, and remembers the same sins, and is the very same person that he was before; but the consciousness of God, now restored, makes him so nearly another being to himself, that the old torment of his sin will scarcely so much as ripple the flow of his peace. If Christ is purging thus men's consciences, by lifting them above themselves, into a higher range of life, the conception will appear and reappear, in many distinct forms, and weave itself in so many varieties, into the whole texture of Christianity. Three of the forms may be noticed: 1. *Justification by faith.* Gospel justification turns on no such mere objective matter as the squaring of an account, nor on any such subjective matter as our being made inherently righteous; but it turns on the fact of our being so invested with God, and closeted in His righteous impulse, that He becomes a felt righteousness upon us. Inherently speaking, we are not righteous; our store is in God, not in ourselves; but we have the supply traductively from Him, just as we have the supply of light from the sun. But the new Divine consciousness in which we live is continually conforming us, more and more deeply, and will settle us at last, in its own pure habit. It is "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe." It is a higher consciousness which God generates and feeds, and as long as He does it there is no more conscience of sins. 2. The same truth of a raising of our plane appears in what is called *the witness of the Spirit.* Being spirit, we are permeable by the Divine Spirit, and He has a way of working in our working, so as to be consciously known as a better presence in our hearts. 3. It is also presented in what is said of the *conscious inhabitation of Christ.* "Until Christ be formed in you." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is as if Paul's being itself were taken well-nigh out of its identity by Christ revealed in it. The old sin he does not think of. The conscience of sins—it may be that he has it in a sense; for, being an eternal fact, he must eternally know it; but the Christ-consciousness in him ranges so high above the self-consciousness, that he lives in a summit of exaltation, which the infinitesimal disturbances of his human wrong and shame cannot reach. When once you have conceived the possibility of raising a soul into a higher grade and order, where the consciousness shall take in more than the mere self, the body of God's own righteousness and love and peace, the problem is solved, and that in a way so plain, yet so easily ennobling to our state of shame, that it proves itself by its own self-

supporting evidence.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

Conscience of Sins after Ceremonies.—"Should have had no more conscience of sins." Ritual religions can never deal with any more than the legal penalties attending on sin, and the outward relations into which men are brought by sin. There may be a personal and spiritual religion within the ritual, and finding expression through it, or there may not. The spiritual religion within is by no means essential to the efficiency of the ritual religion, so far as it goes. But it is evident that no ritual religion can alone suffice to meet the necessities of man as a spiritual being, standing in spiritual relations; afflicted in conscience, as well as disturbed in relations, by sin. No ritual ever yet cleansed a conscience of its sense of sin, or lifted from a soul its burden of guilt. This may be effectively illustrated by the religion represented by the book of Psalms. Such psalms as the thirty-second and fifty-first bring before us men who have, or who have had, the conscience of sin. But they do not seek their soul-relief from Levitical sacrifices, from any routine ceremonies. They evidently feel instinctively that these cannot meet their case. They go direct to God Himself, past all ceremonies and symbols, seeking personal relations, and immediate forgiveness.

Ver. 4. *Everything to its Sphere.*—Everything that exists by nature, and everything that takes shape "by art and man's device," has its proper sphere, its adaptation to that sphere, and its efficiency within that sphere. Nothing can be its real, best self, nothing can be really efficient, outside of or transcending its proper sphere. It does not fit. It is too large, or too small, or otherwise. Blood of bulls and goats has a sphere, strictly limited to the removal of ceremonial uncleanness. It is efficient there. It is helpless in the sphere of soul-sin and burdened conscience.

Ver. 5. *A Living Sacrifice.*—These words, as used of Christ, unfold the mystery of His redeeming work: as used by the psalmist, they show us what is the spirit of the redeemed life. Christ did not come to offer a sacrifice in Jewish mode, or to offer Himself in the mode in which a Jewish sacrifice was offered; but to do that which the sacrifices of Judaism typified, to offer the obedience of a life, and that obedience in a human body. 1. God does not ask of any man first what he *has*. He asks first for the man himself—what he *is*. 2. If any man is willing to give God what he *is*, then that man will find that God is willing to accept what he *has*. 3. But how far may the distinction between what a man has, and what a man is, be carried? In life we have to do with some persons who want what we *have*; but we have to do with others—altogether dearer ones—who can be satisfied with nothing less than ourselves—what we *are*; just our love is their wealth. It is somewhat thus with God. The design of God in giving us what we have, is that by means of it we may carry *ourselves* to Him. What a man *is* includes his body. Man is not a spirit only; he is a spirit in a certain particular body, which has certain particular relations. So we never can give *ourselves* to God until we give Him soul and body together. Show how much larger an idea of the "living sacrifice" this is than is generally conceived. To make any gift acceptable to any one—and certainly to God—a man must put himself into the gift. Our bodies must carry *us* to God, as the body of Jesus (and indeed of the psalmist) carried Him.

The Atonement.—Why is the doctrine of the Atonement called an immoral doctrine? It is based, it is said, on injustice. The point on which the objector has fixed is the substitution of one man for another to suffer for sin. But he does not take the doctrine of substitution as represented and interpreted by Christian teachers, but barely

and nakedly, simply as the principle of vicarious punishment. So stated, the notion is certainly a barbarous one. But God cannot regard punishment apart from the person to whom it is due. He cannot be appeased by pain as such, without reference to the bearer of it. He cannot be contented, so long as the punishment is suffered, that another than the criminal should be the sufferer. Such a bald notion of atonement does not require that the sacrifice should be *voluntary*. Punishment, vicarious or other, does not require a voluntary sufferer—only a sufferer. A striking illustration of an atonement was found in the state religion of Mexico. The gospel is, that *love* is of the very essence of sacrifice, and that there cannot be sacrifice without *will*. In the case of Christ there was no earthly altar, no expiatory form, no visible priest. Nobody could have told, either from His life or from His death, that He was a victim. He died by the natural course of events, as the effect of a holy and courageous life operating upon the intense jealousy of a class; He died by civil punishment; and yet in heaven that death pleaded as the sacrifice that taketh away the sin of the world. But that sacrifice was a willing self-offered sacrifice; and this takes away all question of injustice to the victim. In common life no wrong is done to one who *volunteers* to take a painful office. The existence of pain and evil being supposed, there arises a special morality upon this fact, and in connection with it. It is the morality of sacrifice. Sacrifice then becomes, in the person who makes it, the most remarkable kind of manifestation of virtue, which ennobles the sufferer, and which it is no wrong-doing in the universe to accept. What is the effect of *such* an atonement on the sinner? The willingness of the sacrifice changes the mode of the operation of the sacrifice, so that it acts on a totally different principle and law from that upon which a sacrifice, if a mere substitution, acts. When a man substitutes himself for another, he really means to soften the heart of the judge, to stimulate the element of mercy in the judge. The gospel puts the doctrine of Atonement in this light. The mercy of God the Father is called out toward man by our Lord's generous sacrifice of Himself in behalf of men. Neither in natural mediation nor in supernatural does the act of suffering love, in producing that change of regard to which it tends, dispense with the moral change of the criminal. We cannot, of course, because a good man suffers for a criminal, alter our regards to him, if he obstinately remains a criminal. And if the gospel taught any such thing in the doctrine of the Atonement, it would certainly expose itself to the charge of immorality. Undoubtedly there must be this change, but even with this past crime is not yet pardoned. There is room for a mediator—room for some source of pardon which does not take its rise in a man's self, although it must act with conditions. But viewed as acting upon this mediatorial principle, the doctrine of the Atonement rises altogether to another level; it parts company with the gross and irrational conception of mere naked material substitution of one person for another in punishment, and it takes its stand upon the power of love, and points to the actual effect of the intervention of suffering love in nature, and to a parallel case of mediation as a pardoning power in nature. The doctrine of Scripture, so far from being the doctrine of mere substitution, is a protest against that doctrine; it makes accurate provision for moral claims; it enforces conditions on the subject of the sacrifice; it attributes a reasonable and rational ground of influence and mode of operation to the sacrifice. There is, however, undoubtedly, contained in the Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement, a kind, and a true kind, *of fulfilment of justice*. It is a fulfilment in the sense of appeasing and satisfying justice. And so, also, there is a kind of *substitution* involved in the Scriptural doctrine of the Atone-

ment, and a true kind; it is not a literal, but a moral substitution. The doctrine of the Atonement is the doctrine which most of all comes into collision with, and declares most unextinguishable war with, materialistic ideas of the Deity. . . . So rooted is the great principle of mediation in nature, that the mediatorship of Christ cannot be revealed to us without reminding us of a whole world of analogous action, and of representation of action. How natural thus does the idea of a mediator turn out to be! Yet this is exactly the point at which many stumble: pardon they approve of; reconciliation they approve of; but reconciliation by means of mediation is what they cannot understand. Why not dispense with a superfluity? they say; and why not let these relieve us from what they consider the incumbrance of a mediator? It has, however, appeared to the great mass of Christians infinitely more natural to be saved *with a Mediator* than without one.—*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*

A Sacrifice in the Living of a Human Life.—"A body hast Thou prepared Me." A human body is the medium through which a soul—a spiritual being—is enabled to live a human life on the earth—a life of various earthly relations. What is here affirmed appears to be this—that God was pleased to find a material, human body, in which His Son, the spiritual being Jesus, could live out a human life, as a human son, perfecting an obedience to the will of God, which should be a representative obedience for humanity. And it seems to be distinctly declared that the real spiritual sacrifice which Jesus offered to God on behalf of humanity was that life of obedience and submission and service which He lived through—under a strain and stress which reached its climax in the cross—in that human body which God had prepared for Him, in which He could, fully and representatively, do and bear God's will for humanity.

The Sacrifice of the Body.—This sentence is a quotation from one of the Psalms, but it is not quoted with strict accuracy. In the psalm there is a figure; in the quotation the figure is not repeated, it is translated, and its meaning is suggested. In Ps. xl. 6 the words are, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened." But the Hebrew would be more precisely rendered, "Ears hast Thou digged or pierced for Me." Two explanations of this figure have been offered. There was a curious ancient custom, which some think may be referred to here. When a Hebrew voluntarily resolved to be the life-long servant or slave of another person, that person accepted the surrender by boring through the ear of the would-be slave with an awl. The law regulating this matter is given in Exod. xxi. 5, 6: "And if the servant [who could claim his freedom] shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him to the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." If this could be received as the basis of the figure in the psalm, the sentence would then mean, "I am, through life, thy voluntary servant." But if that had been the reference, a certain technical word would have been used; and even the English reader can see that in the psalm *both ears* are mentioned, and the Hebrew boring was done only to one ear. The better explanation is that opening the ears, digging out the ears, hollowing the ears, uncovering the ears, suggested to the Hebrews the idea of prompt obedience, of attentive listening to the commands of any one. We may understand the figure to mean, "Thou hast made me obedient," or "I am entirely devoted to thy service." What God desires is not sacrifice, but hearing ears, and consequently the submission of the person himself in willing obedience.

Where the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews gained his translation of the figure into "a body hast Thou prepared Me" does not clearly appear. Some of the manuscripts of the Septuagint Version have this rendering, and the writer may have met with one of these; but some think he purposely made the alteration so as to make the Messianic reference of the psalm more distinct. . Ears are given so that we may hear and heed. A body is given so that we may obey and serve in the earthly spheres. And Messiah is represented as saying, "Lo, I come [in the body which Thou hast given me] to do Thy will, O God." The text is part of an argument. The writer is urging that the animal sacrifices of Judaism availed only for external or ceremonial purification. They vitally and eternally saved nobody. They represented the true sacrifice, which God then accepted, and still accepts—the sacrifice of an obedient will, and of a consecrated life. He has provided for us bodies; He has uncovered for us ears; we too can do His will. Our text then embodies a great principle which I want to state, to illustrate, and to enforce. It was true for the psalmist; it was true for our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is true also for us. The principle is this—God never asks of any man first of all what he has. God asks of every man first of all, himself, what he is. If any man is willing to give himself to God, then God will lovingly accept also what he has.

I. God never asks of any man first of all what he has.—"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein." Sacrifice and offering both represent man's gifts to God. They are things which a man *has*; they are things belonging to man. The distinction between them is a Jewish one. Sacrifice is a gift to God of that which has life—life which can be surrendered. Offering is a gift to God of something which has no life, but which can be used in God's service. The man who brought a bullock, or a lamb, or a dove made his gift to God; and the man who brought his shekel, or his flower, or his jewel, or his robe also made his gift to God. He brought of his property—of the things that he had. And if that was all he brought, God never asked for it, and never wanted it. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations." The prophet Isaiah gives these searching words as the utterance of God's Spirit through him; but the earlier psalmist had quite as clear a vision of the truth that God never has cared for mere things. "I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goats out of the folds, for every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof." "Sacrifice and offering"! They are only things of which man claims possession, and which, as his own, he consents to give. Cattle from his folds, corn and fruit from his fields, gold and jewels from his treasuries. In what sense they are his does not readily appear, since man has nothing to possess, but everything lent him just for use during his brief spell of life. When good men give to God, they reverently say, "Of Thine own have we given Thee." In the sight of God there is a most valid and practical distinction between what a man *has*, and what a man *is*. In our sight that distinction is most strangely confused. We are constantly valuing men according to the measure of what they call their wealth. God reckons a man's possessions at nothing, save as it deepens the man's responsibility for the faithful use of his trusts. The man himself is of priceless worth. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We need to learn how to dis-

tinguish between the essentials and the accidents of the man; between the man and the clothes which, at a given time, he may happen to wear; between the man and the material circumstances with which he may be surrounded. Job expresses the distinction very vigorously when all his things that he had were gone from his grasp, seized by the invader, or whirled away in the storms. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." Things were gone; but he was what he was. A man carries his entire self into the next world. Death cannot rob him of that. Death cannot touch or injure that. But man cannot carry into the next world a single one of the things that he only *has*. Death has its power. on them, and plucks them all away—plucks away the monarch's crown, and the nobleman's estate, and the lady's gay apparel and costly jewels. Death stands before the dying man, and compels him to surrender absolutely everything that he has. Death will not let the man take even his grave-clothes with him. The wild Indian will have his bow and arrows put into the grave with him, that they may be ready for use in the happy hunting-grounds he is anticipating. But it is a vain delusion. They only rot in the dampness of the grave. When a late Queen of Madagascar died, they arrayed her in her most gorgeous dresses, ornamented her with her jewels, and so laid her in the tomb. But they only wasted what might have been of use to somebody, and put temptation in the way of thieves. No dresses nor jewels deck her majesty in the other life. She is just herself, and a poor miserable self she must be. Moses and Elijah reappeared from the glory, but they were the very men they were, just the men, even the earth-form and dress was but a seeming. Realise the distinction between the essentials of a man and the accidents of a man, and then you will understand what I mean when I say, that God never has, and never will, ask first of all for the accidents of a man. 1. Because whatsoever a man may seem to have, it is not really his. It is only a loan to him, only a trust to him. It all belongs to God; and to give it to God is only to give God His own. He needs nothing from us. "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." "What have we that we have not received?" 2. And because nothing that man has could reach up to satisfy the claims of God. Know God as the infinite moral Being, the Source of all moral being, as the eternal Father of mankind, and at once it comes to mind that His claim must be for love, for trust, for obedience, for service. No mere material things can ever satisfy parent hearts. Fathers and mothers stand in soul-relations, and they can never be satisfied with other gifts from their children instead of soul-gifts. So thoroughly is God represented as despising mere things that have no soul in them, that when men failed to give themselves in and with their gifts, God actually dealt severely with their gifts. Cain brought an offering only of things. He was not himself in his gift. And "unto Cain, and to his offering, the Lord had not respect." Pleading with a people who had become wholly formal in their religious gifts, God says, "Incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." "To what purpose cometh there to Me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me." "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer Me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos v. 21-

23). This truth is indeed set forth so plainly, and so impressively, that it is passing strange to find men still deluded by the notion that God can be pleased with gifts. Heathen people still say, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Christian people still give goods, or prayers, or emotions. And still the apostolic words may be used, and we may say, God seeks "not yours, but you."

II. **God asks of every man the gift of himself, of what he is.**—If we separate a man from his possessions, from the things that he only has, what is gathered up in the man? There is body, mind, affections, character, soul. For this earth-sphere a man is not a simple spirit, but a spirit with a certain particular environment. And it is this whole self which God asks. "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are His." "I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." We find our model gift in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His whole bodily and spiritual manhood in one life-long devotion to God. There is a sense in which men may properly be regarded as not already God's. Something which can only be called independence has been given to us. Though it is placed under strict limitations, our free-will does make us separate persons, and give us some sort of right in ourselves. And we well know how self-will exaggerates the independence, and throws off God, saying, "Who is the Lord, that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" In whatsoever sense man is himself, he can give that self to God. The truth is, that the only thing which any man has that he can give to God is himself. This every man, poor or rich, wise or ignorant, can give; and this is every man's grandest and noblest gift.

> "Lord, in the strength of grace, with a glad heart and free,
> Myself, my residue of days, I consecrate to Thee.
> Thy ransomed servant, I restore to Thee Thine own;
> And from this moment live or die, to serve my God alone."

A man can give his will to God, voluntarily choosing Him, and accepting His service, saying with the noble Joshua, "Whatsoever others do, we will serve the Lord." A man may give his love to God; and of such a man God will surely say, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him." A man may give his penitence to God, going to Him and saying, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." And such a man ever finds the Father waiting and watching for his return, and hears the sweetest sounds of home-welcome, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." A man may give to God his obedience. It is this which comes fully into view in our text: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." This is what God asks of you and me, asks of every one: "Be Mine. I am Father. Be thou My son indeed." All the revelations that God makes to men, read in the light of their deepest meanings, are just persuasions to making full surrender of themselves to Him. The type of them all is to be found in the vision given to Jacob at Bethel. He felt like a homeless wanderer. He was bearing the burden of his own wrong-doing. Yet God was mindful of him, caring for him, watching him, tending him all night through with loving angel ministries. That vision was God calling upon Jacob to give Him him-

self; and Jacob did it. "And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all which Thou, O God, shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

III. **When a man gives to God what he is, God graciously accepts, with him, what he has.**—How very different is the value we put on the various gifts that we receive! Some are mere gifts. They say nothing; they mean nothing. We take them. But we wish we had not to take them. We put them aside, after a cold thanksgiving. And we do not much care if we never see the thing any more. We are like God in this—that we are very indifferent to mere *things* as gifts. But the very same gifts, and even inferior gifts, may become priceless. They are if they carry to us a heart's love—if the gift is the person, expressed only in the thing that is offered. Then the gifts are treasured. Then they find conspicuous place. Then they are looked at again and again, and always seem to freshen the love-gift of which they remind. It is thus with God. At one time sacrifice and offering will seem to Him altogether worthless. It is only sacrifice and offering. At another time they will seem to Him of priceless value, because they express love, and trust, and obedience, full heart-surrender. When we can say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will," when we can give to God ourselves, then everything we bring with us will be acceptable unto Him. Passing by the receipt of custom, our Lord found Matthew seated, busily engaged with his work. Our Lord called him. But Matthew did not respond by giving his money, Christ cared nothing for that. Matthew responded by giving to Christ *himself*, and that gift carried with it his money, his abilities, everything that Matthew had. Some time ago I took part in a scene of peculiar interest and suggestiveness. Well-nigh two thousand persons were assembled in the largest chapel in Liverpool, to bid God-speed to a band of missionaries who were about to leave home and friends, and devote themselves to Christ's service in heathen lands. Twenty-three men and women faced that great audience as they sat together upon the platform. As I watched them I thought what a variety of powers and talents they represented—what various riches they had. But they were not giving to Christ their abilities, their doctoring skill, their teaching efficiencies, their power to draw or to preach. Those men and women were giving to Christ *themselves*—themselves as spiritual beings. The company on that platform was a company of consecrated men and women; their manhood and their womanhood lay on the altar of Christ. They gave "their own selves to the Lord." But they gave themselves in their bodies, with their bodies. The gift of themselves carried with it all they had; and the God who so graciously accepted them, as graciously accepted *theirs* with them. And so they represented a whole devotement—what they were, and what they had. There they sat, the realisation of the whole burnt-offering unto the Lord. That truth fills our thoughts and hearts—God wants *us* first, then ours. Have we been making the fatal mistake, and bringing, as offerings to God, our things? Have we imagined that God's claim could be satisfied with gifts of our money, of anything that we only have? See this truth once again. God wants *you*. Yes, first you. He will receive nothing from you until you give Him yourself. And when you give yourself, you cannot help giving all you have. This is God's order; you cannot alter it—first *you*, then *yours*. This is the Lord's sacrifice—yourself in the body prepared for you.

Ver. 7. *Submission and Obedience.*—The "will of God" is a present, living reality. It is not something shut up in a book. It is a living revelation to us, made by the indwelling, presiding Spirit. We may know the "will of God" now as truly as our fathers did when the *will* came to them in an audible voice, or by an angel-messenger. We may even conceive the time when the written word will cease to be the medium of the will, because spiritual relations will be perfected. This text presents one form in which we have to accept the Divine will, and it suggests the other; for there are two forms in which the will of God has to be met: (1) By submission—bearing; and (2) by obedience—doing. Prominence is here given to obedience. In Gethsemane prominence is given to submission. Too often it is urged that submission is the only attitude for us to take in relation to the will. This may, indeed, be fittingly commended to the sick, the suffering, and the dying, but it is not the attitude most wisely commended to the healthy, the active, and the enterprising. It is the glory of our nature that we are not mere things to be acted upon, but persons, agents, by and through whom ends are to be reached, and purposes accomplished. Therefore, while it is a great and blessed thing to *submit* to the will of God, it is, for active man, an even greater and more blessed thing to *do* the will.

I. **Submission.**—God sometimes deals with us as if He would convince us that He is the Creator, and we but the creatures of His power. He sweeps over our life in a majesty of wild storm-wind, and there is nothing for us to do but to submit. But usually God deals with us in such ways of mingled severity and tenderness, that He seems to be *asking* us to yield, even making it easy for us to yield. And there is nothing essentially Christian about our submission until it becomes both voluntary and cheerful. Our submission is never possible by knowing what God is doing with us; it is only possible by knowing God Himself better, and so gaining an all-conquering faith (trust) in Him.

II. **Obedience.**—Illustrate this phase by patriarchal times. Abraham *obeyed* God: also by the human life and devoted service of the Lord Jesus. Our common life can be looked at in two ways: (1) As the scene in which we are doing and accomplishing something for ourselves; or (2) as the scene in which, as servants, we are doing and accomplishing the will of God. It is freely granted that the former way of viewing life will seem the most attractive to us as men; but the latter may be commended as the altogether noble, and the more satisfying way. In what spheres can the will of God be discerned? We are to bring our thought, our speech, and our relationships into the obedience of Christ. Then in these spheres we can know the will. And besides the more general disclosures to us of the Divine mind, the open heart will be always able to discern special calls to particular forms of duty. The ideal Christian life is a full, free, constant, loving response to the Divine will, in a holy blending of submission and obedience.

The Sacrifice of an Obedient Will.—This is a quotation from the fortieth Psalm, and it is helpful to understand precisely what thought and feeling the psalmist expressed by it. *Dean Perowne* says: "The psalmist declares what had been the great lesson of his affliction—how he had learnt that there was a better sacrifice than that of bulls and goats, even the sacrifice of an obedient will. It is as if he had said, 'Once I should have thought sacrifices and offerings a proper and sufficient acknowledgment. Now I feel how inadequate these are, for Thou hast taught me the truth; my deaf, unwilling ears hast Thou opened, that I might understand that a willing heart was the best offering I could render. Then, being thus taught by Thee, I said, Lo, I come! Presenting myself before Thee, not with a dead

and formal service, but with myself as a living sacrifice.'"

The Religion of Divine Humility.—To preach Christ is to preach the doctrine of surrender to the will of God. The religion of Christ has been well called "The Religion of Divine Humility." This is Christianity: love to God, and love to man; that surrender of self-will through life and death which marks the whole existence of the Redeemer.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Christ's Own References to the Will He obeyed.—It is some disadvantage to our apprehension of the will of God for humanity, and so the will of God for Jesus, the representative man, that in this chapter it is so closely associated with altar-forms. Our Lord's own references to the will which He fulfilled are free from this association. As He regards it, it is a moral obedience, a heart obedience, finding expression in doing, bearing, and suffering whatever may be recognised as the will of God in a human life. In Gethsemane it was seen by the Lord Jesus that the will of God immediately before Him was a time of overwhelming shame and suffering, and the agony of a violent and dishonourable death; and He would wholly lift Himself up to an entire, unquestioning, and uncomplaining obedience.

Vers. 7, 9. *The Will of God which Christ came to do.*—He was to do the will of God in several ways. "Not only as a prophet to reveal the will of God; not only as a king to give forth Divine laws; but as a priest to satisfy the demands of justice, and to fulfil all righteousness. Christ came to do the will of God in two instances: 1. In taking away the first priesthood, which God had no pleasure in; not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and cancelling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood; and blotting out the handwriting of ceremonial ordinances, and nailing it to His cross. 2. In establishing the second, that is, his own priesthood and the everlasting gospel, the most pure and perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace: this is the great design upon which the heart of God was set from all eternity. The will of God centres and terminates in it; and it is not more agreeable to the will of God than it is advantageous to the souls of men; for it is by this will that we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 10. *Christ's Antitypical Sacrifice.*—This epistle being directly addressed to Jewish Christians, it is of first importance that we should endeavour to understand their views. They were men who had been lifted from the material to the moral. That was the work that had been done for the Jewish nation by the later prophets. They were men that had been lifted from the ritual to the spiritual. That was the work which had been done for them by the Lord Jesus Christ. But these Jewish Christians found it very difficult to keep up to the higher level they had attained. There were certain forms in which temptations to revert to their old standpoint came to them. 1. Persecution by the bigoted and extreme Jewish section—represented by Saul of Tarsus. 2. An exaggeration of the claims of Judaism as an unquestionable revelation from God—specially honourable as having been ministered by angels. 3. The spiritualising of Philo and the Alexandrian School, which worked for a reform of Judaism, and shook confidence in Christ. The writer of this epistle has to counteract these three evil influences. But such temptations are better met by persuasions than by arguments: only the persuasions must be based upon arguments precisely adapted. One great point is made by the writer: "First that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." The *material* is pictorial—it is the picture-teaching of truth, which is

necessary for all child-stages of the individual, the nation, or the world. The *moral* is the reality which is pictured in the material, and it is the proper thing for the man-stage. We teach children arithmetic by showing them, and by working, balls on a frame; by-and-by they come to apprehend the principles and relations of numbers. But what has such comparison to do with us, who have no association with material bodily sacrifices as the Jewish Christians had? Is it possible that there may be a material, pictorial setting of the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which may be limiting us somewhat as the ritual of Moses limited the Jews? These Christian Jews evidently had not spiritual views of Christ's work, and Christians now may keep in the pictorial range for babes when they ought to be in the spiritual range for men. They do when they see Christ's offering of Himself to be a ritual, not a spiritual sacrifice.

I. **The surrendered will is the sanctifying sacrifice.**—Trace the argument. Those old Jewish sacrifices had no value in themselves. The prophets—especially Isaiah and Hosea—made that quite plain. Their value lay solely in their being a means by which the will of a man was offered to God. When this is taught so as to be fully apprehended, formal sacrifice may cease. It has done its work. The final lesson is the Divine acceptance of the offering of Himself which came to Jesus. Christ's whole life was His sacrifice. The sacrifice that God wants is the *man*, not something a man *gives*. The offering of a man himself is the offering of a life—that alone is the man. This makes Christ's death the final act, the seal, the perfecting of His sacrifice; because that death completes, rounds off, the life. No life is complete until death seals it. Christ's death is the great act of surrendered will under the most severe testing-conditions. Dead—human life ended—there is a *whole man* offered unto God.

II. **That sacrifice—the spiritual sacrifice of the surrendered will—was offered through the body.**—Things can have no influence on us that do not come within our range, do not lie in our plane. Moral forces are compelled to use material agencies because we are in material limitations. The surrender of the will of an angel is nothing to us. The surrender of the will of a human being like ourselves is everything to us. Christ became man that He might be able to offer a *human* sacrifice, because *that* is precisely what we ought to offer. An angel could not offer *our* sacrifice: the Son of God, as only Son of God, could not. Christ became representative man that He might offer His sacrifice of Himself in our name, as standing for and pledging us.

III. **That offering satisfies once for all.**—Picture-teaching needs repetition, "line upon line, precept upon precept." The teaching of principles is done once for all. Christ's sacrifice need not be repeated, because it effected its end—1. With God. Did this representative offering of the surrendered will meet God's requirement from us His creatures? The answer is the Resurrection. 2. With men. Was that devotion of Christ to our interests, which led Him to suffer so much in order to secure an acceptable sacrifice for us, such a devotion as could be really persuasive on us? The answer is our experience. The sacrifice of Christ must not be repeated, even in symbol. To repeat the sacrifice is to remove Christ from His present work of applying the gains of His sacrifice. What then have we to keep in mind? Is it only the medium, the bodily agency of the great sacrifice? Every incident of the Passion is intensely interesting to us. But there is a mystery within it. There is a real spiritual sacrifice. It is a man's surrendered will. *We* cannot offer a material sacrifice with Christ. We can offer a spiritual sacrifice with Him. That we will offer it He pledges in our name. But our sacrifice, like His, must be made through our bodies. Our lives, lived unto God, are our sacrifice (see Rom. xii. 1).

The First and Second Sacrifices.—That which is temporarily efficient may, and indeed must, in time become inefficient, because the conditions which it once met undergo change. Whatever concerns the *accidents* of things must be changed. Whatever concerns the *essentials* of things is of necessity unchangeable. The first sacrifices, those of Judaism, dealt with acccidental conditions of men. The second sacrifice deals with the essential states and relations of men. The first sacrifices could not last; and it was significant of their fading away that the Shekinah-glory left the Temple, that even the ark was lost, and the tables of the covenant. In Pompey's time the Temple was but an empty shell with the kernel gone; for when he forced his way into the Holy of Holies, he found only an *empty chamber*. The very heart and life of the old sacrifices was already gone, wholly gone.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—18.

The Power of the Spiritual Sacrifice.—Over and over again the nature of our Lord's sacrifice, as the sacrifice of an obedient will, is presented. He came to "do the will of God" perfectly, in man's name, and to sacrifice Himself in the doing. We know the power of an old formal Jewish sacrifice of bull or of goat. It could cleanse the offerer from ceremonial defilement, and restore him again to tabernacle relations. In this paragraph we are helped to realise what is the power of the spiritual sacrifice of an obedient will. "By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The word "sanctified" here is not used of progressive sanctification, but of "consecration in a pure state to God's service."

I. **Power on man the spirit.**—*George Macdonald* makes one of his characters speak in this way: "We should not say, We are bodies, and have souls; we should say, We are souls, and have bodies." The spiritual sacrifice has its range first in man's spirit. The sacrifice of the obedient will has its power and persuasion on the human will. The essence of redemption is *regeneration*. Formal sacrifices have their power to change men's relations. Christ's sacrifice has power to change men themselves. They become "new creatures in Christ Jesus," by the renewal of their wills in the holy constraint of His sacrificing love. Christ wins us to Himself, and that is winning us to His obedient Sonship.

II. **Power on man the human.**—For man is not pure spirit; he is put into, and limited by, a human body; and that has made a special set of conditions, which angels have no power to adapt themselves to. He only has power on man the human who, Himself, though spirit, became human: "took on Him the nature of Abraham, was made in likeness of man." He is actually in our range and sphere—actually in our human limitations. His sacrifice has power on us because it is ours, it is human. We are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

III. **Power on man's enemies.**—The statement of ver. 13, "From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet," may be simply rhetorical, the writer's mind being full of the psalms from which he had been quoting, and so carried on to complete his reference. But there may be a suggestion intended which does not immediately appear. He who offered the sacrifice of the obedient will, and so gained power to save, will surely have enemies, who will resist His work, and try and keep men from rising out of their material systems, to accept a spiritual salvation. But those enemies will not conquer Him. He will eventually constrain even them, and they shall submit, and become as the footstool of His everlasting throne. And those who accept

Him as their Saviour will have the same enemies to fight. But they who "suffer with Him shall also reign with Him." Their enemies—the enemies of the spiritual—are His, and their subjection is guaranteed in the holy triumph which He is sure to win.

IV. **Power on men's motives.**—This is the idea of the covenant which pledges that God, in and through Christ, will get right into men's hearts, and so constrain them with His love—that they shall want to obey, resolve to obey, strive to obey, and enjoy obeying. Fear of God is man's usual motive, and it never yet inspired a noble life. Love is Christ's new motive, and it inspired His noble life, and it can inspire ours.

V. **Power on men's sins.**—The prophet Ezekiel forshadowed the gospel dispensation in a way which has not been sufficiently noticed. He says that if God can only get a man himself right, He can at once, fully and freely, forgive all His sins. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezek. xviii. 21). It is a part of the new covenant, that whenever we, in Christ, become sons again, with God's laws in our love, and God's will our delight, our "sins and iniquities shall be remembered no more."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 14. *The Sanctifying Power of a Spiritual Sacrifice.*—"For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "Are sanctified" should be rendered "are being sanctified." To understand this verse it is necessary to remember that the cleansing effected by means of the old Levitical sacrifices was, from the Jewish point of view, a *sanctifying*. The man cleansed and restored was a man sanctified. But such sanctifying, such ritual cleansing, was only the shadow and suggestion of the true sanctifying, the spiritual cleansing. A man heart-cleansed, conscience-cleansed, and so restored to his right relations with God, is the man truly sanctified. And what has to be shown is, that the one spiritual offering which Christ made of His whole human life, in one sublime and perfect obedience to the will of God, has an effective power unto such spiritual sacrifice. By "perfected for ever" is clearly meant, proved wholly effective, so that no other supplementary agency can ever be necessary. How then does that one sacrifice which Christ offered act in a way of sanctifying upon our hearts and lives. 1. It presents to us the model of what a sanctified life for humanity is? 2. It acts persuasively upon us, urging us to make the same surrender to God. 3. It puts into a state of separation unto God all who by faith are linked with it. Christ and His people are together sanctified. 4. As a spiritual sacrifice it is influential in our spiritual relations; but those are our permanent and eternal relations, and whatever sanctifying work is done in them can never need to be re-done. Sanctify a man's will, and you have sanctified the man's life, and sanctified the man for ever. We may gain some illustration of the sanctifying power of a surrendered will by considering the moral influence upon us of severe, and life-long, and hopeless sufferers from disease, who have entered into the perfect peace of yielding their wills wholly to God.

Ver. 17. *Self-sacrifice the Way to Happiness.*—The way of happiness is the path of principle, and the governing principles of life, which lead to nobility of character, are bound up in Christ's salvation. Human life, even under civilisation, is placed face to face with the elements of danger.

I. **The highest, happiest, noblest life is a life of self-sacrifice in common conditions.**—In our quiet circle we

may defeat the selfishness that is around us; and if we cannot undo the selfishness of civilisation, we can undo it in ourselves, and in some that are round our life-path. 1. *Let no one say that God has placed us in such a position that to be selfish, avaricious, lustful, worldly, cannot be helped.* The theory of "can't help it" is hateful, because it is utterly cowardly and entirely false. "Can't help it" is the answer of materialism; it is a base philosophy. 2. *Utilitarianism will not help us.* There is no morality without God.

II. **To do God's will is a motive to self-sacrifice.**—God is the sanction of moral life. In our calm moments, and in our moments of terror, the great motive to stay us constantly in life's great struggle is God. We can do right, not because there is a law, but because the law expresses the law of the Lawgiver—the great, the beautiful, the holy God.

III. **God in Christ is the expression of supereminent love.**—To feel the love of wife, of mother, of sister, of child, of friend, makes us feel the dignity of life; to feel the love of Jesus, God in humanity, makes us feel that self-sacrifice is possible, that we had better perish than be selfish, that our love of God has increased the great motive of our love of men.

IV. **Power to do what there is motive to enforce is submitted to us all.**—Grace is offered in answer to prayer, to help us to do His will, to speak His will, to speak His word, to be content to do it, with His law in us. His love is over us; He will not forsake us.—*Canon Knox-Little.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—25.

Duty rests on Privilege.—In this section the hortatory portion of the epistle really begins There have been, again and again, hortatory "asides"; now there is a general practical application of the truths to which attention has been so earnestly directed. The main position of the writer is briefly stated afresh, and in terms which show that he still had the solemn ceremonies of the great Jewish Day of Atonement in his mind. He had fixed attention on this fact—the way into the Holy of Holies, where God's presence was manifested in sacred symbols, had never been open and free to everybody. A veil hid it away, and that veil never might be passed save on definitely arranged conditions. "Into the second tabernacle the high priest went alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people." That was picture-teaching of spiritual things. The Holy Ghost signified something by it. The Holy of Holies represents the "more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands"—the place in which God now receives His people. Free access there is lost for man by reason of his wilfulness and sin. God has put a veil which no sinful man may pass. And yet the fact is, that the veil is now done away. The fact is, that man now *has* free access to God's spiritually manifested presence. How has this come about? and what is involved in our now having this extraordinary liberty and privilege? The first question is answered by the writer in this way: "But Christ having come, a High Priest of the good things to come [or that are come], through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The material ceremonies of the material tabernacle secured for Israelites material privileges, and pictured and foreshadowed the spiritual ceremonies of the spiritual tabernacle which secure for all men spiritual privileges. When we speak of Christ, we need to remember that the Holy of Holies which He entered is the *spiritual* presence of God; that the blood which He took is *spiritual* blood, the offering of Himself,

His will, His life, His perfect obedience of sonship; that the veil through which He entered was His life in the flesh, in which the perfection of His obedience was tested and proved; and that the benefits and privileges which He secured for us were wholly *spiritual* benefits, summed up in right *soul-standing* with God, and free *soul-access* to Him. This privilege is restated for us in ver. 19: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and *having* a great Priest over the house of God." The old priest went into the old sanctuary, but took no one in with him. When he went in, he closed the veil behind him. When he came out, he carefully closed the veil again. Our new and spiritual High Priest, being Himself also His infinitely acceptable offering, took the veil aside, and went in, leaving the veil drawn aside, and the way in open for every one who would come to God by Him. *That* High Priest went in, and *never came out again*, and never closed the veil behind Him, and never will. There it stands to-day just as He left it, thrust right back; and there He stands to-day, just as He took His stand when He entered, as sacrifice and priest, the Holy Place. And there the open way is, just as He made it; and by that way *we* have freedom and boldness of access to God. If those Christian Jews to whom the epistle was written would but enter fully into their new and spiritual privileges in Christ Jesus, they would readily let the old, formal, and material system pass away, and they would be no longer disturbed in mind by those who exaggerated the importance of what was but temporary and preparatory. If they did enter fully into their spiritual privileges, they would surely find that those privileges brought calls to duty, and that the earnest and persistent fulfilment of the duty ensured the constant renewal and constant enjoyment of the privileges. The safeguard of religious truth and religious privilege is not contention and dispute, but an earnest, devoted, obedient life of love and service.

I. **Our duty to ourselves.**—It is not selfishness or self-centredness to do our duty to ourselves—to meet our obligations to ourselves. A man is just as truly put in trust of himself as he is put in trust of others. "Every man must bear his own burden," the responsibility of being himself. No man can rightly neglect his own spiritual life upon the excuse that he is busily attending to other people's. Three things are urged by this writer, as included in our duty to ourselves—Prayer, Purity, Profession. 1. We must freely use our new-found privilege of access to God. Prayer is the spiritual agency by means of which our souls pass along the new Christ-opened way into the presence and communion of God. "Let us draw near, with a true heart, in fulness of faith." 2. We must be very jealous about that condition of using the new Christly way which is the condition *on our side.* It is not *anybody* who may pass in, only those who are aiming at personal purity, who are setting their wills upon righteousness, whose consciences do not accuse them of wilful and purposed sin, and who are putting a strong hand of control upon their daily conduct and relations, to ensure that they run in lines of consistency and righteousness. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water"—figures evidently taken from the anxiety of the high priest, on the Atonement Day, to secure both bodily and moral purity before venturing through the veil. 3. And we must recognise the importance of a steady persistency in the profession of our faith, and a constant readiness to make confession of our faith, whenever the call to make confession comes. Spiritual safety is guaranteed when a man has no idea of hiding whose he is and whom he serves—when he can say, even before those who persecute him, as did the saintly Polycarp, "I am a Christian." It was the half-shame and half-fear which were keeping the Jewish Christians from openly confessing Christ, that put their standing in

Christ in peril. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope, that it waver not."

II. **Our duty to one another.**—It is of the very essence of a Christian Church that those who stand in the recovered *sonship* are brought into mutually helpful relations in the recovered *brotherhood*. A Christian *is* his "brother's keeper." We are responsible to one another for what we can do for one another in the culture and fitting expression of that spiritual life which we have in common. It is not often set before us with sufficient clearness and force, that our duty to fellow-Christians is not merely common-place, every-day, human kindness. This is due from man to man in the ordinary human brotherhood. *Our* call is to serve our Christian brethren precisely in the sphere of their *Christian*, that is, their *spiritual*, life. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." In every Church there are the strong and the weak: "Let those who are strong bear the infirmities of the weak." In every Church there are the advanced, the experienced, the saintly: let them provoke to all goodness the beginners, the young, and those whose life is in its struggling-time. Spiritual things, virtues, powers, experiences, are never to be thought of as *personal possessions*: they are trusts for use; they are for mutual edification. The man will lose them who thinks to keep them to himself; the man will keep them who uses them in service to others. Provoke others, then, to *love*, which is the essence of the Christian life; and to *good works*, which are the essentials of the *expression* of the Christian life. Each may be the "helper of another's joy." And the peril of the Jewish Christian Churches would be easily removed, if only they would take proper spiritual care of one another.

III. **Our duty to the Church.**—We stand in relation not only to one another, but also to the Church, as a body, to which we may belong. We are responsible for our personal example of godliness, and for our loyalty to all the Church's arrangements and claims. This is put into one matter—one which we are surprised to find thus early in the history of the Church causing serious anxiety: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Nothing puts a man's spiritual life in more serious peril than irregular attendance at the services of his Church; nothing more readily checks the process of spiritual culture; nothing affords a more injurious example to others; and nothing indicates a weaker sense of the responsibilities under which a man comes in entering the fellowship of a Church. These duties wait on privilege. There can be no enjoyment of the privilege without meeting the obligations. Let no one deceive himself on that point.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 19. *Free Admission to the Holiest.*—The humility which is suitable to the Christian *life* is suitable also in our relations to the Christian *truth*. We never can, at any one time, see *wholes* of truth. As with our bodily, so with our mental vision, we may see the front and one side, but we cannot at the same time see the other side and the back. It is well to bear in mind the fact that each representation of truth made to us is only *one aspect* of it. It may be the best aspect *for us*, and not be also the best aspect *for others*. We should therefore hold each setting of religious truth charitably, and with due consideration of the differing thoughts and feelings of others. Each man has a different apprehension of the truth of the Reconciliation or Atonement. Some approach it as philosophical inquirers, and some as conscious sinners. (These are likely to see special value in the *substitutionary* aspects of the Redeemer's work.) Some as saved ones, who, looking back, try

to understand the salvation. (These are likely to give special prominence to the moral power in our Redeemer's work.) But all sides and aspects of a truth must be taken into due account if we would apprehend it as a whole.

I. **The condition of entrance into the Holiest.**—"By the blood of Jesus." Great spiritual verities are illustrated by the old Jewish ritual. The "Holiest" was separated from the "Tabernacle," picturing for us the truth that, *as men*, the worship of the Creator, the God of providence, can be carried on daily; but, *as sinners*, God is, in some sense, hidden, and can only manifest His favour *on conditions*. The "mercy-seat" is within the space called the "Holiest." Many think of the "mercy-seat" as if it were a common thing belonging to the outer court, and always accessible. Note the significance of the *veil*, and the *mode of entrance*. The conditions on which sinners can come to God are given in the text and context. 1. The blood of Jesus. This was required on God's side. It was necessary to the vindication of God's truth, and the honouring of God's law, so that no dishonour should come to Him while extending His mercy to sinners, and so that all presumption might be checked. God was honoured in Christ's obedience unto death, in His surrender of life, or blood-shedding. 2. The humanity of Jesus—"His flesh." This was required on man's side. The God we cannot see is behind the veil of Christ's flesh. Only through the humanity of Jesus do we come to God—to know God—to hold communion with God. It is quite impossible for us men to come to a God conceived only as an abstraction. He must be God *manifest*. 3. The priesthood of Jesus. This is needed both by God and by us. It represents a living mediation. On such a basis we may well have "boldness, and access with confidence."

II. **The joy of being in the Holiest.**—Having free admission to it is a "sacred joy." Conceive the joy of the high priest while privileged to be within the veil. In the older days there was no abiding there, nor indeed any frequent going there. Show—1. Our joy in *gaining* admission to God. Imagine a high priest going into the Holiest for the first time. Compare our first sense of being within the veil. 2. Our joy in securing *liberty of access*. Gaining the feeling of a *right* to enter. The right of gracious invitation, and an offered way. 3. Our joy in *using* our privilege. Able to go to God in all our difficulty, trouble, faintness, feebleness, and sin. As men, we can always go into the outer court to praise, and to thank God, and to worship. Should it not be a joy indeed to us that—as sinners—we can *always* go into the "Holiest?"

Conclusion.—1. How firmly based is our forgiveness and acceptance with God! The "Holiest" opened; the "veil" rent; the "blood" sprinkled; the Priest before the "mercy-seat" for us. 2. How large is our privilege of access! "Boldness to enter"! Is it too large? Does it seem to be too easy? God's commonest mercies are the most necessary, yet the most neglected. Shall it be so with this? A rent veil, and none, or but few, passing through it! A living Priest, and no worshippers, or but few, for Him to present! The Angel of the covenant standing, and no prayers, or but few, for Him to put into His censer!

The Veil of the Flesh.—The veil in the Temple which interposed between the worshipper and the visible presence of Jehovah is compared to the body of Christ (John ii. 21). As the veil concealed the glory of Jehovah from ocular sight, so the body of Jesus shrouded His original glory. As God dwelt behind the veil in the earthly Temple, so God dwells behind the veil of human flesh in the the person of Jesus: that is, God can be approached only by means of Him. The rending of the Temple veil at the death of Christ attested the fact that

His death gave a right of free access to every man to the presence of God. The typical meaning which is here attached to the veil shows that the actual approach to God is made by the existing humanity of Jesus.—*Webster and Wilkinson.*

Ver. 20. *The New and Living Way.*—"Consecrated," or "dedicated," or even better, "inaugurated." This way was opened to us by Christ; in it we follow Him. For Him, the way into the Holiest led through the veil—His flesh. As the veil concealed from the high priest the place of God's presence, which he could enter only by passing through the veil, so, although in His earthly life Jesus dwelt in the presence of God, yet as our representative He could not enter the heavenly sanctuary until He had passed through and out of His life of flesh (see chap. ix. 11). There is probably a covert allusion to the rending of the Temple veil in the hour when Jesus thus passed through the rent veil of His flesh. This way is new (chap. ix. 8, 12), it is living, for in truth this "way" is living union with Christ (John xiv. 6).—*Dr. Moulton.*

The Body of Christ a Tabernacle.—In many passages the human nature or body of Christ seems to be regarded as a kind of temporary tabernacle, or veil of the Divine nature which dwelt in Him. As God dwells behind the veil in His earthly Temple, so God dwells behind the veil of Jesus' body in His spiritual temple, *i.e.* He can be approached only through the medium of this, or by means of this.

Ver. 23. *Holding fast Profession.*—The text invites consideration of the duties involved in a Christian profession, and of the watchfulness that is necessary if we are to keep faithful to it. The profession, or confession, of Christ is a voluntary act; and by voluntary efforts it is to be maintained.

I. The duties involved in a Christian profession.—1. Allegiance to certain revealed truths, as revealed. We are under no obligation to be loyal to those truths as any particular *man* may have been pleased to restate them. 2. Submission to the living rule of Christ. 3. Keeping of certain well-defined rules, and doing of certain carefully prescribed works. After unfolding each of these, press home the command of the text, "hold fast," with (1) head, (2) heart, (3) hand.

II. **The dangers attending a Christian profession.**—The great danger called to mind here is liability to wavering. 1. Liability to waver from allegiance to truth. Note the influence of speculation and criticism—the wisdom of this world; and of religious prejudice, bigotry, sectarianism, and exclusiveness, which are always trying to shift us from God's truth to men's opinions. 2. Liability to waver from submission to the living rule of Christ. Easily drift to become self-pleasers and men-pleasers. The inspiring truth of Christ's living high-priesthood is meant to counteract this. All will be well if we keep Him constantly in soul-vision. 3. Liability to waver in the fulfilment of Christian obligations. That danger always comes when the spiritual health flags, and the vital force is lowered. Depressed life is always attended with neglect of duty. Health and activity and energy in service always go together.

Holding fast Profession.—Observe—1. The duty of "holding fast profession" itself. Getting and keeping such hold as will effectually secure us against (1) persecution; (2) temptation. 2. The manner in which we must do this: without (1) wavering; (2) without doubting; (3) without disputing; (4) without dallying with temptation to apostasy. 3. The motive or reason enforcing this duty. God's faithfulness to His promise should be our perpetual inspiration.

Ver. 24. *Mutual Consideration and Mutual Provocation.*—As Christian in-

dividuals responsibilities, obligations, claims, and duties come to us. As members of Christian communities our fellow-members have claims upon us, and we have claims upon them. All human relationships involve mutual responsibilities. God purposes to carry on His redeeming and sanctifying work in *small* circles by the piety, the gracious words, and hallowing influence of individuals, and in *larger* circles by the piety, devotion, zeal, and aggressive activity of Churches.

I. **We ought to consider one another.**—To know one another, to be interested in one another, to be ready to serve one another, but especially to be interested in the Christian well-being and progress of those who are united to us in the Christian fellowship. Take interest in others, and spheres of work and influence are sure to open before us. There are always spiritually feeble ones whom we may strengthen: the *permanently* feeble, who are always finding it difficult to maintain the religious life; the *temporarily* feeble, in times of bodily sickness, or family or business troubles. But if we are to be true helpers one of another, it will be necessary for us to watch against the upgrowth of those jealousies and misunderstandings and prejudices that tend to divide us one from another. We should give more thought to our oneness in Christ, and less to our mutual peculiarities and infirmities.

II. **We ought to provoke one another to love and good works.**—This we may do by—1. Our example of Christian living. That example should be no doubtful or uncertain witness. With sincerity we should be able to say, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." 2. By our joy in meeting Christian obligations and fulfilling Christian duties. This has a most inspiring influence. Illustrate from (1) attendance on means of grace; (2) generosity and charity; (3) Christian aggressive work. 3. By our anxiously using our opportunities for speaking to others. The living Christian should be doing the same work as the living word, which is given "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." "Ye which are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," and help others into the spirit of "love" and the life of "good works."

Pastor and People.—Attention may be fixed on the way in which the writer puts *himself* into his recommendations and counsels. "Let *us* consider one another." He was not only a brother-Christian, he was a teacher, he may have been an apostle: he evidently had some personal office in relation to the Jewish Christian Churches, or some especial authority in them. Advice is never effectively given when the adviser in any sense holds himself aloof from the advice he gives. It is most effective when it is evident that the adviser applies the advice to himself. He carries us with him when he says *we*, not *you*. Here then pastor and people are called upon to "consider one another" and to "provoke one another."

I. **What can pastors do for the people?**—The word "provoke" is generally used by us in a bad sense, but it need not be. It is a suitable word with which to describe a minister's work, if we will take it aright. It means, "stir up; urge with all holy persuasions; do not let rest; keep on stirring up; never mind if there is resistance; keep on trying to get a gracious and good influence." 1. Ministers may provoke by presenting inspiring examples. "Be thou an ensample to the flock." The example should not be merely of truthfulness, integrity, purity, and "heavenly, Divine charity": it should be a *specifically Christly example* of forbearance—"the servant of the Lord must not strive"; of gentleness; of meekness, in its nobler sense of "non-self-assertiveness"; of sympathy, which enables him to come helpfully near to all kinds of human sorrow. But we may not limit ministerial examples to Christly

graces; the minister must be an ensample of Christly activity and energy. To deal with this fully would need an audience of ministers. Enough to say now, that a minister should be what he can make himself and what Christ can make him; but in actual fact he too often is only what the people make him, and then he is far down below what, in his moments of noble aspiration, he intensely longs to be. He would, when he is his truest self, provoke men by an inspiring example. 2. Ministers may "provoke" by wise and strong and spiritual teachings. Fearing that he had given offence to a leading member of his congregation by some very strong appeals which he had been led to make, a clergyman foolishly went to him to explain and apologise. The man was wiser than the minister, for he very quietly replied, saying, "My dear sir, it is a very poor sermon that does not *hit somebody.*" Smoothness and platitudes are helpless, hopeless, and injurious things. Men can go to sleep, and even die in their sins. A minister must so teach as to *provoke.* He must provoke men to think; provoke men to examine the beliefs which they are holding to-day for no other reason than that they have held them for years; provoke them to self-examinations, that they may see whether their spirit and their conduct are such as "becometh the gospel of Christ"; provoke them to see whether they are cherishing evil, untrustful, unforgiving feelings towards any others; provoke them to put away their sins and self-indulgences; provoke them to the renewal of their neglected religious duties. Christian teachings are not sweet, soft playings on a harp. They are not mild nothings of sentimental comfort. They are—they ought to be—clarion-calls to come forth to the "help of the Lord against the mighty," who in these days are imperilling the Christian truth, the Christian righteousness, and the Christian charity. We want the holy provocations of a vigorous, searching, and strong ministry. 3. Ministers may provoke by spiritual quickenings. There is something required more than example, and more than teaching. It is the mysterious quickening influence of vigorous, healthy, refined, sensitive, *spiritual life.* Sometimes we use the term "mesmeric," and we say of ministers that they have a strange mesmeric power over their congregations. Call it what we may, we all know what is meant, for we ourselves have come again and again into its power. High soul-life has quickened soul-life in us. Spiritual power has provoked the dying embers of our soul-life, and stirred them into a flame again. *That* supremely good work ministers may do for the people. They *may*, but only on conditions that are not easily realised. 4. And ministers may provoke by leading the people into new enterprises and good works. The initiative need not always come from the minister; but the leadership of the enterprise, when started, may properly come from him; and with wisdom, courage, and persistency he may help over early difficulties, and guide development along healthy lines.

II. **What can the people do for their pastors?**—"Provoke to love and good works." Provoke in a good sense. Ministers are but human. They are as susceptible to kindly surroundings of trustfulness, to signs of sympathy and affection, as other people are; and they readily respond when sweet confidences and loving services tell how God is using them in culturing religious life and virtue. The spiritual life and power of ministers flag very readily, and they have always to set the counsel well in view, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." What then can the people do for their minister? 1. *Trust him.* He cannot always do what the people think to be wise; he often does not do what the people think he ought to do; and he is sure to *say*, if he really is a man of God and not a mere time-server, what the people think he

ought *not* to say. Trust him. If he is in God's lead and keeping, trust him. Depend upon it God's truth and God's honour are as precious to him as to any of his people. 2. *Stand by him.* A minister, in coming to preside over a people, commits his reputation, his ministerial reputation, to their charge, and they should be very jealous of it. Calumniators there may be; let them be *outside* his Church. The healthiest thing for a Church to do is to insist that it will discuss the teachings which the minister presents, but it will not discuss the *minister.* How wise the rebuke of the good man who, checking remarks at his table that tended to disparage the minister, calmly but firmly said, "He is our minister, and I never allow such remarks as these in my house." 3. *Pray for him.* That is the truest and most blessed form of provocation. When persons get out of sympathy with their minister, they always cease to pray for him, or their prayer becomes a mere grumbling to God about him. That prayer-power is always at the command of a congregation, and a marvellous power it is to provoke pastors unto "love and good works." And when they thus each provoke the other, what a noble life they can live together as pastor and people! what sacrificing services they can render together! Services then are times of refreshing. Christian work is done then with full consecration. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." Let us use our power of mutual provocation.

Ver. 25. *The Duty of the House of God.*—"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." We have all been surprised to find that our Christian brethren have passed through our experience, have felt our feelings, have battled with our difficulties, and have won the rest which we have gained, by the very means which we had employed. As soon as we know the heart-story of our brethren, we find in how large a measure it is true that "no temptation has taken us but such as is common to man." And the idea we have of the singularity of our own experience we are disposed to transfer to the Church itself. Men say that there never has been such a period in the Church's history as the present. It has never been surrounded with the same evils and temptations, or been marked by the same peculiarities. But the truth is, that there is no temptation that has taken the Churches of to-day but such as is common to Churches. In the early days of first love and zeal, the Christian teachers had to deal with a difficulty which sorely troubles the Church of to-day. Men were neglecting the "assembling of themselves together."

I. **Religion is a personal thing, an individual thing, a spiritual thing.**—A personal thing—each man must attend to it himself. An individual thing—no man can lose himself in a crowd of seekers; he must stand alone before God, and carry his sin-burden alone to Christ. A spiritual thing—mere association with services and ceremonies cannot secure it; it belongs to a man's heart, not his hands or his head or his tongue. The best things are liable to abuse. Divine truths suffer, in practically working them out, through our infirmities. We are always too ready to exalt one truth above another, one form of duty at the expense of another. Some make too much of the individuality and personality of religion, and because they are growing all by themselves, are growing long and thin and pale and weak, as many "only children" do growing up all by themselves in homes. A man set by himself to nourish his own religion can never reach the highest stages of Christian life and experience. There is, indeed, a long roll of saintly men and women who, in hermit cells and in monastic and conventual seclusion, have sought holiness, but their lives have always fallen short of the Christian ideal. There are Christian virtues which never can be nourished in this

way. All that part of Christian character which relates to the unselfish demands association with others. If a Christian is to be in health, he must not only breathe Christian feeling and feed on Christian truth, he must also feel the power of daily contact with those who are conscious of the same sins, glory in the same Saviour, and labour to win the same holiness. Upon Christian associations, in worship and in work, the culture of a high, worthy, Christian life depends.

II. **The religion of Jesus Christ makes plain demand on us not only to nourish our own life, but also to interest ourselves in the Christian life of others.**—The Christian spirit in us urges us to care for others, that (1) they should *begin* the godly life, and (2) that they should *walk* worthy of their vocation. We are gathered up together as redeemed sons of God, children together of the one Father, heirs together of the same infinite inheritance; and there is properly expected from us a family, a brotherly, interest in each other. In the early days of the Church all who had truly learned of Christ consecrated themselves to works of charity and mercy: they relieved the sick and afflicted; they instructed in Christian truth; they preached in order that, if possible, all men might be saved. Our Lord left us an example. In His life the most prominent thing is care for others, self-sacrifice in the effort to bless others. He is never seeking to *get* pleasure; He is always trying to *give* pleasure. And He gets the truest and best pleasure in the *giving*. The first natural cry of a renewed soul is for some one with whom to talk about the new emotions. We cannot be glad, as Christians, without wanting somebody to stand beside us, and join their voice to our psalm of thanksgiving. We cannot pray, but we want some one to kneel beside us, and utter their heart out along with ours in fervent wrestlings and supplications. We cannot listen to the preached word with profit unless others sit beside us, and the dews of Divine truth are refreshing also the soil of their hearts. Plants and trees never do well unless they grow together. It is a pilgrim path we have to tread, but the pilgrims may walk together. The spirit of sin is the spirit of separation. Sin makes men walk in lonely paths, thinking their own thoughts, wrestling with their own doubts. If it were not the spirit of *sin*, we might say it was the spirit of the age in which we live. The selfishness of modern business competition is opposed to that generous thoughtfulness of others which properly distinguishes the Christian. The world would cut off every tie that binds us to others. Christ would make every tie hold more closely.

III. **Our modes of assembling together are practically fitted to accomplish both these ends—to strengthen and develope our own religious life, and to exhibit and express our interest in the religious life of others.**—Our text evidently puts our "assembling together" as a means of "provoking one another to love and good works"; and that is the only kind of "provoking" Christians ever should do. Our modes of assembling are mainly of three kinds: 1. We assemble together for purposes of Christian fellowship. 2. We assemble together for purposes of worship and instruction. 3. And we assemble together to remember our Lord's death, with the help of His appointed emblems. We need all these kinds of meetings. We need all for the full development of our own life. We need all for the adequate expression of our consideration for others.

The Day approaching.—Christians ought to observe the signs of the times, such as God has foretold. There was a day approaching, a terrible day, to the Jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen

remnant. Now the apostle puts them upon observing what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and upon being the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all, the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them to greater watchfulness and diligence in duty.—*Matthew Henry.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 26—31.

The Judgment of the Wilful.—If others remind the Jewish Christians of the authority, inspiration, and value of the Mosaic ceremonial system, this writer will remind them of the solemn sanctions of that system. If he has proved to them that the dispensation of which Christ is the head is in every way superior, it follows that the sanctions will be found altogether more searching and severe.

I. **The sanctions of the Jewish dispensation** (ver. 28).—Moses' law was most considerate and merciful in dealing with sins of frailty, lapses through inadvertence, weakness, and ignorance. Its rites and ceremonies provided for all kinds of sin arising out of human infirmities. Its severity is often dwelt on; its mercifulness is far more remarkable than its severity. But for wilful sin based on knowledge that what was done was sin it had no sacrifice. Let it be fully proved by witnesses that a man has wilfully done what he knew to be sin, and then he is recognised as a man who has set at nought Moses' law, and he must die without compassion. Every care must, however, be taken to ensure that the man's wrong was persistently wilful, and that it was intelligently wilful, being based on knowledge. It is necessary to press this point very closely, because upon it the comparison of this paragraph depends.

II. **The sanctions of the spiritual dispensation.**—Merciful in all matters of frailty, it also is severe, with a yet intenser severity, in all matters of wilfulness upon and after knowledge and experience. Lapses or slidings from the faith in Christ are not dealt with here, but wilful departures from the faith after having confessed it. Apostasy which implies resolute wilfulness is here indicated. "If we sin *wilfully*, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." In the passage four things are presented for our consideration: 1. The true significance of such wilful apostasy. It might seem only giving up one particular phase of religion, and falling back upon an older. It might be represented as a loosening of hold on the uncertain, and gripping tight that which had been the confidence of men through long ages. But all such representations only obscured the solemn truth, and confirmed men in their wrong-doing. See the wilful departure from Christ aright, and it has a most terrible threefold significance, which the writer does indeed present in the line of Old Testament figures and associations, but which readily impress their solemnity on every heart. It really is such an insult to Christ, as (1) would be involved in treading underfoot the Son of God. It is such an awful meanness as (2) counting the blood of the covenant, by which the man was sealed over to Christ for ever, a thing to be lightly trifled with—an unholy thing. It is even (3) doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. In the common associations of men it is thought an insulting thing for a man to throw up his membership. What must it be to apostatise from Christ, after a man has professed to have obtained through Him eternal salvation? 2. The hoplessness of such apostasy regarded as a *moral* condition. For it should be clearly seen that no merely intellectual doubting is here dealt with. The apostasy is a settled feeling of the heart, and a resolute determination of the will. It is a hopeless moral state, which may find expression in a specific act. It is hopeless

because it is immoral. The bringing of further proofs may persuade the intellect; but if the sacrifice of Christ has made its persuasions of the heart and the will, and then that persuasion is put away, refused, and resisted, it is plain that *that* sacrifice can no longer be used as persuasion; and there is no other, no higher moral force that can be exerted upon the man; and so his case has become necessarily a hopeless one—unshielded the man stands exposed to the full blasts of the Divine indignation. "There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." 3. The punishment of such apostasy which is inevitable. He who ventures outside the shelter stands exposed to the storm. Figures alone, such as that of fire, can convey to human minds fitting ideas of Divine indignation and wrath. All punishment is necessarily relative to the being punished; and we have to realise what punishment of a spiritual being, such as man is, may possibly be. Scripture uses two words, both of which are of awful significance—"eternal punishment," and "eternal death." 4. The warning which the possibility of such apostasy should prove to those who are exposed to malign influences and subtle temptations. Take heed lest you yield even a step; it may be putting your foot upon a slide, and before you are aware you may have drifted away. See how "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," as you must if you are found *outside* that shelter and resting-place which you have in Christ. Hold fast your profession. Help one another to hold fast. For Christ's sake, for your own sake, for each other's sake, *hold fast.*

Note on "sinning wilfully."—The word "wilfully" stands in contrast with sins of weakness, ignorance, and error. If the writer meant to say that, after the commission of heinous and wilful sins, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins," this would not only be the most terrible passage in Scripture, but would do away with the very object of redemption, and the possibility of any forgiveness of sins. It would, as Kurtz says, "be in its consequences truly subversive and destructive of the whole Christian soteriology." But the meaning rather is, "if we are willing sinners," "if we are in a state of deliberate and voluntary defiance to the will of God." He is alluding not only to those sins which the Jews described as being committed presumptuously "with uplifted hand" (Num. xv. 30; Ps. xix. 13—see vi. 4-8, xii. 16, 17), but to the *deliberate continuity of such sins as a self-chosen law of life*; as, for instance, when a man has closed against himself the door of repentance, and said, "Evil, be thou my good." Such a state is glanced at in 2 Pet. ii. 20; Matt. xii. 43-45.—*Farrar.*

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 26. *No other Sacrifice.*—There remaineth no longer a sacrifice for sins, so far as they are concerned, because that offering of Jesus which they deliberately reject has abolished all the earlier sacrifices. The observances and ceremonies of Judaism, which had been full of meaning while they pointed to Him that was to come, have lost all their virtue through His coming. Nay more, for such sin as this, the sin of knowing and wilful rejection of the only Sin-offering, God has provided no other sacrifice.—*Dr. Moulton.*

Apostasy is Perdition.—If you make defection from Christianity, and renounce your hope and trust in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, no other is provided, or can be provided, for you—no other makes real atonement for sin; this being renounced, therefore, your case is desperate. The sacrifice under the new covenant is never, like

the Jewish offerings, to be repeated. Apostasy from your present religion, then, is final perdition.—*Moses Stuart.*

No Sacrifice for Some Sins.—There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifices were provided; but yet if those who committed them did truly repent, though they might not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come, and make atonement.—*Matthew Henry.*

Only One Atoning Sacrifice.—They have rejected the work of Christ, and it cannot be done for them over again. There is one atoning sacrifice, and that they have repudiated. He does not say that they have exhausted the infinite mercy of God, nor can we justly assert that he held such a conclusion; he only says that they have, so long as they continue in such a state, put themselves out of God's covenant, and that there are no other covenanted means of grace. For they have trampled underfoot the offer of mercy in Christ, and there is no salvation in any other (Acts iv. 12).—*Farrar.*

Falling from Grace.—He only who stands high can fall low. A lively reference in the soul to what is good is necessary, in order to be thoroughly wicked; hence man can be more reprobate than the beasts, and the apostate angels than apostate man.—*Tholuck.*

Ver. 30. *God the Hater of Sin.*—God stands between the right and the wrong, not looking pleasant on the one and equally pleasant on the other; not looking as the sun looks, with a benignant face on the evil and on the good; and not as man looks, with only a less benignant face upon the evil. He stands with all the fervour of His infinite love and all the majesty of His unlimited power,—approving good, and legislating for it on the one side; and disapproving evil, and abhorring it, and legislating it down to the dust, and beneath the dust, into infamy and eternal penalty on the other side. And if there be one truth that speaks throughout the Bible like the voice of God, and resounds with all the grandeur of Divine intonation, it is the truth that God does not look with an equal eye upon the evil and the good, that He is a discriminator of character, a lover of that which is right, and a hater of that which is wrong.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

Vengeance.—To our minds this word conveys a meaning which makes it unsuitable for application to God. It is hardly possible for us to separate personal feeling, and unrestrained passion, from it. The Bible idea of the term is best understood by thinking of the family goël, avenger, or as it is in Num. xxxv., *revenger* of blood. That family revenger took vengeance; he was bound to take vengeance; but he imported no personal feeling into his vindication of outraged family sanctities. Vengeance was the solemn duty of his position, office, and relation. With such an association we may rightly conceive of vengeance as applied to God.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 32—39.

The Inspiration of Experience.—To have had the experience of the joys of salvation may increase our judgment if we fail, but it also increases our stability if we "hold fast." There are times in life when looking back upon religious experiences that we have had in the past has a distinctly weakening influence on our religious life, making us morbid and depressed. But there are other times when such reviewing of the past is inspirational. We convince ourselves of the reality and power of our religion by remembering what it was to us in the beginning of our career, and what it has been again and again to us in the

strain-times of life. The writer here thinks that reminding the Jewish Christians of their new-found joy, of their new-found faith in Christ, will materially help them to "hold fast the confession of their faith, that it waver not." His plea is this: "You have withstood severe suffering and persecution for Christ's sake. You did not fail then, and why should you suffer yourselves to fail now?"

I. **The former experiences.**—The persecutions which arose about Stephen, in the very first months of the Christian history, scattered the first Jewish Christian Church, and brought persecutions on the members, which are indicated by the activity, energy, and unscrupulousness of Saul of Tarsus. It involved personal sufferings, open insults and reproaches, loss of property and work. And some of those to whom this epistle was addressed had actually come through all these bitter experiences, and had come through them well, "holding fast." "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions." The first flush of faith, and the glow and enthusiasm of first love, no doubt helped them very greatly over their difficulties then; but lengthened experience and settled principles ought to give them even a fuller power to withstand now. They should be far better able to stand a strain than they were in those days when they were first "enlightened." But let them not forget that they *had* passed through this experience. It had been proved that they *could* hold their Christian faith through times of temptation, strain, and persecution.

II. **The new afflictions.**—They were sufficiently *like* the old to make their former experience avail. They were sufficiently *unlike* the old to make a special demand for watchfulness. Persecutions were renewed, and they could but take many of the old forms; but the special peril of the hour was the enticement of subtle persuasions to fall back upon the older Jewish faith, the faith of their childhood. These persuasions came from those in close association with them, and became very serious trials of their faith.

III. **The conditions of renewing the old victory of steadfastness.**—1. The spirit of Christian endurance. 2. The realisation that, in having Christ, they had in themselves a "better possession" than could be taken away from them by any persecutions. 3. A holy boldness that would enable them to set a firm front against every foe, that would enable them to resist evil influence by attacking the evil. 4. The patience which could rise into persistency, be determined to know the will of God, and to stand by it.

IV. **The reward of those who finally overcome.**—"They receive the promise." 1. They are in a state of readiness for the Lord's coming. 2. They realise the true life now, in keeping their faith, and living the life of faith. 3. They are conscious of the acceptance and favour of God, who finds "His pleasure in them." 4. They receive the full salvation of the soul—its emancipation from all bodily limitations, and full unfolding into the image of the risen and glorified Son of God. The mention of the life of faith, the life ruled and toned by a steadfast faith in God, prepares the way for the striking series of illustrations of the power of faith in life which are given in the next chapter.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 32. *Admonished by the Past.*—"But call to remembrance the former days." At different times and in various moods of mind we find ourselves variously impressed by the sameness, or by the diversity, of our human experiences. It may be true to say that, strictly, a past experience is never repeated; for if the thing that happens is the same, the attendant circumstances and conditions are not the same, and our personal states, in

relation to the thing, are not the same. It is with examples taken from our own past as it is with the examples offered us in the blessed human life of our Divine Lord; we can copy neither in any minute detail. But we are not therefore shut off from following the example of our Divine Lord, nor are we prevented from being duly admonished and aided by our own past experiences. What we require to see is that all things enshrine principles, express principles in some one direction and with some precise limitation. We remember the thing, the incident, the conflict, the success or failure, for the sake of the principle which found expression in it, and may gain a new application to our new scenes and difficulties. There is a sense in which man can only progress by forgetfulness of the past—"leaving the things that are behind." "Let the dead past bury its dead." It is at once the mission and the weakness of the aged, their keeping us in touch with the past. But it is equally true that nothing is ever safely built up—no truth, no character, no human life, nothing moral—save on the foundations of the past. It is the young man's mission and weakness that he imagines things are new, and wants everything to be independent of everything else. The point in relation to the past specially presented in this text is, that former experiences have put good principles, right motives, and good inspirations to the test—perhaps to a severer test than they are ever likely to be subjected to again. They stood the test; they stood the test well: then you may safely trust those principles, motives, and inspirations in view of new emergencies.

Vers. 35, 36. *The Need of Patience.*—Patience is the ballast of the soul, that will keep it from rolling and tumbling in the greatest storms; and he that will venture out without this to make him sail even and steady will certainly make shipwreck and drown himself, first in the cares and sorrows of this world, and then in perdition. —*Hopkins.*

Christian Patience.—Results are slowly produced in the natural, the moral, and the spiritual worlds. Men who only gaze upon work, and have not to *do* it, are often impatient. Some of the early Christians were in danger even of apostasy through the want of patience amid the trials which they had to endure.

I. **The need which there is of patience in Christian life and work.**—There are difficulties connected with our life and work common to all times. 1. The difficulty of fully understanding the gospel ourselves, and of making it understood by others. 2. The moral difficulties we have to encounter are even greater than the intellectual. 3. We need patience on account of the opposition which we have to encounter. 4. On account of the deep obscurity in which we labour—obscurity applying to the results of our labour as well as to its design. 5. And on account of delay in the fulfilment of God's promises.

II. **The root from which patience will spring—confidence or faith.**—The man who has no faith in the soil will not plough it; the man who has no faith in the seed will not sow it; and the man who has no faith in the return of the seasons will neither plough nor sow. So it is in spiritual things.

III. **The reward with which patience shall at length be crowned.**—It hath "great recompence of reward." Ye shall "receive the promise."—*Absalom Clark.*

The Promises call for Patience.—The greatest part of the saints' happiness is in promise. They must first do the will of God before they receive the promise, and after they have done the will of God they have need of patience to wait for the time when the promise shall be fulfilled; they have need of patience to live till God

calls them away. It is a trial of the patience of Christians to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward till God's time to give it them is come. We must be God's waiting servants when we can be no longer His working servants. —*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 36. *The Expectation of Future Blessedness.*—Whereas we have here the expression of "receiving the promise," it is plain the promise must be understood objectively—that is, that transcendent good that was promised; namely, that principally wherein all the promises do finally and lastly centre: which it is plain the apostle here most especially intends, as being eminently called "the promise."

I. **The business of a sincere Christian in this world is to be doing the will of God.**—By the will of God we are to understand the *object* of His will, or that which He wills—namely, the thing willed. Our *duty* willed by Him and not mere events, that must be understood to be the object of this will. Of this every sincere Christian must be the active instrument: it is the business of a devoted person, one given up to God in Christ. Such only are in an immediate capacity or promptitude to do the will of God intentionally and with their own design, though it be the undoubted duty of all who are naturally capable thereof.

II. **Patience, in the expectation of the blessedness of the heavenly estate, is very needful to every sincere and thorough Christian.**—Give some account of this patience. The natural constitution of the human soul disposeth it equally to covet and pursue a desirable good as to regret and shun a hurtful evil. The want of such a desirable and suitable good, understood to be so, is as truly afflicting and grievous as the pressure of a present evil. An ability to bear that want is as real and needful an endowment as the fortitude by which we endure a painful evil. Therefore it equally belongs to patience to be exercised in the one case as well as in the other. What does patience suppose, as it hath its exercise this way, viz. in the expectation of future blessedness? (1) That blessedness, truly so called, be actually understood and apprehended by the expectants as a real and most desirable good to them. (2) That the delay and deferring of this blessedness must be an afflicting and felt grievance: otherwise patience can have no place or exercise about it. Wherein does patience consist? It is "an ability becomingly to endure." But its reference to God must be maintained. And this reference must be to Him as to the *Author* of it and the *object* of it. Patience is not only a rational temperament, it is also a gratuitous donation, a gift of the good Spirit of God. God is said to be "the God of patience." A deference of His holy pleasure in ordering the occasions of such exercise is carried in the notion of it. It hath in it submission to the will of God. Consider patience in its peculiar *effect*—the "work of patience." It gives a man a mastery and conquest over all undue and disorderly passions. It fixes the soul in a composed serenity; creates it a region of sedate and peaceful rest; infers into it a silent calm; allays or prevents all turbulent agitations; excludes whatsoever of noisy clamour; permits no tumults, no storm or tempest, *within*, —whatsoever of that kind, in this our expecting state, may beset a man from *without*. Christ said, "In your patience possess ye your souls." If you have not patience, you are outed of yourselves; you are no longer masters of your own souls; can have no enjoyment of yourselves; and, therefore, are much less to expect a satisfying enjoyment of Him. The temper of spirit it introduces is a dutiful silence. In reference to the delay of the blessedness we expect, we ought not to be without sense, as if it were no grievance. And we ought not to have an excessive sense of it which were peevishness or impatience.

III. **The necessity of patience arises from a consideration of the principles from whence the necessity arises, and**

the ends which it is necessary unto. —The principles are such as these: faith of the unseen state; hope; love; holiness, which includes hatred of the opposite—sin; and a tendency to the improving and heightening itself. Where there is an inchoate holiness, there cannot but be a tendency unto consummate perfect holiness. As holiness includes conformity to the *preceptive* will of God, so it doth to His *disposing* will being made known. Therefore when we understand it to be His pleasure we should wait, the holy nature itself, which prompts us so earnestly to desire the perfection of our state, must also incline us patiently to expect it. The sovereign and supreme principle is the blessed Spirit of God Himself. He begets, raises, and cherisheth such desires after the blessedness of the heavenly state as makes this patience most absolutely necessary. Consider the ends which patience serves. The nearer and more immediate—"our doing the will of God"; the remoter and ultimate—"our inheriting the promise." Patience conduces to our doing God's will. Not that it is the proper principle of doing it—active vigour is that; yet the concomitancy of patience is requisite thereto. Two things God doth ordinarily will concerning the way wherein He conducts and leads on those that peculiarly belong to Him to the blessed end and consummate state He designs them to, the one whereof is also requisite to the other: 1. Their gradual growth and improvement in holiness and all dutiful dispositions towards Him, till they come nearer to maturity for glory, and a meetness for the heavenly state. 2. Their maintaining an intercourse with Himself in order thereto.—*John Howe.*

Ver. 38. *Drawing Back.*—As the fig tree began to wither so his gifts began to paire, as if a worm was still gnawing at them; his judgment rusts like a sword which is not used; his zeal trembleth as though it were in a palsy; his faith withereth as though it were blasted; and the image of death is upon all his religion. After this he thinketh, like Samson, to pray as he did, and speak as he did, and hath no power, but wondereth, like Zedekiah, how the Spirit is gone from him. Now when the good Spirit is gone, then cometh the spirit of blindness, and the spirit of error, and the spirit of fear, and all to seduce the spirit of man. After this, by little and little, he falls into error, then he comes into heresy; at last he plungeth into despair: after this, if he inquire, God will not suffer him to learn; if he read, God will not suffer him to understand; if he hear, God will not suffer him to remember; if he pray, God seemeth unto him like Baal, which could not hear. At last he beholdeth his wretchedness, as Adam looked upon his nakedness; and mourneth for his gifts, as Rachel wept for her children, because they were not. All this cometh to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken that which he seemeth to have."—*H. Smith.*

Ver. 39. *Shrinking Back and Keeping On.*—"But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul." There is no more difficult work given to Christian teachers to do than to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and gentleness." It is easy work, there is a certain personal gratification found in the work, of denouncing and condemning. The denouncer has a pleasant consciousness of moral superiority; but a man must have himself in noble restraint, and go well out of himself in pitiful interest in others, before he can rebuke wisely and effectively, and put compassion and Christly sympathy into his reproofs. The writer of this epistle had a very serious work of warning to do. It so thoroughly possessed him that it comes out into varied expression at every opportunity. It is like the ever-recurring refrain of a song or a piece of music. And he seemed him-

self to get almost weary of it, and to fear that it would be unduly wearying and depressing to those whom he addressed. So in this passage he tries hard to get into another mood, and to write trustingly and hopefully. The mood of our text is a cheerful one, but the cheerfulness is only gained through a struggle. The writer has evidently been greatly distressed by failures from the Christian profession. He has almost overwhelming impressions of the perils to which Christian professors were exposed in his days, more especially Christian professors who had come out of Jewish associations. He has every confidence and satisfaction in the sincerity and stability of those to whom he wrote, and yet he felt that he must warn them carefully, for a spirit of self-security might creep in upon them, and then the temptations, false teachings, and imperilling influences and associations would have every chance with them; for "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The writer's confidence in the people was partly based on the fact that he and they had already passed through a very bitter experience together, and they had acted nobly all through it, and come out nobly from it. He knew therefore how they could "stand fast in the Lord." He bids them "call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one." It may be asked, If they had shown themselves so noble, why should their teacher have any such grave anxieties concerning them, and address such careful warnings to them? The answer is twofold: 1. In the very fact of their coming so well out of one time of strain lay a peril of unwatchfulness, and unpreparedness to meet a fresh time of strain. An army is never in such peril as in the hours succeeding a victory. A man is placed in the gravest moral peril immediately after he has gained a great moral success. It is so easy for a man to delude himself with the idea that one success guarantees continuous success; so easy to argue, "I have stood, therefore I shall stand"; so easy to fail to realise that life is a continuous moral battle, a series of surprises; our moral foes are skilful in assuming various devices, and the successes of our past form no guarantee whatever for triumph in the future, even our experiences but feebly preparing us for the strain-times that are before us. Froude reminds us that experience is like the stern-light of a ship, it does but cast its rays upon the way that has been taken. To moral victors the counsel must be given, "Be not high-minded, but fear. 2. But the other answer is this—The new peril to which they were exposed bore an altogether new character, and they might not be prepared for *it*. Their early experience had been one of active persecution. The government and society of the day had been arrayed against them. Some of them had been cast into prison, many of them had been despoiled of their goods, their characters had been maligned, and they had been hated of all men for Christ's name's sake. And such times of outward persecution and material peril have passed again and again over Christ's Church. They are the times of which the most can be made in history, but they are not the times that bring the gravest peril to the spiritual life of the Church. That life has always survived its martyr ages. If there is a seeming exception to that "always," it is found in the driving of evangelical religion out of France for generations by the persecutions which culminated in Black Bartholomew's Day. But even in France evangelical religion did but hide its head awhile, waiting its opportunity to lift it high again in the latter days. The experiences of persecuting ages never fit men

to meet all the forms of peril in which the Christian life may be placed, and they do us some injury if they start in us the impression that all strain upon the religious profession will take this outward form. These Jewish Christians would fail to see the new forms that temptation was taking, if they persisted in thinking that all temptation would follow the pattern of that which they had already gone through and overcome. The evils around them now were of a subtle character. They came even from the fact that they were *not* persecuted. They came from that easy-going spirit which comes when there is no evident call to watchfulness and enterprise. They came from their ability to put their Christian weapons aside on the shelf; they were losing the power to use them skilfully, and were disinclined to take them down when any foe appeared. And they came in the opportunity the leisure afforded for the influence of enervating and false teachings, and for the attraction of pleasurable but demoralising self-indulgences. When the sky is clear, the air dry, the sunshine warm, the atmosphere genial, the trees budding, and the flowers opening freely, when there is no warning of storm, and no mutter of distant war, then subtle pestilence may be stalking abroad, and secretly imperilling life and health. The Church has lost most in its times of apparent security. It has been drawn back rather than driven back. The ship will sail the great Southern Seas, safely outriding the great gales, and, if bruised, still sound, when it has been smitten with the lightnings, tossed with the tempests, and helplessly driven before the hurricanes; and then it will come out into smooth seas, and the blue shall reach from rim to rim, no more than a gentle breeze shall play upon the waters, and it shall feel restfully, peacefully, unwatchfully secure. But almost out of sight is yonder island, with its coral reef, over which the waves dash violently. That island is a source of new, unknown, subtle and well-nigh overwhelming danger to the ship. It has a strange attractive power upon the under-waters. Towards the reef the currents are setting, and they may seize the ship, and bear her secretly on, until at last, no hurried turning of the helm, no desperate hanging out of every yard of sail that the ship can carry, will save her; on, on she is borne, till they can hear the wild lashing of the waves upon the coral rocks, and soon the ship is crashed upon them, drawn back, and crashed again upon them, until the fragments of a hopeless wreck are borne over the reef to tell their tale of woe. Well, indeed, may we be warned of the perils that belong to quiet times of religious experience. Then—yes, then more especially—there be many that shrink back to perdition. We may well thank our Bible Revisers for that very suggestive term "shrink back." They seem to have caught the writer's idea precisely. He evidently fears chiefly a spirit of religious sluggishness, do-nothingness, listlessness. He had the same kind of fear about his people that St. Paul had about Timothy. That quiet, studious, weakly-bodied young man was inclined to take things too easily, to let things go rather than battle with them. And this brought grave fears for him to his father in Christ; so he sent him this arousing message, "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." And what this writer fears is not a determinedly going back from the faith of Christ, not an open and resolute apostatising, nothing disgraceful like the forsaking of Demas, or the violent enmity of Julian; but a drifting away, a shrinking back, a silent action of the current of worldliness, or a current of false teaching, which would take all the inspiration and sanctifying impulse out of the Christian faith, until the Church would but keep its name to live, and be dead. His point may be simply illustrated by the fish in a rapid stream. So long as they actively swim, let their life go out in energetic efforts, they can go up the stream, advance

against the current. But peril lies in sluggishness. Cease to swim, and silent, ever-working forces act upon the fish; he shrinks back, he is borne downward, though he may think he keeps his place; presently he will feel the power of the downward swirl; it will be beyond his power of resistance, and over the great fall he is borne. It is thus with the Christian. He need only do nothing to "shrink back unto perdition." Relative to the Christian life, we must accept of the world as a force, like a descending stream, ever bearing us downward. In the stream of the world we have to be, we must be. Against the stream we have to swim if we would reach the restful lake of the holy ones. Against the stream, always against the stream, day and night against the stream—that is how it must be with us. Relax one moment, the current seizes you, and ere you know it you have shrunk back a little way. Get into a listless, careless way in the religious life, and it is inevitable that downward you go. Perhaps you will even be so fascinated at first that you will quite enjoy the rest from toil and strain, and find all around so pleasant that you feel sure the end must be like the way. But what an awful delusion all that is! See which way are you moving? The lake of holiness and God is not *that way*. You are "shrinking back," you are going down, the rapids are that way, the frightful fall is that way, the whelming waters are that way. Shrinking back is always "unto perdition." There are two ways of living the Christian life. There is "keeping on," and there is "letting go." The "keeping on" folk are they who have faith (and let it inspire activity and effort) unto the saving of the soul. The "letting go" folk, who make no effort to follow on and keep up, are they who "shrink back unto perdition." Would you be "keeping on"? Then you must mean to keep on, plan to keep on, master yourself, and master your circumstances, in order to keep on. Keeping on is never a matter of accident, it is always a matter of thought and effort. Keeping on the whir and whirl of machinery means persistent toil in renewing the fires, and replenishing the boilers. Would you be "letting go"? Then no resolve whatever is needed, you are required to make no effort, you simply need do nothing: cease to keep on, stop, and you will surely drift. You can only keep up to a level reached by persistently striving to reach a level beyond. The law of the garden is the law of the soul. Toil, weed, watch, culture, plant, put energy into it, wisely directed, well-adapted energy into it, and the garden will be an ever-increasing joy to you. But stop, be careless, leave it alone, cease to work at it—that is all you need do—do nothing—it will soon be overgrown with weeds, a ruin and a disgrace. Toil, strive, watch, be active, enterprising, energetic, in the religious life, and beauty, power, joy, will abundantly respond to you. Let things go, let duty be done perfunctorily, and worship become formality; rest upon a past experience; want nothing higher or better; get through a religious life somehow, anyhow, with a wretched sort of lifeless hope that somehow all will come out right at last,—you can picture that soul-garden; you do not need that I should picture it for you. It is evidently "shrinking back unto perdition." The cultured place is fast becoming a wilderness. In the religious life there is one absolute and universal law always working: "Strive, and you shall live"; "Cease to strive, and you shall die." Let the oars lie still on the rapid stream of life—the oars of your soul's boat—you need do nothing more, the stream of life will do its fatal work only too surely—"you will shrink back unto perdition." The truth may be illustrated in our several Christian spheres. 1. The Christian life demands anxious and continuous attention to personal culture. Flag in it, stop it, and your Christian character will soon shrink back. 2. The Christian life demands active endeavour to exert gracious personal influence, and to use

in service entrusted talents and gifts. Persistently send out holy influences, and you will keep and enlarge your powers of influencing. Stop all effort to influence, and the very ability will fade away, as the blacksmith's muscle becomes flaccid when he ceases to wield the hammer. 3. The Christian life demands a persistency and continuity of attendance on Christian worship and means of grace. Begin to flag; do not go sometimes; become irregular; go when you feel inclined, not when you ought; and you will soon cease to get a blessing, and easily shrink back into indifference. But the writer of our text wrote hopefully, and we would speak hopefully to you. We must warn you faithfully; but we hope that you are "not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul."

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER X.

Ver. 18. *Remission of Sins.*—A French girl of fourteen once appeared before Napoleon, and casting herself at his feet cried, "Pardon sire! pardon for my father!" "And who is your father?" asked Napoleon; "and who are you?" "My name is Lajolia," she said; and with flowing tears added, "but sire, my father is doomed to die." "Ah! young lady," replied Napoleon, "I can do nothing for you. It is the second time your father has been found guilty of treason against the State." "Alas!" exclaimed the poor girl, "I know it, sire; but *I do not ask for justice; I implore pardon.* I beseech you, forgive, oh, forgive my father!" After a momentary struggle of feeling, Napoleon gently took the hand of the young maiden, and said, "Well, my child, for your sake, I will pardon your father. That is enough; now leave me."

Ver. 27. *Fear of the Judgment.*—Jerome used to say, that it seemed to him as if the trumpet of the last day was always sounding in his ear, saying, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." The generality, however, think but little of this awful and important period. A Christian king of Hungary being very sad and pensive, his brother, who was a gay courtier, was desirous of knowing the cause of his sadness. "Oh, brother," said the king, "I have been a great sinner against God, and know not how to die, or how to appear before God in judgment." His brother, making a jest of it, said, "These are but melancholy thoughts." The king made no reply; but it was the custom of the country, that if the executioner came and sounded a trumpet before any man's door, he was presently led to execution. The king, in the dead of the night, sent the executioner to sound the trumpet before his brother's door; who, hearing it, and seeing the messenger of death, sprang into the king's presence, beseeching to know in what he had offended. "Alas! brother," said the king, "you have never offended me. And is the sight of my executioner so dreadful? and shall not I, who have greatly offended, fear to be brought before the judgment-seat of Christ?"

Ver. 33. *A Gazing-stock.*—The Greek word here used means to expose to view as in a public theatre, which was commonly done in those days. The expression here is figurative, yet it was afterwards literally carried out, when Christians were exposed in the theatres, not only to opprobrium and insult, but made the victims of wild beasts, or assaulted by gladiators.

Ver. 36. *Patience likened to a Jewel.*—"I compare patience to the most precious thing that the earth produces—a jewel. Pressed by sand and rocks, it reposes in the dark lap of the earth. Though no ray of light comes near it, it is radiant with imperishable beauty. Its brightness remains even in the deep night; but when liberated from the dark prison, it forms, united to gold, the distinguishing mark and ornament of glory, the ring, the sceptre, and the crown," said the wise Hillel. "Her end and reward is the crown of life."—*Krummacher.*

The Leaves teaching Patience.—O impatient ones! Did the leaves say nothing to you as they murmured when you came hither to-day? They were not created this spring, but months ago, and the summer just begun will fashion others for another year. At the bottom of every leaf-stem is a cradle, and in it is an infant germ; and the winds will rock it, and the birds will sing to it all summer long; and next season it will unfold. So God is working for you, and carrying forward to the perfect development all the processes of your lives.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

The Work of Patience.—Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride; she bridles

the tongue, refrains the hand, tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, consummates martyrdom. Patience produces unity in the Church, loyalty in the State, harmony in families and societies; she comforts the poor, and moderates the rich; she makes us humble in prosperity, cheerful in adversity, unmoved by calumny and reproach; she teaches us to forgive those who have injured us, and to be the first in asking forgiveness of those whom we have injured; she delights the faithful and invites the unbelieving; she adorns the woman, and improves the man, is loved in a child, praised in a young man, admired in an old man; she is beautiful in either sex and every age. - *Horne.*

CHAPTER XI.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH AS A PRACTICAL POWER IN LIFE.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

THIS chapter contains a series of illustrations, taken from the heroic ages of Hebrew history, of the nature and influence of faith in God. The writer desires to show that faith makes a motive and inspiration for daily life and conduct as sufficient and as satisfactory as distant announcements and demonstrative proofs. In impressing the temporary character of the Mosaic religious system, the writer is careful to preserve everything belonging to the older age that had a universal, a simply human character. And faith is the same thing sustaining patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs of the olden time or the new.

Ver. 1. **Substance of things hoped for.**—Here the word means "confident expectation"; and this is so real that the man of faith acts as if he already had what he hoped for. Things only "hoped for" have no actual present reality to us. They gain practical reality in the faith that grasps them. That faith gives the present enjoyment of them. **Evidence.**—Demonstration, proof. Faith in the Divine word supplies the place of and is equivalent to proof. It satisfies the mind, and it inspires conduct just as a proof or demonstration should do. *Stuart* points out that the "faith" mentioned here is not specifically what is understood by "saving faith"; but rather faith as a practical principle and power, influencing all life and conduct. "The true and essential nature of faith is confidence in God, belief in His declarations." Faith here is the principle of pious and virtuous belief and action.

Ver. 2. **Elders.**—Heroes and saints of the older age.

Ver. 3. **Worlds.**—Greek "ages," *i.e.* the world regarded from the standpoint of human history. "The 'time-world' necessarily presumes the existence of the space-world also" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 4. **More excellent.**—Because Abel made it the offering of *himself*. It is the offering of the man himself, through his sacrifice, that God accepts. **Dead yet speaketh.**—Philo says, "Abel—which is most strange—has both been slain and lives."

Ver. 6. **Believe that he is.**—The two absolutely fundamental truths of universal religion are: (1) God exists; (2) God is moral Governor of the universe, and as such rewards the pious, and punishes the ungodly.

Ver. 7. **Righteousness which is by faith.**—Which is according to faith. "Faith in this writer never becomes the same as mystic oneness with Christ, but means general belief in the unseen. And 'righteousness' is not 'justification,' but faith manifested by obedience. Throughout this chapter righteousness is the human condition which faith produces, not the Divine gift which faith receives" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 19. **Received him in a figure.**—Lit. "in a parable." *Stuart* thinks the reference is to Abraham's having originally received Isaac as one born of parents who were virtually dead. But the reference is clearly to the scene on Mount Moriah; and it must mean that when, in full purpose, Abraham had laid his son on the altar, he was potentially sacrificed, and Abraham received him again as one brought back from the death to which he had devoted him.

Ver. 21. **Leaning upon the top of his staff.**—Probably meaning "upon the head of the bed"; only this assumes more of a bedstead than was usual among tribal Eastern people. The LXX. rendered *mitteh*, staff, instead of *mittah*, bed. The idea is that aged Jacob, rising from his bed, and unable to support himself, leaned on the staff associated with his pilgrimage, and bowed over the staff in an act of worship. The *Vulgate* renders, "he adored the top of Joseph's staff"; and Cornelius à Lapide quotes the sentence in defence of image-worship.

Ver. 23. **Proper child.**—Goodly child; unusual for beauty and signs of intelligence; ἀστεῖον, goodly, fair, beautiful (Acts vii. 20, "fair to God").

Ver. 24. **Refused to be called.**—This is based wholly on Jewish legends.

Ver. 37. **Sawn asunder.**—The traditional mode of Isaiah's death. **Tempted.**—*I.e.* severely tested. A conjecture has been made that the word should be ἐπρήσθησαν, they were burned, instead of ἐπειράσθησαν. But it may mean that every effort was made to induce them to apostatise. Illustrate from the efforts to induce the last of the seven Maccabean brothers to apostatise. See 2 Macc. vii.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—3.

Faith and Reason.—It is necessary to consider precisely what idea of faith this writer has, and illustrates in this chapter. It is manifest at once that he is not attempting any general description of faith. If we had to understand him in that sense, we should have to say that his definition was an imperfect one, because it excludes so much. His mind was full of a particular class of people, who were under particular circumstances of temptation and difficulty, and his setting of truth is strictly and exactly adapted to them. The Jewish Christians had entered the spiritual dispensation in which *faith* is the medium, and they were seriously tempted to drift back into the material dispensation in which *sense* is the medium. The case is put strongly in the words, "But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul." But it would seem to those Jewish Christians as if he were urging them to break altogether away from their old history and old associations, and that was a very hard thing for the Jew, who had such a passionate attachment to the old. The writer seems to say that he advises nothing of the kind. There is a spiritual element in that old history and old ceremonial; that spiritual element is the real *glory* of them. That is precisely akin with the spirit of the new dispensation, which really is the very heart of the old, freed from its swathing bandages and its material limitations. "By faith"—just the very faith he is urging them to retain—"the elders obtained a good report," or "had witness borne to them." Definitions of faith are seldom satisfactory, because it can be viewed from several sides, and the definition may give only one of its sides. *Locke* describes faith as the assent to any proposition not made out by the deductions of reason, but upon the credit of the proposer. But that sees faith only on one side, and is altogether unsatisfactory to the Christian mind. The precise idea of faith in this chapter may be seen by a consideration of the similar terms, belief, saving faith, and trust. The writer is certainly not meaning belief, or the assent to particular statements of truth; nor does he mean "saving faith," or that acceptance of Christ as Saviour, and that soul-surrender to Him, which is the proper beginning of the Christian life; nor can he be referring to "trust," which is a personal feeling of confidence in Christ, and a daily renewed attitude of dependence. Neither of these aspects of faith are appropriate to this occasion.

I. **Faith is the power in man which makes real to him the unreal.**—By unreal is only to be understood the "unseen." Man calls material things real and spiritual things unreal, and we take man's standpoint. The deeper truth which he is to grow to apprehend is, that the spiritual is the real, and the material is but as its shadow, and so unreal. The mischievous teachers might urge on the Jewish Christians that in leaving Mosaism for Christianity they were leaving the real, the tangible, that which was known and proved, for the unreal, the vague, the uncertain, the intangible. What therefore needs to be made clear is, that man has within him a power which is altogether higher than sense. He *can* come into relation with that which cannot be seen, cannot be heard, cannot be touched. He can see the unseen; he can hear the unheard; he can feel the unreal. It is man's power to live in the unreal that is his sublime dignity. This lifts him up out of the animal range, for the creatures

have no up-looking eyes. This lifts him up out of the range of animal, carnal man. Faith makes him a new creature, another creature, an altogether higher creature. That power in man which puts him into relation with the spiritual world, and makes that unreal world real to him, the very world in which he lives, is the faith with which the writer deals in this chapter. And it is strictly to the point for him to plead that, in urging the Jewish Christians to keep in that spiritual world to which they had been lifted, he was but urging them to do what the noblest heroes of the ages had done, what alone accounted for the patience of their achievements, and the splendour of their triumphs. They endured through the faith-power that was in them. They "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Faith as a power in man is kin to spiritual vision, and gets its best illustration from our bodily vision. The body looks out from the eyes, discerns something outside it which it regards as real, and lets that something influence feeling and direct conduct. And the soul looks out from the eyes of faith, sees something outside it which it regards as real, which is spiritual and eternal, and it lets that something influence feeling and direct conduct. This is precisely what is illustrated for us in Abel, and Enoch, and Abraham, and Moses. It is the power in man which Christianity cultures, develops, purifies, ennobles, and guides to fitting objects. The two sentences, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen," are really one thought repeated in the usual Hebraic mode. Taking the Authorised Version, we may see that the "substance of things hoped for" is simply this—making a present, real, and active power to us the unreal. And the "evidence of things not seen" is the making evident to us—manifesting to us, so as to be practically influential upon us—that which the bodily eye fails to discern. "Evidence" here is not "proof." We can never get any *proof* of spiritual things. They are "spiritually discerned." We speak of things being "in evidence" when they are presented to us for serious consideration. Faith brings unseen and eternal things into evidence; presents them for our consideration, with a view to the right ordering and shaping of our conduct and relations, both as regards God and as regards man. That then is the faith that is impressively, and we may say attractively, illustrated in this chapter. It is the faith that makes a present power on us of what is not materially present—that makes the unseen God a present inspiration to duty, the unseen Christ a present persuasion on feeling, and the promises of spiritual blessing a realised present possession of the blessing. Faith makes God real, and He is with us now. Faith makes righteousness real, and it becomes our attainment now. Faith makes heaven real, and it is about us now. It is the power which makes the unreal real to us. It is the power which keeps the unseen related to the seen. And "that which is seen is temporal, that which is unseen is eternal."

II. **Faith is the power which does for the unreal what reason does for the real.**—"By faith we understand." Just as man takes the facts that are apprehensible by his *senses*, examines them, inquires about them, reasons concerning them, and thus comes to *understand* them, and then acts upon them, so the spiritual man takes the facts of the unseen and eternal world, which are apprehensible by his faith, examines them, inquires into them, uses his quickened spiritual faculties about them, and so comes to apprehend them, to *understand* them, and then acts upon them. Much difficulty is needlessly made in defining the relations of faith and reason. They simply belong to two distinct spheres. Reason moves in the sphere of sensible and material things, and concerns itself entirely with that which takes forms which are apprehensible by the human senses. Faith moves in the sphere of intangible and immaterial things, and concerns itself entirely with that which takes no form which the senses can apprehend. A man is not a mere bundle of senses. The distinction is illustrated

by a reference to the Creation. Nobody knows anything about the origin and first forms of material things by any evidence that the senses can give him. Nobody saw its birth; nobody watched the unfolding order. The obervations of the earth's form and crust on which modern geological studies are based only give rise to conflicting theories, which change with each passing generation, and are all untrustworthy. The scientific man knows more about the Creation through his *beliefs* than through his *observations*. But the spiritual man knows, by his faith in what God has revealed, all that we really need to know concerning the material creation. But observe a distinction. The writer only deals with what the *spiritual man* needs to understand concerning the Creation. Let the *sense-man* go on inquiring as freely as he may please. *Our faith* satisfies *us*; it is to us just the same as if we had been able to reason it all out; God—God alone—the God of Judaism and of Christianity, made the worlds; and there was nothing existing before Him out of which He could make them, and which could possibly set up a rivalry against Him. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear." Unbiassed reason does but reaffirm the conclusions of faith; and he who has the faith is beforehand with the man of reason in his apprehension of the primary truths of science and religion. What is thus illustrated in relation to the material creation is further illustrated by reference to selected heroes of the older Bible history. The principle for the spiritually renewed man that "through faith we understand" is capable of extensive application in all the actual spheres and practical relations and multiplied difficulties of life. The godly men of old really lived their daily life, really met and mastered their cares and perplexities, in the power of their faith. What has been done can be done. What has been done we can do. 1. Look at Abel. By faith he understood what offering, and what spirit in his offering, would gain his acceptance with God. By faith he understood the primary conditions of acceptable human worship. 2. Look at Enoch. By faith he understood the spirit of the earthly life that would secure the favour of God. He understood how to please God. 3. Look at Noah. By faith he understood how to act when God's judgments were abroad in the earth. By faith he understood the safety in which a man always stands who is actively obedient to the will of God. 4. Look at Abraham. By faith he understood where to go, what to do, and how to order his household. By faith he understood the holy mystery of the Divine control of human careers. 5. Look at Sarah. By faith she understood how to meet the surprise events of life. For surprise indeed it was to gain her motherhood in her old age. 6. Look again at Abraham. There is one scene of surpassing interest in his life-story. It is his being called to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. By faith he understood something of the mystery of Divine discipline, and something of the absolute claim of Divine obedience. 7. Look at Isaac. By faith he understood that the interest of a man is not bound up in this life, but belongs to a future, of which he can provide but a part. 8. Look at Jacob and Joseph. Both by faith understood how the world triumphs over the death, and passing away, of individuals; both by faith understood how man lives again in the fulfilment of God's sublime purposes in their race. 9. Look at Moses. By faith he understood what his great life-work was to be. And knowing what it was, he did it, and did it nobly. The triumphs of faith can be summarised. They cover all life—all commonplace life of duties, all special calls to service. Faith everywhere takes the place of understanding, and does for us all that understanding could do. Have we fully entered into apprehension of this most practical relation of faith to life? Even in the new spiritual life we want to reason out everything, and say we will believe nothing that we do not fully understand. Then we must be below our spiritual level. This is the standpoint of spiritual

men: "By faith we understand." The apostle Paul puts his position as a spiritual man quite plainly. "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." A striking New Testament illustration of faith as a practical power on conduct is found in the behaviour of St. Paul during the great storm at sea. "In that desperate crisis one man retained his calm and courage. It was Paul the prisoner, probably in physical health the weakest among them, and the greatest sufferer of them all. But it is in such moments that the courage of the noblest souls shines with the purest lustre, and the soul of Paul was inwardly enlightened. As he prayed, in all the peacefulness of a blameless conscience, it was revealed to him that God would fulfil the promised destiny which was to lead him to Rome, and that, with the preservation of his own life, God would also grant to him the lives of those unhappy sufferers for whom, all unworthy as some of them soon proved to be, his human heart yearned with pity. While the rest were abandoning themselves to despair, Paul stood forth on the deck; and after gently reproaching them for having rejected the advice which would have saved them from all that buffeting and loss, he bade them cheer up; for though the ship would be lost, and they would be wrecked on a certain island, not one of them should lose his life. For they knew that he was a prisoner who had appealed to Cæsar; and that night an angel of the God whose child and servant he was had stood by him, and not only assured him that he should stand before Cæsar, but also that God had, as a sign of grace, granted him the lives of all on board." "Wherefore, sirs," Paul said, "be of good cheer, for *I believe God*, that it shall be even as it was told me."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Faith is more than Belief.*—Faith is that power within us which makes the things of another world seem as real to us as the things of this world—which brings home to us the things not seen, and makes them as clear and sure to us as if we could see them with our very eyes. The great work of faith is to *realise*—make *real* to us—the things of the world unseen. And so faith is sometimes called *the eye of the soul*, because it looks upon the great truths of religion, and sees them as clearly, certainly, and constantly as the bodily eye looks upon and sees all the outward things around us. The bodily eye has no doubt that the things it sees are true and real. When it looks upon the mountains and fields and trees, it is quite sure that they are really there as it sees them. And so faith, the eye of the soul, has no doubt about the things it looks upon. It is quite sure that there is a God, and that God is ever present, and knows all we think and speak and do; it has no doubt about a Saviour who died for us, and about a Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts. But still more, the bodily eye not only is sure about the truth of what it sees, but also cannot help seeing the things before it. When you walk along the road, you do not try to see everything in your way; you see it without trying. So too faith. Faith is not only sure of the truth and reality of the things not seen, but also has them ever in mind, keeps them ever in view, as it were. Faith means a great deal more than mere *belief*. It means making a thing *real* to our souls, having it *ever* present to our minds, keeping it so clearly before us that we cannot help *acting* upon it. So faith is the root of good works and holiness. We cannot help, when the unseen world seems so *real and present* to us—we cannot help living for that unseen world, instead of for the world we see. That power which keeps the great realities of another world clearly, constantly, steadfastly, before our souls is the only power which can conquer the snares and temptations, the

power and the perils, of this world.—*W. Walsham How, D.D.*

Faith as Assent.—Faith is an assent unto truths credible upon the testimony of God (not on the *reasonableness* of the thing revealed, though by this we may judge as to whether it be what it professes, a genuine revelation), delivered unto us in the writings of the apostles and prophets. Thus Christ's ascension is the cause, and His absence the crown, of our faith; because He ascended we the more believe, and because we believe in Him who hath ascended our faith is the more accepted. —*Bishop Pearson.*

The Evidence of Things not seen.—The evidence that the "fool" wanted when he "said in his heart there is no God"; the evidence that Pharaoh wanted when he inquired, "Who is the Lord that I should serve Him? or what profit shall I have if I pray unto Him?" the evidence that Goliath wanted when he disdained David "because he was but a youth"; the evidence which Pilate wanted when he so scornfully inquired, "What is truth?" the evidence that Gallio wanted when "he cared for none of these things"; the evidence that St. Peter wanted when he exclaimed, "Lord, we have left all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?"—such evidence had Noah during one hundred and twenty years. Caring nothing for the gibes of the ungodly, he went on quietly building his extraordinary boat. The wise man had it when he said, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." The three Jews had it when they said, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." Job had it when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Daniel had it when he said, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." True faith is totally distinct from sectarian canting, which springs from ignorance and conceit. It is totally distinct from fanatical excitement, which in the nature of things is a transient emotion, powerless to change the heart and life. True faith leads you on, leads you ever. A man looking for the evidence of things not seen is a patient, earnest, careful, constant creature. But the practical man says, Where is the evidence? Illustrate by the mystery of Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord's Supper. Men are better or worse according to the measure of their faith, *i.e.* their power to realise the evidences of things not seen. Columbus said, "When I passed across the sea to find a land that men thought dwelt only in my fancy, they scorned me for my toil, yet had I faith in God, that He would prosper and direct my purpose."—*Hawthorn Homilies.*

Faith a Soul-principle.—Faith is that principle, that exercise of mind and soul, which has for its object things not seen, but hoped for, and which, instead of sinking under them as too ponderous, whether from their difficulty or from their uncertainty, stands firm under them, supports and sustains their pressure—in other words, is assured of, confides in, and relies on them.—*Dr. Vaughan.*

The Power of Faith Man's Dignity. —Every one knows how much the word "faith" has to do with Christianity. The word is, indeed, peculiar to religion, and in an especial manner peculiar to the religion of Christ. In His revelation to man God has taken hold of that one part of our nature which was lying most neglected, and yet in which the seed of our highest perfection is alone to be found. Faith is indeed that which most raises us from a state of brute selfishness and brute ignorance; and leading us on gradually, according to our gradual growth, from one high object to another, ends by offering to the mind of the Christian the most perfect object of all, even God Himself, our Father and Saviour and Sanctifier. But faith is also that part of our

nature in which the effects of our corruption are seen most strongly. What does the text say faith is? It is that feeling or faculty within us, by which the future becomes to our minds greater than the present, and what we do *not* see more powerful to influence us than what we do see. When we are told of God, we see at once that He is an object of faith, far more excellent than any other, and that it is when directed to Him that the feeling can be brought forward to its full perfection. Faith in God seems to be perfect in all the points required to perfect it; it rests on the word of Him who is all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful; it points to objects so distant that faith must be strong and well matured in order to reach them; it encourages and terrifies by blessings and miseries so far removed from our present conceptions, that the faith must be far more powerful which can overcome actual temptations by dwelling on objects which our understandings are as unable to grasp fully, as our bodily eyes to see and to hear them. This, then, is *religious* faith. There is a peculiar species of religious faith, called Christian faith: that is, not only a faith in God our heavenly Father, but a faith in God as He has revealed Himself to us in the New Testament; that is, in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Christian faith is of a more excellent kind, because it shows us more of God's perfections than any other; and from that view becomes even yet stronger, and more pure, and more self-abandoning. But this faith cannot be understood by all. How can they who live wholly by sight, who do not *practise* even the lower kinds of faith, how can they so much as understand the highest? (See Sermon on 1 John v. 4, 5.)—*Thomas Arnold, D.D.*

The Psychology of Belief.—We can only believe what is intelligible, what we can understand. Not, however, completely understand: if we could believe nothing unless we understood it completely, we should never believe it at all. Because we can believe what we do not understand *completely*, it has often been assumed that we can believe what we do not understand *at all.* Language which we do not comprehend is for us an unknown tongue. It is a mere sound. Sound is not the object of belief, but sense. A meaningless proposition cannot be believed, for the very simple reason, that since it is meaningless, there is nothing to believe. We can only believe what is possible. We cannot believe that which is *contrary* to reason. Reason contradicts a statement when it shows that it never could be true. Belief would not be possible unless there were some things which it is *impossible* to believe. We can only believe what is probable. We can neither believe without evidence nor against it. Evidence is to mental vision what light is to physical. Of mental vision there are two kinds—knowledge and belief. The evidence of certainty produces knowledge; the evidence of probability produces belief. The amount of evidence required to produce belief is different in different individuals, and the amount of evidence required will be different in the same individual for different subjects. Belief is independent of volition. The *profession* of belief is not so limited. We cannot believe to order or at will.—*Prof. Alfred Momerie.*

A Genuine Act of Faith.—Every genuine act of faith is the act of the whole man, not of his understanding alone, not of his affections alone, not of his will alone, but of all three in their central, aboriginal unity; and thus faith becomes the faculty in man through which the spiritual world exercises its sway over him, and thereby enables him to overcome the world of sin and death.—*Hare.*

Vers. 1, 6. *Faith includes Belief.*—The terms we constantly use in religious conversation and in our preaching may be compared to current coin, which

the whole community have an interest in keeping perfectly pure and of the true weight. So it is with terms such as faith, justification, sanctification. They are apt, like coins, to be clipped of some small portion of their Scriptural meaning; and we do well constantly, as it were, to take them to the mint and compare them, or rather the meaning we have come to attach to them, with Holy Scripture. The word translated "faith" is equivalent to *trust in a person.* Those who "come to God" are those who are on their way to faith; yet we are told that before they can have faith they must at least "*believe* that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." *Faith* is a Scripture term which is used in a larger sense than *belief.* Every one who has faith believes; but every one who believes has not necessarily all that is comprehended in the term "faith." Belief is a part of faith, not the whole. Belief is an act of the intellect. Faith is that unshaken trust in God as our heavenly Father, in Christ as our Saviour, and in the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier, which is wrought in the heart of the Christian by the Holy Spirit. We cannot believe without being convinced; if we are intellectually convinced that Jesus is the Christ, we cannot say so from the heart, except by the Holy Ghost—"cannot come to Christ except the Father draw us." It is not the profession of belief alone that God requires, although He requires this, but the acting out of the belief. We must be careful not to assert that there are no degrees in faith, and so make sad the hearts of children of God, whom He has not made sad.—*Robert Barclay.*

Ver. 2. *The Inspiration of High Examples.*—"For by it the elders obtained a good report." R.V. "For therein the elders had witness borne unto them." A recent review-writer on "Modern Socialism and Economics" points out that all forms of society, aristocratic or democratic, despotic or republican, have recognised qualitative differences in their individual members. A better soldier or sailor, inventor or planter, poet or singer, soon made an impression on these societies, and found his reward. This principle, if not rejected, is oppressed by socialism. The mass of society, and not the essential quality of the individual members, occupies the attention, and stimulates the inventive plans of socialists. This is not the method of nature, which improves by variation, and not by mere succession and repetition. Progress comes by diffusing quality through the mass, and not by merely increasing the bulk of the mass; and the quality of individuals, once attained, becomes a common heritage. In no sphere of life does God ever permit man to keep on one dead level. Everywhere God sends forth the advanced man, the superior man, that he may be the inspiration to effort and attainment to others. Every superior man starts in other men the hopeful restlessness of discontent and ambition. The natural tendency of men on a level is to sink to a lower level. So there are always among us best men, elect men, who save humanity by preventing it from sinking, and inspiring it to rise higher. This is the fact in the moral and religious spheres, and Jesus Christ is the supreme Example who declares what is possible for humanity and helps to the attainment of it.

Ver. 3. *Faith and Philosophy dealing with a Material World.*—It needs to be clearly seen that faith and philosophy do not ask the same thing concerning creation. Philosophy asks, "How did these things come to be?" Faith asks, "Who brought these things into being and order?" It is of the very essence of the faculty of faith that it bears relation to *person,* not to force. This is plain if we remember how closely associated faith is with "trust" and with "love."

Vers. 3, 4. *Faith and Reason.*—How "faith" properly stands related to "reason" may be illustrated by the

reference to the Creation. How "faith" stands related to "religion" may be illustrated by the reference to Abel. Faith cannot be satisfactorily defined; it can be described in what it does, or helps us to do.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—6.

The Construction of Religion.—The direct association of Abel's offering with his "faith" gives the true key to the old Scripture narrative, which in fact records the beginning of religion, which, properly regarded, is man's effort to meet the conditions into which sin has brought him, and to recover the relations which sin has disturbed. Man needs worship; sinful man needs a religion.

I. **Man's efforts to construct a religion.**—The result of incoming sin on the human family was not immediate and absolute loss of the thought and knowledge of God; for Abel and Cain knew of God, and recognised God's relation to their prosperity. The result of incoming sin was disharmony between man's spirit and man's body, and the body no longer remained, what it was designed to be, the medium and servant of man the spirit. The body now claimed separate and independent rights, and even to dominate the spirit. In Abel we see the harmony of body and spirit; in Cain, the disharmony. God does not pass by that first instance of disharmony. He testifies His approval of Abel and disapproval of Cain. And in that instance, in that verdict, God establishes for all time the law that acceptable worship must have in it the reality, though it need not have the perfection, of harmony between soul and body. The beginning of the construction of religion was bringing an offering to express thankfulness and to ensure the Divine favour. It is important to notice the difference between the spirit of Adam and the spirit of these sons. Sin had brought in the distinction between "mine" and "thine" in relation to God. Adam saw all to be God's. Abel and Cain made gifts, of what was theirs, to God. A religion is only wanted, and is only possible, where there has come about a breaking of the harmony. Religions are, essentially, human endeavours, more or less Divinely guided, to recover lost fellowship, to restore lost relations.

II. **God indicating what are the essentials of a right religion.**—It were a vain thing for man to construct a religion if God held aloof, and was in no way interested in his effort. If God concerned Himself with it, He must indicate what features of man's effort He approved and what He disapproved. And this is precisely the significance of His acceptance and rejection of these different, and differently inspired, offerings. Man made distinct advance in the construction of a religion when he knew what God approved. An offering like Abel's, offered in the spirit of Abel, is acceptable to Him. Then what are the essential features of Abel's offering, and wherein lies its distinction from Cain's. "Possibly Cain just took some of his fruits as a man would who performs a duty in which he is not very deeply interested. Possibly Abel selected with care, chose out the fattest and best, as a man would who wanted to make a really acceptable gift, one that would worthily express his thankfulness and love. The Mohammedan legend embodies this idea in an exaggerated form. It says that Cain's offering was a sheaf of the very worst of his wheat, but Abel's a fat lamb, the very best of his flock. It is better, however, only to say that the light feeling of the one and the intense feeling of the other gave God a basis for further discriminating between them. Abel's was a personally religious act; Cain's was a formal duty done. Cain's bringing his offering was an expression of natural religion; Abel's was an expression of personal piety. God could receive both, if both were sincere, but the smile of His special favour

must rest on Abel. The point of distinction may even be stated more sharply. The one—Cain—offered a gift to God. The other—Abel—offered himself to God by means of a gift. And the opportunity was taken for sealing, once and for ever, the truth that the only offerings God can accept are gifts which carry to Him the givers themselves." "Every man, then, wanting a religion, it is remarkable that the first idea men light upon is always the same. The first notion of religion is universally that which is seen in Cain and Abel. Men bring a gift to please the Deity and secure His favour. Cain and Abel did not merely bring their offerings as expressions of their thankfulness for temporal prosperity. The story clearly indicates that they looked for the Divine acceptance of themselves, in some sense, for the sake of their gift. Cain was angry because he did not, by his gift, secure the Divine favour for himself. But no mere *gift* can ever secure God's acceptance. 'The Lord looketh on the heart.' Abel's gift of a lamb was, in itself, no more acceptable than Cain's corn and fruits. Abel's humble, earnest, grateful, trusting heart can receive God's favour. From Cain's formalities God's favour must be withheld. Thus in the very first ages of the world was forcibly presented the law which our Divine Lord expressed so plainly: 'They that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Not sacrifices, not temples, not services, not prayers, not good deeds, not steadfast morality, not generous giving, can, of themselves, ever gain Divine favour. The Spirit-God asks for spirit-worship. Because man is a spirit it is beneath his dignity to offer, and it is beneath the dignity of God, the great Spirit, to accept, other than spirit-worship."

These points may be impressed. Religion is not sentiment, and yet it goes with sentiment. Religion is not acts, and yet it can express itself in acts. Religion is heart-feeling; it is the devotion of a man's self to God; it is seen in the Divine Man, who "offered Himself without spot to God."

(This topic might also have been treated as "*The Power of Faith in Human Worship.*")

Special Study of Cain.—1. In Cain we have sin putting on its outward evil forms: heart-wrong showing itself in outward wrong-doing—wrong to others, wrong to society. The difficulty we have with sin is that it never will keep in the heart-sphere; it will persist in coming out and showing what a terrible *heart*-evil it is, by manifesting in social relationships what a terrible *life*-evil it is. 2. In Cain we also see the beginning of contentions about religious matters; and we may learn that religious contentions are always about the externals of religion, never about the inner spirit of piety; about men's beliefs, not about their soul-lovings and soul-trustings. It is assumed that all the Churches and all the sects will be happy together in heaven. They will, but only on the deep ground of their common piety, their common "life in Christ," which will there take the place of religion. Before men sinned in Eden, and after they have been wholly delivered from sin in Paradise, worship may be required, but not religion, which is entirely relative to man's sinful condition.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 4. *Posthumous Eloquence.*—The eloquence of life and the eloquence after life are nearly one, the latter for the most part a prolonged reverberation. The life may be still a living epistle, not dependent upon monumental marble, nor the book memoirs. There are, however, special values attaching to the echoes of the life after it has closed on earth. 1. Speaketh through the charitable memoirs of men, kindred, friends, the Church, the com-

munity—by word, work, example. 2. Speaketh in testimony and vindication of the truths, the cause for which the life stood as an exponent. A completed argument, the peroration, the most forcible part and the most lasting in impression. 3. Pre-eminently Christian faith gives posthumous power to the life. "By *it* he [Abel], being dead, yet speaketh." Agnosticism, infidelity, pessimism, worldliness, selfishness, in any form not only winds up in despair, but leaves no echo that men care to listen to. Christian faith, as the soul of the Christian's life, is immortal and perennial in influence and fruitfulness. It reappears in children and children's children. It adds continually to the witnesses summoned by the Church in her vindication, adds undying elements to the Church's endless pilgrim song.—*J. S. K.*

The Witness of Abel's Faith.—The reference is not to any imaginary continued presence of Abel, nor need it be to the statement in Gen. iv. 10, that the voice of Abel's blood cried from the ground. The argument of the writer requires that the continued witness of Abel should be the witness of Abel's *faith.* He speaks by his faith to those who should come after him, exhorting and encouraging them to follow his example. That example of faith remains upon the holy records, and affords admonition and instruction to succeeding ages.

The Contrast of Cain and Abel.—In the two men, Cain and Abel, we have the types of the two classes into which the world has ever been divided. In Abel we have the soul struggling for restored harmony, seeking to gain its restored rights. In bringing his offering he conquered so far as to make his bodily gift express his soul's gratitude, dependence, and faith. As he stood before God with his offering, body and soul were in harmony. But in Cain the harmony is wholly wanting. His body and soul were not together. The bodily gift indeed was offered, but it spoke nothing in behalf of the soul. —*Age of Great Patriarchs.*

Ver. 5. *Death and Translation.*—Death requires to be spoken of with care and precision. There is the natural death of the animal which man shares in so far as he too is an animal. But as a being inbreathed with the Divine Spirit, and made a living soul, *translation* from one bodily organ to another must be thought of as the Divine idea for man, as was realised and illustrated in Enoch. Death for the living soul, in the animal body, is the necessity introduced by human sin.

Pleasing God.—Enoch, the devout patriarch, the fearless preacher, the fellow-traveller with God, the triumphant saint who did not see death, but took wing at once by the way of translation into heaven. A glorious man, whose name and character and destiny will live in human memory freshly, until the resurrection of the dead. This is the ground of all—that "he pleased God." He did this not by any special superhuman experiences and endeavours, but just in such a way as we may all imitate. The words may never have been uttered to himself at all, but he had the sense of the words in his heart—the deep joyful assurance of God's approbation and love—and others, by his life and labours, knew that he was an accepted and a favoured servant and saint of God.

I. **The necessity for pleasing God.**—There is a God to please, a living God, who takes a living and continual interest in all human things, whose great endeavour, by all this complicated world-work that He carries on, is to nourish and educate human spirits, that they may, like Him, hate the wrong and love the right, and do it. He is pleased always when the least cause for pleasure is presented to Him. Some say that the attempt to please God is an inferior aim, and that the real end we ought to keep in view is, *to be right in everything.* But let a man try to

be right without any regard to God, and how far will he go? God being an infinite, absolute, all-perfect Being, holding in Himself all principles, all relations, all truth, order, and beauty, to please Him must, in the very nature of the case, be to do right. In the epistle to the Hebrews God is spoken of as "Him with whom we have to do." It is not with the duty, but with God in the duty; not with the care, but with the will of God in the care; not with the man, but with God, the maker, ruler, judge, of the man and of all men, with whom we have to do; and therefore we ought to please Him.

II. **The way of pleasing God.**—It is not difficult, if only we take the right way of it. He is not a hard master. I believe we have no idea how simple, how natural, how human-like in the best sense, is the pleasure and joy of God in the obedience of His children. Repentance, faith, practical obedience, are the things which please Him. Enoch lived a public life of service, and pleased God in it. We may do so by action or by suffering; by public testimony or by private prayer; in much or little; by strength or weakness; amid applause or scorn, honour or shame; we may walk with God with a simple, joyful, loving heart.

III. **The results of pleasing God.**—In this way we shall please ourselves as we never can do in any other. There is a kind of self-satisfaction of which the less we have the better. But there is another kind of self-satisfaction which we may and must seek. It is well when a man brings himself up to the bar of his better self. There is something of God in a good man; the enlightened conscience is the echo of the Divine authority and will. And if we please God, we shall ourselves have pleasure in life and the world. He can make our enemies to be at peace with us. In the world we may have tribulation, and yet we may be of good cheer. Come what may in this life, the reward in heaven is always sure. To mortal man the joy of the immortal is not yet revealed; but as the flicker of light on the morning sky is the pledge of the shining sun and the risen day—as the blade above the soil is the earnest of the waving corn-field and the plentiful granary—so are God's first rewards of service here the fore-tokens and the pre-libations of the joy of heaven.—*Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*

Pleasing God must be essentially the same thing in all ages and everywhere. God is the same everywhere and to everybody—the same absolutely, and the same relatively in adaptation to their varying conditions.

I. **What is the condition on which man can please God?**—Simply this—let him be what God designed he should be. None of us can be pleased when our work is spoiled, or turns out to be other than we intended it to be. We are pleased when our work proves to be what we wanted it to be.

II. **What is the reward of pleasing God?**—We get all the blessing—unlimited, unhindered—that He planned. The Divine expectation of the creature involves the richest blessing of the creature.

Vers. 5, 6. *The Power of Faith on Human Death.*—Why was the narrative of Enoch recorded in the older Scriptures? and why is it recalled to mind here? Physical death then seemed to be an absolutely hopeless thing. Everybody died. It might seem to be the end of all. In a long and unbroken procession men passed away by death. Men are in the hands of fate. They may become careless. They did become careless. They let loose their passions, and said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." A world of dying men was fast becoming utterly corrupt before God. It was necessary to show that death was not inevitable. The order could be broken. Man is in the hands of God, not of fate. This life on earth is neither the only life nor the true. This, in the early days, could only be shown pictorially, by an incident, by a fact. It *is* shown in the freeing of Enoch from the uni-

versal death-law, on the ground of faith, and of the life which his faith inspired. What then is taught the world by the translation of Enoch?

I. **The death-penalty on sin may be remitted.**—It was once; it may be again. It is no absolute law for humanity, against which men may kick in vain. In the first age it was remitted. In the prophetic age it was remitted. In the resurrection of Christ it ceased to be a penalty on man, and its power was once and for ever destroyed. For all who are now in Christ death is not death; it is Enoch-translation. The dead in Christ simply "are not"; God takes them.

II. **There is another world, the spiritual world, into which man the spirit goes.**—The first age learned that —learned it from Enoch. Does any man sum up his career thus, "I am born, I grow, I live, I die, and that is all"; what can he do with Enoch? Enoch lives, while he lives, in the spiritual world. Enoch goes into the spiritual world; he does not die. Where is he? Where is Elijah? Where is Christ? "God is not God of the dead, but of the living."

III. **The life that is ruled by other-world considerations escapes death.**—Enoch had this testimony, "He pleased God," in living by faith, not by sight. Then in outward and visible ways he shall illustrate the abiding spiritual truth for the race. He was translated—actually freed *from* death. All who live by faith, by other-world considerations, are translated *through* death. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord."

Ver. 6. *Postulates of Prayer.*—"For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." Coming to God is coming with some request; it is prayer. That is declared to be an impossible thing unless two postulates are laid down and fully admitted.

I. **Nobody can pray unless he believes that God is.**—If he did not so believe, it would never enter into his head to pray. And if a man professes to believe that there is no God, and nevertheless prays, that man is manifestly self-deceived. He does believe in God. Men easily deceive themselves by using terms such as force, law, fate, etc. If in any sense they pray to, or depend on these things, they make them God. The personality of God is the thing men resist, but it is necessary to show that personality in God is precisely relative to prayer in man.

II. **Nobody can pray unless he believes that God is the rewarder of them that pray.**—No one would attempt what he was absolutely sure was useless. There must be hope in prayer. But to lay down as a fact that God is a rewarder is to go beyond the assertion that He is, and to assert that He has a moral character, and comes into moral relations with His creatures. It is to advance from natural to revealed religion. Grant these two postulates (God is; God is a rewarder), and we will logically raise a whole religious structure for humanity, which shall be in absolute harmony with, and be the manifestly necessary outcome of, those first principles.

Two Primary Truths.—The two fundamental truths of all that can properly be called religion are here adverted to. The first is, a belief that God exists; the second, that He is the moral governor of the universe, *i.e.* that He rewards those who are pious, and consequently punishes those who are not so. He who denies this, denies all that sanctions religion, and makes it binding upon the consciences of men.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—12.

Expressions of Faith.—The series of illustrations of faith is in some sense historical; but there is an evident selection to suit a definite purpose. Three persons are introduced in this paragraph; and it is evident that they illustrate

faith, or living in the power of the invisible, as it may gain expression—(1) in the calamities of life; (2) in the commonplaces of life; (3) in the surprises of life.

I. **Faith finding expression in the calamities of life.**—Noah was placed in circumstances which he had no share in bringing about, and over which he had no control. He had to suffer for the sins of others. And he had only a Divine intimation of what he was to do. He saw nobody; perhaps did not even hear a voice. He felt the direction put into his mind. But he believed; he acted upon his faith. There was no outward sign of the judgment falling. The long years must pass before it would fall. Nevertheless he went on preparing the ark, and testifying for God, and for the coming judgment which would express the Divine condemnation. We are all placed under disabilities, and come into the strain of calamities, over which we have no control, and with which we are not directly related. If there be in us the life of faith, we accept God's will concerning us in the very midst of the disabilities, and simply, cheerfully do it; and in doing it honour God, and plead for righteousness with our fellow-men.

II. **Faith finding expression in the commonplaces of life.**—Where we shall live, what shall be our occupation, where we shall seek our friendships, what shall be our daily doing, make up the commonplace of life. And it may seem as if that was precisely the sphere for a man's own judgment and enterprise. What can he want with faith in these every-day things? They call for his decisions and his skill. That there is a noble and spiritual way of doing our commonplace duties, and meeting our commonplace obligations, is shown to us in the patriarch Abraham. He did not go where he wanted to go; he went where *God* wanted him to go. He did not do what he wanted to do; he did what *God* wanted him to do. He believed the Divine voice in his soul, and followed it. He cherished the promise for his race, and quietly bore the limitations and burdens which God laid on the present. It is a sweet mystery of faith that it can thus bring spiritual considerations to bear on the simplest relations of every-day life and duty, so that we may win the righteousness of common life. We can be the children of faithful Abraham.

III. **Faith finding expression in the surprises of life.**—It is strange to find Sarah selected to illustrate faith, seeing that a marked feature of her story is her incredulity. That, however, was only a passing weakness. She came to share her husband's faith. She is selected because the promise of God to her was a distinct surprise; and her having a son in her old age represents what we may call the surprises of life, the things we do not think of or anticipate, or even desire. Sometimes delightful surprises; sometimes doubtful surprises; sometimes trying surprises. Faith may find expression in them; it can find God working in them, and can try to meet the claims of them, and to learn the lessons of them. They may seem to the ordinary human view puzzle-pieces that fit nowhere. Faith finds their fittings, or trusts God to show their places in due time. Faith then is a real and practical power on daily life. It is no great acquisition for great occasions. It is an abiding force, making real to us God, and His word and promise; and so it becomes our sufficient help to bear the disabilities, do the duties, and meet the surprises of life.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 7. *Faith in God's Word.*—The basis of faith is our recognition of something as the word and will of God concerning us. Noah acted; the action was the expression of his faith, and it was based upon a warning that he had, which he recognised to be a warning sent from God, and bearing

direct relation to him. It is our recognition of a thing as the word of God, and the word of God to us, which brings responsibility, and gives exercise to faith, which really is our response to that word. It is conceivable that a man may recognise something as the word of God which is not the word of God, or not meant for him; but the recognition equally brings responsibility in that case; and the man, though actually wrong, is right in so far as he acts up to the light as he apprehends it. It may be said, Then a man is better off who simply leaves God's words alone, and makes no personal recognition of them. The answer is, That this he cannot do. By the law and condition of his very being, he is open and sensitive to communications from God. He must deal with them. He must be judged as a moral being, by the ways in which he has dealt with them. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Persistency in the Obedience of Faith. —An act of faith may be comparatively easy. To maintain a series of acts of faith implies difficulty. To sustain a series of acts, amid changes and opposition, for many years—in the case of Noah, for one hundred and twenty years—implies a truly sublime moral triumph. "We can only admire the loyalty and the faith which kept him going quietly on amid the jeers and scoffs of the thoughtless multitudes who watched his work and listened to his word. Here is no common man. Here is the surprising thing—the man stood in the world's eye all through those years. He lived among the people whom he warned. The religion that is worth anything can stand the strain of common-place, every-day life and relations."

Ver. 8-10. *The Illusiveness of Life.* —God promised Canaan to Abraham, and yet Abraham never inherited Canaan: to the last he was a wanderer there (see Acts vii. 5). But Abraham never complained of being deceived. He does not even seem to have expected fulfilment. His faith appears to have consisted in disbelieving the letter, almost as much as in believing the spirit, of the promise. So we get this principle—God's promises never are fulfilled in the sense in which they seem to have been given. Life is a deception; its anticipations, which are God's promises to the imagination, are never realised. They who know life best, and have trusted God most to fill it with blessings, are ever the first to say that life is a series of disappointments. And in the spirit of the text we have to say, that it is a wise and merciful arrangement which ordains it thus.

I. The deception of life's promise. —The promise to Abraham was not *delayed*; it *never* was fulfilled. Abraham died a stranger and pilgrim in the land. In the later years of David, and earlier years of Solomon, the promise may seem to have been fulfilled. But Scripture distinctly said of the old heroes, "These *all* died in faith, not having received the promises." Those who believe that the Jews will be restored to their native land expect it on the express ground that Canaan has never been actually and permanently theirs. And such is life's disappointment. 1. Our senses deceive us; we begin life with delusion. 2. Our natural anticipations deceive us—*natural* in contradistinction to extravagant expectations. 3. Our expectations, resting on revelation, deceive us. The world's history has turned round two points of hope,—one, the first; the other, the second coming of the Messiah. In the first the promise of the letter was unfulfilled; the second has disappointed many generations. There are two ways of considering this aspect of life,—one is the way of sentiment; the other is the way of faith. The sentimental way is trite enough. Life is a bubble, a dream, a delusion, a phantasm. The saints accepted the fact, but they did not mournfully moralise over it, because they knew that the promise itself had a deeper meaning.

II. **What is the meaning of this delusiveness?**—1. It serves to allure us on. Life is an education. God leads us on, through life's unsatisfying and false reward, ever educating: Canaan first; then the hope of a Redeemer; then the millennial glory. Observe the beautiful result which comes from this indestructible power of believing in spite of failure. 2. This non-fulfilment of promise fulfils it in a *deeper* way. Life is not deception, but illusion. Distinguish between *illusion* and *delusion.* The reward we get is not the reward for which we worked, but a deeper one—deeper and more permanent. The merchant labours all his life, and the hope which leads him on is perhaps wealth. At sixty years of age he attains wealth; but is that the reward of sixty years of toil? No! a reward deeper than he dreamed of. Habits of perseverance, a character trained by industry—that is his reward. He was carried on from year to year by, if he were wise, illusion; if he were unwise, delusion; but he reaped a more enduring substance in himself. This is what God does. His promises are true, though illusive—far truer than we at first take them to be. We look for a mean, low, sensual happiness, all the while He is leading us on to a spiritual blessedness—unfathomly deep. This is the life of faith. We live by faith, not by sight. We do not preach that all is disappointment—the dreary creed of sentimentalism; but we preach that *nothing* here is disappointment, if rightly understood. God has no Canaan for His own, no milk and honey for the luxury of the senses; for the city which hath foundations is built in the soul of man. He in whom God-like character dwells has all the universe for his own. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 8. *Following an Invisible but a Present Guide.*—Abraham is the one man of his age who stands in the sharpest contrast with the men around him. His ideas were different from theirs. He saw more than they could see. He ordered his life upon considerations which were quite foreign to them. Their sphere was "the seen and temporal"; his sphere was the "unseen and eternal." To them God was a name; to him God was the only reality. In Him Abraham, consciously and willingly, "lived and moved and had his being." Other tribes migrated, moving southwards, upon the impulsion of natural race instincts. Abraham led his tribe to the south-west under a conscious Divine leading. He went where he knew that God would have him go. "He went out, not knowing whither he went," but well knowing that all his movements were in the direction of the Divine wisdom, and well assured that all his wants would be supplied from the Divine bounty. Abraham differed from all the men of his time in the keenness of his sense of God, and the quickness of his response to every revelation of the will of God. He is the father of a race whose supreme racial peculiarity is its sensitiveness to the presence and to the claim of God. But it may be asked, How could Abraham, more than any other man, know for certain that what he heard was really the voice of the living God? The answer may be, That no man can know anything for certain that belongs to the spiritual spheres, but some men are much more sensitive to spiritual impressions than others; and every man is responsible for his beliefs, and for his conduct in relation to his belief.—*Revelation by Character.*

Ver. 9. *Expectant Tent-dwellers.*—Tent-dwelling was a stage and a variety in the housing of humanity, but it was in no sense a finality. It properly belonged to a time when the various races were restlessly moving in search of permanent settlements. So there was hope of the fixed house even in the movable tent. Man's first habitations were the spaces round trunks of trees, the lower leafy branches

being drawn down and fastened to the ground as slanting roofs. Then pyramidal bowers were made, distinct from the tree trunks, but of tree branches; these developed into and suggested the form of tents, which developed into the sloping roofed hut or house of wood or stone.

Ver. 10. *The Way to the City.*—We have here an *object for faith*, and *faith for the object*; or we have *the city* and the *way to it.*

1. **The City.**—Let us thank God for that word—or these—"a country"; "a better country, that is, an heavenly." How do these familiar terms fill up for us the dim and vast obscure! They make a home for our wandering thoughts; they give an answer to our wondering inquiries. (1) The city is very ancient; (2) very strong and stable; (3) it is all built by God. To set face towards this city is the noblest attitude a man can assume; to look for it as Abraham did is the highest exercise of faith; and to journey to it through all discouragements is the supreme wisdom, and will bring us, through God's goodness, within its everlasting gates.

II. **The way to the city.**—It is to "look for" it, to expect it. It is the way of faith. Without faith, showing itself by a life-long looking, we have no interest in the place. A whole city for a look, only it must be the look of the whole soul, continued through the whole life, until the city appears. There are those who would be willing enough to *think* themselves into a celestial city. But that is *not* the way. Others would be very willing to *buy* themselves into it. It cannot be discerned by *knowledge*; it cannot be won by *strength* or by *merit.* The unseen city can be won by *looking*, only it must be the whole soul acting in faith, rising in desire, answering to the word and assurance of God in reference to the life to come.—*Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*

The Hope of Abraham.—Abraham is spoken of as the "Friend of God" and the "Father of the Faithful." Fixing attention on these two titles of nobility, and measuring his rank by these, note that—

I. **Abraham was a wanderer, a homeless man, a sojourner in the land of promise.**—And this not on account of poverty, nor because he had no real estate. (The land of Canaan was in a sense his own.) Possibly the homelessness of Abraham may be explained by the fact that the Canaanite was then in the land, and would not let him settle. It may be thought that his keeping to a wandering life shows him to have been a mere barbarian. Or perhaps he regarded it as a wrong thing to lead a settled life in towns and cities. Or perhaps the nature of his property, flocks and herds, necessitated this constant migration for food. None of these suggestions are satisfactory. He "looked for," expected, a city. Abraham was not wandering in search of a city upon earth; he lived in quiet expectation of a city. It was the "patience of hope" that rendered Abraham indifferent to the walled cities of the Canaanites around him, whose antiquity was of ancient days, and whose defence was the munitions of rocks. Nothing so effectively breeds indifference to present objects as the hope of better things to come. But what sort of a city did he look for, in contempt of those around him? It had foundations, permanent ones. Its builder and maker was God. The foundations of His structures are laid deep in His decrees, and the cement has been growing hard from all eternity. We call the city "heaven."

II. **See the marked resemblance between Abraham's case and our own.**—We know that our abode on earth is only for a time; it is not the place of our rest. And of this we are receiving constant admonitions. The feeling of uneasiness, the sense of homelessness, is incompatible with happiness. In order to be happy, you must have a home, either present or in prospect. Earthly homes, in reference

to eternity, are nothing worth. Then the more unsatisfactory you find this world, look the more eagerly and steadfastly on that which is to come. Do not, however, imagine that mere expectation is alone required. There is but one path to the city, and that is a narrow one. It is the path of humble, childlike faith. We know from the life of Christ Himself that Abraham desired to see His day, and saw it, and was glad. It was faith in God's mercy, and that was counted to him for righteousness. It was a firm belief that God would set forth a propitiation for the sins of men, and a hearty acceptance of the pardon thus provided for himself. These are the footsteps of the Father of the Faithful. If, then, you are merely looking forward to the happiness of heaven, without knowing or caring how it is to be obtained, learn from the example of Abraham that you must renounce all sin and self-reliance, and believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your souls, if you would look, with any well-grounded hope, for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.—*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*

Vers. 9, 10. *The Practical Faith of Abraham.*—The record of Abraham's life sets before us a series of incidents, but each is intended to convince us how truly "faith in God" was the mainspring and moving principle of his whole life. The more prominent of these instances are: (1) his leaving his native home to go forth as a wanderer into a strange land; (2) his sojourning in that land hopefully, though he might purchase and possess in it only a grave; (3) his patience under the promise of an heir which the lapse of long years found unfulfilled; (4) his acceptance of the Divine will that the son should be born in his old age; and (5) his simple obedience in going forth to offer his son on Mount Moriah. And such *faith* is the only basis on which a true religion can be built; it is the only centre round which a religious creed or system or life can gather. No religion can rest securely upon knowledge; for knowledge can never be sure or perfect; it can never reach beyond the probable. To pass out of the sphere of faith is to pass out of the sphere of the *creature*, and make our claim to the independent rights of the Creator; and so it is to change the very conditions of our being.

Sarah the Princess.—Sarah is the first woman who is fully introduced to us in Holy Scripture. Eve is a kind of ideal of womanhood. Sarah is the first fellow-woman who evidently passed through the common human experiences. The narrative that deals with her is blended with that of her husband. She was the companion of his life-wanderings for probably a hundred years. Only on very few occasions do we find her acting independently. But these cases should be carefully noticed. She is introduced as a wife. She stood in close family relations to Abraham. Her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah. She went with Abraham to Egypt. Explain her deception to save her husband. Eastern kings claimed the right to seize any woman for their harems. Then came the promise of seed in her old age. Sarah wondered how it could be fulfilled, and thought she must aid the fulfilment, so she gave her maid to Abraham as a wife. Tell the story of Hagar and Ishmael. The promise was renewed to Abraham in such a way that Sarah could hear it. Notice Sarah's domestic virtues. Estimate her laugh. Not wholly the laugh of incredulity. Then comes the visit to Gerar, and a repetition of the deception to save Abraham. This time Sarah suffered a severe rebuke. Buy a veil, and adopt civilised customs. No longer expose your wife thus to rude gaze. Then Isaac was born; and motherly jealousies awoke, which led Sarah to act cruelly. Ishmael was then a youth of twelve. His mocking. Sarah schemed to get authority over Hagar, who had secured wifely rights by giving

birth to Ishmael. Isaac's safety was ensured. There is a tradition that Sarah's death really came about through hearing that Isaac had been taken off to be sacrificed. Her husband showed profound grief at her death, which took place when she was one hundred and twenty-seven years old.

I. **Sarah's natural disposition.**—We require to know this if we would estimate her properly. What we are as *Christians* very much depends on what we are as *men*. Sarah was affectionate, but impulsive, jealous, and imperious. In view of our natural dispositions, some of us must be thought of as remarkable triumphs of grace.

II. **Sarah's wifeliness.**—This is one of the New Testament points in its mention of her. Sharing cheerfully her husband's lot; accepting and keeping to her department; showing wifely obedience and deference. A good wife is from the Lord. The wifely mission is a most noble one. The true wife is Sarah's daughter.

III. **Sarah's motherliness.** — A mother's joy; a mother's care; a mother's jealousy. True love is near akin to jealousy, but it must not run into it.

IV. **Sarah's godliness.**—The text infers piety. She shared her husband's religion. She had a religion of her own. Its essence was faith. Not just faith in a promise made to her; but that nobler thing, faith in *Him* who made her the promise. This is the true and saving faith—faith in *God*. Her faith was subjected to severe tests. Untested faith is worth but little. Faith won out of conflict and doubt alone is worthy. The very essence of godliness is in this text. What Sarah was in Abraham's estimation is shown in the pathetic statement concerning her, "Abraham rose up from before his dead." We can imagine what he had been doing.

So in Sarah there is much to commend. Notice in conclusion: 1. Her God—the "faithful Promiser." 2. Her faith. "Nothing too hard for the 'faithful Promiser.'"

Sarah.—What is so often said of men may be said also of women; they must be judged in the setting of their age. Early Bible women could not have the trained and restrained characters we expect to find in these days. Sarah the wife of an Arab sheikh. Died aged one hundred and twenty-seven. Her story is subordinate to Abraham's. She only appears occasionally in the record. Her family relationship to Abraham, other than that of wife, is somewhat uncertain.

I. **See the good in Sarah.**—1. Loving companionship. Proved by her husband's sorrow at the time of her death. 2. Trustful obedience. Seen in the times of perplexity in Egypt and in Gerar. 3. Motherly affection, which easily ran into jealousy.

II. **See the frailties in Sarah.**—1. Womanly impatience. She tried to make a fulfilment of God's promise of a son somehow. She could not wait for God's time and way. 2. Jealousy. Seen when Hagar had a son, and again when she herself had a son. 3. Incredulity. Laughing at the Divine assurance. All her weaknesses belonged to her womanhood. Judged simply as a character, Sarah may possibly be found in every way estimable.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—16.

Living and Dying in Faith.—This rhetorical chapter, reviewing rapidly the stories of the other saints, could not fail to interest the Jewish Christian readers to whom the epistle was addressed. It illustrates the fact, that the great secret of the mastery of life is faith—trust; and God is ever working to make that trust a really sanctifying power. That indeed is the key to all His dealings with us. Just this is shown in the example of the patriarchs. Special atten-

tion is directed to Abraham. He started life under a promise. But the promise was never fulfilled to Abraham in the letter. He died possessor of only a grave in a promised land. So he was led to trust for the fulfilment by-and-by, and even to reach forth to its fulfilment in spiritual ways. Faith toned the patriarch's mind, and made him feel like a stranger. It filled him with longings for, and onlookings towards, and even preparations for, "the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He died, not in possession, but "in faith."

I. **God's promises seem, at first, to assure earthly good.**—The promise made to Abraham seems to mean an actual earth-territory, a national inheritance, and our promises have a very earthly look. We are assured that we shall "inherit the earth." Treating us very much as we treat our children, God gives assurances and promises which take shape for us as material and temporal good. And with our life all before us, that is what we seem chiefly to need and to desire. God's Canaan for us always seems, at first, to be some earthly prosperity and blessing. And this is more evidently the case when we have some definite purpose in life, some country that we mean to win.

II. **Life but seldom fulfils the promises just as we understand them.**—It might be said that it *never* fulfils. The writer addresses Christian Jews, who were oppressively feeling how different Christian life was proving to be to the picture of their early hopefulness. Then it looked so fair, so bright. It proved to be a scene of care, and struggle, and persecution, and peril. And it is much the same with us. 1. Life seldom is, even in its outward circumstances, what we picture to ourselves that it will be. Could Jacob's story or St. Paul's story have been imagined beforehand? The fact is, that God's promises are general, and God's providences work out the precise fulfilments of them. God orders our place and our work very strangely. As life passes on we are even led to do exactly what we most shrink from doing, and what we even think ourselves altogether unfitted for doing. We are brought through scenes and experiences which would have seemed to us hopelessly overwhelming, if we had thought of them in the outset of life. 2. Life seldom permits any great work to be accomplished right through by the man who begins it. Moses must climb Nebo to die before his life-work was completed in the possession of Canaan. Joshua died before the whole country was cleared of the idolatrous inhabitants. David died before the Temple could be built. There is even a sense in which our Lord's life was "cut off," and He left an unfinished work to be carried on by His apostles. To do any entire work, from beginning to end, seems to be too great an honour for any man. Some sow, others weed, and others reap. Some die ere life is started; some live on long enough to see others put the topstones on their work. And thus the solemn lesson is taught us, that God absolutely needs no one of us.

III. **By the seeming failure God graciously lifts us up to take the higher view of His promises.**—How failure can open men's eyes! How disappointment here, dissatisfaction with life as we find it, tends to lift our eyes away from earth, and makes us feel that this is not our rest! As one thing after another disappoints, we begin to see that the time and place for God's fulfilment of His promises is—yonder and there; not here and now. We begin to find out that the seemingly earthly look of the promises in reality only veiled the heavenly meaning for us—veiled it for a while, until we have grown strong enough to bear the full and spiritual truth of them. Is not this just the sanctifying work that advancing life does for us all under God? Still we believe—as Abraham did, right to the end—these earthly promises of Canaan; but we grow to be quite willing that they should be fulfilled for others—for our sons and daughters. For ourselves, every year makes us look away, more and more, to the heavenly

city. It is quite plain that the earthly Canaan, of which we had dreamed never will be ours. We seek a country.

Conclusion.—This is God's gracious way of sanctifying us through the actual experiences of our life. He makes us feel here on earth like strangers. He enables us to give the witness of strangers, and show ourselves to be heavenly citizens, who are only "passing through." He thus helps us to live in *trust*, and to die in *trust*, and to find and feel the present peace and power of a life that is a "life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 13. *Faith a Persuasion and a Power.*—Faith was an actual present blessing to the men of old, though what faith led them to anticipate never came to them. They died with the faith, not with the possession. And yet they really had held the possession all through their waiting-time; for it had been to them, and it had done for them, everything that the actual possession could have done. It had comforted them, satisfied them, inspired them. The two terms "persuasion" and "power" suggest that our faith has a most gracious influence on our mind and heart, as well as a most powerful influence in ordering our conduct. Faith puts the heart right; faith puts the life right. Faith keeps for us the proper relativity of this life to the life to come.

Vers. 13, 14. *The Christian Pilgrim.*—The apostle is here setting forth the excellencies of the grace of faith, by the glorious effects and happy issue of it in the saints of the Old Testament. 1. *What these saints confessed of themselves*—that they were strangers and pilgrims. 2. *The inference drawn by the apostle*—they sought another country as their home.

I. **This life ought to be so spent by us as to be only a journey or pilgrimage towards heaven.**—1. *We ought not to rest in the world or in its enjoyments, but should desire heaven.*—A traveller passing through pleasant places, flowery meadows, shady groves, only takes a transient view of them as he goes along. His journey's end is in his mind. 2. *We ought to seek heaven by travelling in the way that leads thither.* This is a way of holiness, the way of obedience to God's commands, an ascending way, a Christ-like way. 3. *We should travel on in this way in a laborious manner.* Many mountains, rocks, and rough plains demand our strength. 4. *Our whole lives ought to be spent in travelling this road.* We ought to begin early; we ought to travel with assiduity; we ought to persevere. 5. *We ought to be continually growing in holiness.* Thus we come nearer and nearer to heaven. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word," etc. "This one thing I do," etc. 6. *All other concerns of life ought to be subordinate to this.* Business, money, temporal enjoyments, quit if they prove a hindrance.

II. **Why the Christian's life is a journey or pilgrimage.**—1. *This world is not our abiding-place.* Continuance here is short. God never designed that this world should be our home. 2. *The future world was designed to be our settled and everlasting abode.* The present state is short and transitory, but our state in the other world is everlasting. 2. *Heaven is that place alone where our highest end and highest good is to be obtained.* God hath made us for Himself. God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. Here we get but scattered beams—God is the sun; but streams—God is the fountain; but drops—God is the ocean.

III. **Instruction afforded by this consideration.**—1. *Moderation in our grief for the loss of friends who have died in Christ.* Death is to them a great blessing; gone to Father's house. "I heard a voice from heaven," etc.

(Rev. xiv. 13). 2. *How ill do they improve their lives that spend them in travelling towards hell!* Thus do backbiters, covetous, drunkards. 3. *Converted persons do but begin their work, and set out in the way they have to go.* They should be earnest and laborious, and should strive for grace.

IV. **Exhortations.**—1. *How worthy is heaven that your life should be wholly spent as a journey towards it!* Where can you choose your home better than in heaven? 2. *This is the way to have death comfortable to us.* 3. *It will make retrospect pleasant.* 4. *In journeying to heaven we may have heaven.* 5. *If our lives be not a journey towards heaven, they will be a journey to hell.*

Conclusion.—A few directions. 1. *Labour to get a sense of the vanity of this world.* 2. *Labour to be much acquainted with heaven.* 3. *Seek heaven only by Jesus Christ.* "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." 4. *Let Christians help one another in going this journey.* Go in company, conversing together, assisting one another. Go united. This will ensure a more successful travelling, and a more joyful meeting at the Father's house in glory. —*Jonathan Edwards, M.A.*

Vers. 13-16. *General Lesson of the Patriarchal Times.*—The reference of these verses is strictly to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. In a sense the older men, from Adam, may be called patriarchs; but the point of reference here is to those patriarchs who had a temporary home in Canaan, and held it together with the promise that it should be made a permanent home for them. They never actually had it as such a settled, permanent home; but their faith that God's word would stand, and that their descendants would have Canaan for a possession, gave a practical power to the promises, and enabled them to bear, and suffer and enjoy, while they had but the temporary holding.

I. **Their faith brought discontent with this life.**—The peculiarity of the Abrahamic race, in this practical power of their faith in God's word, may be shown by contrasting the Abrahamic as an Arab tribe, with the other Arab tribes around. Usually Arab tribes have no ambition to become settled nations. And even if we recognise that in Abraham's time there was a general and widespread migratory restlessness among the Eastern peoples, still there were marked differences between the instinctive restlessness that was common, and the intelligent discontent that was peculiar to the Abrahamic race. (1) This faith embraced the truth of the unity of God; (2) conceived of the possibility of personal relations with Him; (3) apprehended life as in the direct Divine lead; (4) and saw duty as implicit and unquestioning obedience of the Divine will. Such faith made satisfaction with material conditions and worldly successes—the things which met all the needs of the tribes around—impossible to this tribe. Lift a man up to high things, and he must ever after fail to be content with the low, as those who can appreciate the art creations of this century are discontented with the pictures and figures of the fathers' time. Touch a soul with the true and worthy thought of God, and the world can no longer be its rest.

II. **Their faith brought content with the life to come.**—A man can be in the present, and yet be really living in the future. That is the Christian state. To these patriarchs Canaan, which they knew not, was better than Chaldea, which they knew. To us heaven promised is better than any Canaan possessed.

Vers. 14-16. *Human Restlessness.*—Faith does not crush down human aspirations. It guides them and tones them aright. The models of faith are stated to have been restlessly seeking something that they had not. Restlessness for humanity is a Divinely implanted condition; upon it depends the peopling and subduing of the whole earth. Human restlessness is so persistent that it cannot be satisfied with

any earthly attainment. It may be considered: (1) what various forms human restlessness may take; and (2) how certainly the unrest will remain, whatever may be the measure of attainment in any direction. Man's good time is always *coming*.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—20.

Faith under Divine Discipline.—A special reference is made to Abraham, because in his case Divine discipline took an unusual and extraordinary form. Reference has already been made to the general features of his life, as a sojourner in a strange land, which was indeed the land of promise, though of it he only had a present possession by faith. It *was* his, because he was quite sure that it *would be* his. He had the "substance" of what he "hoped for." But there was one most singular and striking incident in Abraham's later life, which provided too important an illustration of one sphere of faith for it to be passed over. He who had been called to forsake his early home, and go forth, responsive to Divine leadings, not knowing whither he went, was now called to give up, and even himself to sacrifice, that very child in whom all the promises of God and all the hopes of Abraham seemed to centre. He gave up his father's home in faith. Could he break up his own home in faith, and with his own hand destroy all hope of a race in whose history God's promises could be fulfilled? Perhaps a man's faith has never been put to a severer test than was Abraham's in that hour of strain. No wonder that early legends represent Sarah as never recovering from the shock of Isaac's being taken away to be sacrificed, and from that time pining away to her death. Two forms of Divine discipline are indicated in this paragraph.

I. **The relation of faith—which makes real the spiritual—to times of trial.**—Trials come into every man's life; but we have to consider the trials which come into the good man's life—the renewed, spiritual man's life. And they cannot be explained in any ready, offhand way. Two cases—three, if we class our Lord with men—are given in Holy Scripture, in order to check our satisfaction in general, and hastily made, and surface explanations. We must think about this strange trial of Abraham. We must wonder why Job, "the perfect man and upright," was so severely afflicted. We stand in awe before the mystery of the agony of the cross, and say, "Why did the innocent One suffer?" 1. This is clear—the *punishment* of transgressions will not explain all the trials through which good men are called to pass. Job's friends may persist in it that suffering is always penalty. It is *not*. The trial to which Abraham was now subjected was not penalty or punishment in any sense whatever. No hint is given of any moral or spiritual failure on the part of Abraham which Divine justice was bound to recognise. The sufferings which came to Job were not penalty or punishment in any sense whatever. When they came upon Job, he was a man standing fully in the Divine acceptance. It is a small, poor, and unworthy view that persists in seeing penalty everywhere. God reproves, in every age, *the Job-friends* who do that sort of thing. 2. The idea of Divine *discipline* will not sufficiently explain all the cases of trial which come before us. We may take a comprehensive view of Divine discipline, and say that it includes: (1) the correction of evils which are ever ready to develop into sin; and also (2) the culture of moral virtues and graces into strength and completeness; and also (3) the mastery of life-conditions and relations in the power of moral principle; but we have only got a little way then toward the understanding of Abraham's trial. On the face of the narrative there is no special call for a discipline of correction or of culture.

In the case of Job it is not God who finds it necessary to discipline Job. It is God permitting Job to be tempted and tried, when He knows that he does not need it. Exactly this brings in the perplexity and difficulty of the poem. There was no need for subjecting the ever-acceptable Son to the discipline of the cross. That must be explained from some other point of view. Christian men and women, in their times of trial, would be greatly comforted and strengthened, if we would assure them that trial need not be punishment, and it need not be discipline. Faith in God, in the unseen, in the spiritual, brings round to us another and a better explanation. 3. Much of the trial that comes to good men is *vicarious*. It does not strictly belong to them; it belongs to others. It has no more necessity than the necessity which God finds for witnessing to some truth, and using them as witnesses. The trial may simply be the *service* which God asks us to render to our sphere, our age, or the world. This comes out clearly enough in the three cases already called to mind. The trial of Abraham has taught the generations. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." Christ, "lifted up, draws all men unto Him." But what a faith of unseen and eternal things is involved in an obedience like Abraham's, unquestioning, prompt, entire, almost cheerful—an obedience which involved so severe a trial and loss! It was a triumph indeed of faith that Abraham could see God wanting a witness, and not therefore finally intending to take away his son. Faith in man—the obedience of faith—has never surpassed this: "Accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a parable receive him back." We shall never explain all the cases of trial to which spiritual men are subjected, nor understand the sublime heights to which the faith of spiritual men may reach, until we fully recognise that much of human suffering is *vicarious*, as was that of our Divine Lord.

II. **The relation of faith to the hope of the future.**—It is stranger than it seems, that God should have ever held out a prospect before men and generations, and fulfilled His promise, but seldom, if ever, to the man or to the generation. Spiritual men live by faith. Their future is always the "good time coming." Even to-day men's faith is exercised concerning the coming of the Son of man, which is hardly yet on the eastern horizon-line. How faith can stand related to the hope and promise of the future is seen in Isaac, who "blessed Jacob and Esau even concerning things to come." He lived under promise of the possession of Canaan. He died almost as much a stranger as his father had been. *He* never had the promise fulfilled. But faith held it firm, and made it real. He confidently passed the promise on to his sons. He blessed them in assuring them of God's blessing. And so still we sing concerning our "good time coming."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 17. *The Offering of Isaac.*—Abraham's offering of his son is one of the perplexing things of God's word, because it seems to commend the immoral thing, murder, in connection with God's worship. But we too readily judge the Divine requirements in patriarchal days by our modern sentiments concerning human sacrifice, forgetting that these should not be projected back into the earlier ages of the world, when men, being in the child-stages, had to be taught by action and ceremonial and symbol, rather than by words. Ancient Easterns had thoughts about God's absolute proprietary rights in man which we seem to have lost; and we now know that the Accadians, or early inhabitants of Chaldea, sacrificed their firstborn sons in times of special trouble, and their practice the Semitic

race had, to some extent at least, copied.

I. **Abraham's sacrifice was a burnt-offering.**—This kind of offering was the foundation of the sacrificial system. All the other offerings—peace-offerings, meat-offerings, trespass-offerings, sin-offerings, thank-offerings—were but the detailed adaptation of the burnt-offering to the varieties of human conditions and experiences. The burnt-offering was presented ages before the Mosaic system was established. Can we get to understand this original, simplest, and yet most significant and spiritually suggestive form of sacrifice? It was called a "burnt-offering" because the victim was wholly consumed by fire, and so, as it were, sent up to God on the wings of fire. The victim must be selected with extreme care. It must be pure, unblemished, and as nearly perfect an animal as possible. It was regarded as a whole, an entire and complete offering, only when the *life* of the creature had been taken. Then, as a complete body, and a whole, completed life, it was ready for offering to God. Then it was laid on the altar, and entirely consumed. What was the idea of such a sacrifice, as it came to the mind of a devout and spiritual worshipper? Can we at all enter into the thought of a serious-minded patriarch or Jew? It must have been this: he passed to God an entire life, a pure, clean beast—gave it to God wholly, body and life; and by so doing he, in a representative way, passed to God *himself*—himself wholly, body, will, life. He gave to God a representative of what he himself wished to be, what he thus solemnly pledged himself that he would strive to become. Or, to put the same thing in more formal language, the burning of this whole creature by fire "marked it as an expression of perpetual obligation to complete, sanctified self-surrender to Jehovah." And, therefore, in the Mosaic system, every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed as a burnt-offering on behalf of the whole covenant people; and the evening victim was to be so slowly consumed that it might last till the morning—an expressive symbol of that continual self-dedication to God which is the duty of man. In the light of this spiritual idea of a "burnt-offering," we can see something of the Divine purpose in this strange command given to Abraham, that he should offer as a sacrifice his only and beloved son. Evidently God asked for an expression, through that singular burnt-offering, of Abraham's entire devotion to Himself. He desired to read the patriarch's very heart through an act of obedience and devotion. He purposed to show the perfect trust and loyalty of His servant, to all the ages, by means of an unusual burnt-offering.

II. **Abraham's sacrifice anticipated the Great Burnt-offering.**—It was the *sonship* of Isaac made him an acceptable offering. His submission and obedience were so different from the yielding of a mere animal, because it had a *will in it*; and so the sacrifice of Isaac, the son, alone fittingly suggested the obedient sanctified will of Jesus, the Son of God. "Every burnt-offering was a type of the perfect offering made by Christ, on behalf of the race of man, of His human nature and will to the will of the Father." And this burnt-offering, Christ—the only begotten and well-beloved Son—is *our* burnt-offering, yours and mine. We could not make Him ours if we were not sure that God was well pleased with Him. But God has provided Him for us; so we stand beside the strange Calvary altar, shaped for human seeing like a cross, and see our sacrifice go up to God, with the confidence that God will "smell a sweet savour," and accept us as we give ourselves to Him in that burnt-offering.

Faith inspiring Self-sacrifice.—Observe that it was faith in God's word, in what Abraham intelligently apprehended to be God's word to him. The demand it made was a personal one, the full surrender of a personal possession. To a father it was the supreme, the extreme demand. To

Abraham, because of peculiar circumstances associated with Isaac, it was truly a sublime demand, and response to it a model of self-sacrifice. By showing and illustrating what a height of self-sacrifice Abraham reached, it may be shown what an inspiring, elevating, ennobling power faith was to him.

Vers. 17, 18. *The Strain that Feeling may put on Faith.*—In the record of this incident given in Gen. xxii. there is a very tender bit of conversation. The aged patriarch is journeying on an errand which he can explain to nobody, and the darling of his life is the companion of his journey. We know the great things that were in his heart—he was taking his only son, the heir of all he had, the heir of all he hoped for, to his death by his own fatherly hand. The youth wondered much over the object of this sudden and mysterious journey, until at last he could keep back his questionings no longer. There were evident signs of his father's intention to offer sacrifice; he himself was carrying the wood needed for a fire; and his father had in his hands the bowl with fire and the sacrificial knife. But Isaac knew well that on such occasions his father also took the necessary victim with him; but this time they had brought no lamb from the flock. So he said, "My father." And Abraham said, "Here am I, my son." And Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Surely a wonderful answer! But it must have cut that father to the quick to speak those silencing, those trustful words. In him faith triumphed over feeling.

Ver. 19. *A Figurative Resurrection.*—"Whence he did also in a parable receive him back." Abraham received Isaac back, figuratively, from the dead, because so far as Abraham's purpose and intention were concerned he *was dead*, "potentially sacrificed." In one Jewish writer it is said that Isaac was actually killed and raised to life again.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21, 22.

Faith in the Hour of Death.—The illustrations of the practical power of faith would have been manifestly incomplete if no instances had been given to show how it was retained, and made to bring strength and cheer to men, in the closing and sternest experience of life. Two illustrations may suffice.

I. **Faith for the family maintained in the death-hour.**—This is illustrated in the dying acts and words of the patriarch Jacob. He had held through a chequered life a firm faith in God's promise concerning his family. Could the bodily weariness and weakness and pain of the death-time cloud that faith? Could the solemnity and mystery of the death-time overstrain the faith? Must a man lose that which has brightened and ennobled his whole life when his feet touch the waters of the river of death? Will he then despair concerning those who are dear to him, as if with his going all their hopes were going? From Jacob's example we learn that faith may even grow brighter and stronger in the hour and article of death. 1. Jacob was so positive about the future of his sons that he could even anticipate their locations and characteristics and history, when they reached Canaan, in his prophetic song concerning them. 2. Jacob could even see the future for Joseph's sons with such certainty that he could discriminate between them, and point out which would prove the greater. That grip of God for him, and God for his family, which faith gave Jacob, he held fast right up to and right through his death-hour. His God was the God of the generations to come.

II. **Faith for the nation maintained in the death-hour.**—This is illustrated in Joseph, who "gave commandment concerning his bones." The associations of Jacob's life made him think along *family* lines. The associations of Joseph made him think along *national* lines. The faith that saw the people of Israel a settled and independent nation was an advanced faith. Did it stand the strain of the death-hour? Very possibly Joseph, as a statesman, anticipated the troubles that were coming, but he died in absolute assurance that God would fulfil His word, make Israel a nation, and settle it in Canaan.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 21. *Reminiscences of Jacob's Staff.*—"Leaning upon the top of his staff." It would seem that one particular staff had been Jacob's companion through many years, possibly during his whole life of manhood. Indeed, that staff was as characteristic of Jacob as the rod was of Moses, and the mantle of Elijah. It was only an ordinary shepherd's staff. Sometimes such a staff is bent into a crook, but more commonly it is a long, stout, straight, oak stick, often cased at its lower end in iron, to beat off the thief or wild beast. This staff to help, and the club to protect, are the staff and the rod with which God comforts His people (Ps. xxiii. 4). (David, when advancing towards Goliath, carried with him his shepherd's staff. Indeed, the staff was inseparable from the shepherd; it was with him night and day.) Associate Jacob's staff with the main incidents of Jacob's chequered and changeful life: *e.g.* 1. The staff in the simple home-life. 2. The staff in his eventful journeying. 3. The staff in his hard-working and perilous life with Laban. 4. The staff laid aside for the great struggle at Peniel. 5. The staff shown to the reconciled brother. 6. The staff taken down into Egypt. 7. The staff steadying trembling and aged limbs. (An address to children might be constructed by making the "staff" tell the story of Jacob's life.)

Ver. 22. *The Witness of a Dead Man's Bones.*—Joseph's body was embalmed. But a good point may be made by contrasting the idea which an Egyptian had when he arranged that his body should be embalmed, with the idea that Joseph had in arranging for the preservation of his bones. The Egyptian tried to secure some sort of immortality. Joseph had no merely personal aim. He wanted the presence of his mummy to be a constant reminder of God's promises, a constant testimony to God's faithfulness, and a constant inspiration to loyalty and trust and hope.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23—29.

The Faith of Moses.—These verses cover and include all the references which this writer thinks it necessary to make to Moses. In comparison with the notices of other great men the reference to Moses is long and various, and this would be regarded as befitting by those who held Moses in almost supreme honour. There are illustrations of the practical power of faith in four distinct sets of relations.

I. **The faith that could be disobedient.**—Not to God, but to man, in loyalty to God. Often in life the expedient becomes a temptation to us. The will of those in authority over us may conflict with the will of God. Then the expedient is to keep straight with the human authority and risk offending God. In presence of that conflict faith gives the man power to disobey the local

authority in order to obey the supreme Authority. This conflict appears—1. In the case of the parents of Moses. Faith enabled them to disobey the command of the Pharaoh, and scheme to secure the life of their child. It is plain that there was more than parental love guiding their conduct. There was some inward witness, some word of God which they recognised as such, indicating that the child was sent for some Divine mission. Only motherly faith could persistently, and heedless of all peril, carry through such a scheme of disobedience. 2. In the case of Moses' disobedience to his foster-mother. "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." What but faith in God's mission for him could have led to such a resolve—a resolve which, from all human points of view, was utterly unreasonable! It costs a man much to break away from the destiny that is arranged for him; he never can do it save as he believes in some other destiny that God has for him. Why it should be said that Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ" does not readily appear. What the writer had in mind is difficult to trace. Perhaps he meant "the same reproach that Christ endured"—the reproach that comes when a man persists in doing the will of God as he knows it. That certainly was the mind of Moses at this time. He was quite sure that it was not the will of God that he should become an Egyptian prince, and his faith enabled him to bear the reproach of disobedience. It may be a power to help us in some of the grave perplexities of life to remember that faith in God can be—it has been—an inspiration of disobedience to man. Illustrate the martyrs.

II. **Faith that can endure.**—It is hardly possible to conceive a more burdened and anxious life than that which Moses lived. He had times of personal peril, but they are of far less importance than the constant strain upon feeling involved in leading the people, and mediating between them and God. The word "endure" is admirably chosen. Faith enabled Moses to keep on, and push through, and bear all—faith the inspiration of "patient continuance in well-doing."

III. **Faith that can meet great occasions.**—Life is mainly commonplace and routine; but every life has its surprises, and occasions when supreme demands are made upon it. Such times came to Moses at the burning bush, Mount Sinai, and when smiting the rock for water. Faith helped; lost faith meant failure. The writer here mentions the climax of the visitation on Egypt, when with the unquestioning faith of an immediate deliverance, Moses made the people "keep the Passover."

IV. **Faith that can do the seemingly impossible.**—Moses believed the word of God which ordered him to turn out of the route toward Canaan, and go down by the shores of the Red Sea. It was a strange command, wholly beyond man's comprehension. That way they could neither get to Canaan, nor get to the desert of Sinai. Every step put a wider stretch of water between them and the land where they would be. Faith triumphed unto obedience, and faith was vindicated by so glorious a Divine deliverance as stamped once and for ever the supreme relations of Jehovah as God of the people Israel. That which is impossible with men is possible with God; and possible it becomes to man when he has such faith in God as Moses had.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 24. *Choice revealing Character.*—There is no better sign of character than the manner in which a man makes a serious decision. It is something that (1) he estimates the seriousness; (2) that he considers before deciding; (3) that he is capable of judging the value of considerations;

(4) that he judges in the light of duty rather than of pleasure, and of the future rather than the present.

Vers. 24-26. *The Choice of Moses.*—It has been said: "Biography is a feeble struggle with death. It is an attempt to retain something of the man, his spirit and manner of thinking and feeling, that he being dead may yet speak." In this temple of Jewish worthies, whose faith is recorded for our example, Moses occupies a conspicuous niche.

I. **The choice of Moses.**—The world placed before him its very best, and religion placed before him its very worst; and between the best of the world and the worst of religion he was called upon to make his choice. 1. What the world placed before him. (1) Honour—that of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (2) Pleasures—the pleasures of sin, sensational and unhealthy mental excitement. Such pleasures of sin are, however, only for a season; and there are pains of sin as well as pleasures. (3) Wealth—the treasures of Egypt. The three things which men so eagerly pursue, any one of which is deemed by the world a great inheritance, were all placed at the feet of Jesus. 2. What religion set before him. It came to him in its meekest, saddest guise, and placed before him—(*a*) Affliction. If Moses espoused the cause of the people of God, he must be prepared to share their burdens and endure their trials. (*b*) The reproach of Christ; or such reproach as Christ endured, such as always attaches to spiritual religion.

II. **There is a sense in which we may have to make a choice as Moses had.**—1. In relation to our position in life. 2. In relation to companions and society. 3. In relation to the concerns, and some of the minutest acts, of our daily life. What was it that influenced Moses in making his good choice—faith. Such a choice has its reward in this world. "A mind conscious of rectitude is its own reward." Our religion brings to us now its own reward. And it has also a recompense in the world to come.—*Absalom Clark.*

Ver. 27. *The "Endurance" of Faith.*—This verse gives the key to the long, anxious, heroic life that Moses lived. "Endured" is the proper word. His life was full of difficulties. Circumstances seemed to be always against him, and he could not do the things that he would. He was always set under limitations; and out of the constant "bearing" and "enduring" of his daily life he came to be the meekest, most self-denying, least personally ambitious of all men who have ever lived. The secret of his wonderful power of endurance was his "seeing the invisible"—a vision which, in his earlier days, was simply the sight of the soul-eyes which we call "faith." Afterwards it gained surprising help through symbols, and the sound of a heavenly voice. But, better than all visions, there was a heart-realisation, a soul-vision, which kept the invisible God ever closely near, and made him regard as an agony unspeakable the bare possibility that God's presence would not go with him. What can we learn from the secret of Moses?

I. **Life for us all is enduring.**—It is for all who feel their nobility, who cannot regard life as man's play-hour, who understand that man is set in the midst of disability, because the supreme purpose of God concerning him is his moral culture. It is for all who feel themselves to be above circumstances, and refuse to be mere waifs and strays, driven hither and thither with every wind, and tossed. In the morning outlook of life it seems to be all enjoying. Wonderful is the hopefulness of youth. But as years pass on the reality proves other than our dream. Soon we have to say that life is not all enjoying; it is *enduring.* Things will not be according to our mind. Circumstances are against us. Relationships are trying. And yet we know that *we* are bigger than life. 1. Can we endure the things that are, just as they exactly are? 2. Can we

endure that which we ourselves are? 3. Can we endure those precise conditions under which God deals with us? It is not, Can we submit? It is, Can we endure? Can we keep on through it all, holding fast faith, never faltering, hoping on, working on, making love and loyalty master all disasters, all disabilities, and winning virtue out of woe. The endurance of Moses was self-restraint to win power to serve God and man.

II. **Life for us all may have a Divine presence.**—Man, and God with him, is the great mystery of the Creation. This is the idea of the theocracy—a nation, and God with it. Prophets spoke with authority, because they were men having God with them. Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, God with us. The Holy Ghost is God making His abode in man. 1. There is the presence of God as *providence*. 2. There is the thought of God's fatherly care. 3. But there is something higher and better—the sense of God's presence, which is a special revelation to the Christian heart. Do men say of the Christian, "He is only a man"? He should let them know, he should make them feel, that he is not just a man, but a man having God with him—a man who has the invisible One so near that he can always see Him.

III. **Life for us all may be glorified by this Divine presence.**—1. It makes life very serious. It is a solemnising influence. We have One with us everywhere who is grieved with wrong, who wants everything to bear the stamp of the holy. 2. It keeps before us high aims: not merely human ones, but those that God has for us, such as God may inspire us to attain. 3. It brings a consciousness of ability, so that we say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Him which strengtheneth me." 4. And it satisfies us concerning the future. It is enough; here God is with us; then surely there we shall be with God. This verse has been rendered, "He was stedfast towards Him who is invisible, as if seeing Him."

The Invisible God.—Note—1. The God with whom we have to do is an invisible God. He is so to our senses, to the eye of the body; and this shows the folly of those who pretend to make images of God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. 2. By faith we may see the invisible God. We may be fully assured of His existence, of His providence, and of His gracious and powerful presence with us. 3. Such a sight will enable believers to endure to the end whatever they may meet with in the way.—*Matthew Henry.*

Seeing the Invisible God.

I. **Consider the invisibility of God.**—This is one of the *negative* attributes of God. Unchangeableness, unsearchableness, irresistibleness, invisibility, are all negative attributes of God. And we require such negative conceptions to assist our idea of an absolute, infinite, all-perfect Being. Job's familiar words really mean this: "I cannot in any way penetrate the dark mantle of His invisibility" (Job xi. 7). See also Deut. iv. 12, 15; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. The same truth is *implied* when our Saviour teaches that "God is a spirit." We are perfect, in relative creature perfection, *with* our bodies, not without them. But the perfection of a creature must be, in some points (and this is one of them), in direct contrast with the perfection of the Creator. He is not seen, because He is perfect. Because He will always be perfect, He will never be seen. Ten thousand happy souls do indeed see His face day by day. But what soul has ever seen His form? What form hath He to be seen? The fruits and traces of His perfections are seen in all His works, but He Himself is seen nowhere. In saying this we are of course remembering "God manifest in the flesh," and the elevation of the visible humanity into the heavens in the person of Jesus Christ. But if it should be that our Lord will always, through eternity, retain His glorified humanity in heaven, and be *seen* in that, and beloved and worshipped in

that, the question still is, *What* will be seen? The spiritual essence, the infinite power and presence of God, will still be deep within, quite beyond, high above, far away. What I can see can never be a portion to my immortal soul; a spiritual substance requires a spiritual portion; the child-spirits need the Father of spirits. It is the grand discovery of the Scriptures, and the good message of salvation, that *God only* is good enough for man. Spirit for spirit—Creator for creature—the Invisible for the visible. We have never seen our own souls; we shall never see their portion.

II. **The seeing of the invisible God.**—Moses really did see God by soul-sight, or, as we say, by faith. He believed in His actual presence in the world, in human life, in human affairs. He believed that He would be *with him*, according to His express promise, to cheer his heart, to guide his way, and to confirm his work to the end. He not only believed in God's presence with him, but he relied on His strength. God's presence was to him an actual power, on which he could lean. There is no use to us in this example of Moses if it is exceptional. His duties and his whole career were high and singular, but his sight of the invisible God was the same act of the soul by which all the faithful in the camp, however humble, were sustained, by which the faithful in every age have lived and triumphed. And at this day what we have to do is just to observe the Presence that is always near, and lean upon the arm that never faints. *Then* we shall "endure." (1) We shall endure when all that is visible *threatens*; (2) when all that is visible *allures*; (3) when everything visible decays, changes, passes away.—*Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*

The Christian Way of seeing God.—It is a full and exhaustive definition of Christ's salvation to designate it—the Christian way of seeing God. For what is religious salvation but the perfect vision of God, the perfect restoration of man to God, the perfect enjoyment by man of God? "We will come to him, and make Our abode with him." Not a distant glimpse of God, a trembling touch, a casual break in the dark firmament of life; but a full, unclouded manifestation, a Divine Pleroma, the true Pantheism. Not the old Oriental Nirvâna, our human personality lost in Deity, put out like a flame in the light of the meridian sun; but our true and perfect spiritual individuality, filled with the light, the life, the inspiration, of God.—*H. Allon, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 30, 31.

Faith seen in the Jericho Associations.—"The sacred writer has lingered over the life and deeds of the greatest of the patriarchs, and of Moses the legislator of the nation: two examples only—differing in kind from those which have preceded, and peculiarly suggestive and important—have been taken from the history of the people after the death of Moses. Enough has now been said to guide all who are willing to search the Scriptures for themselves. With a brief mention of names which would call up before the minds of his readers achievements almost as wonderful as those on which he has been dwelling, he passes from the elders who received witness from God by their faith, and speaks in general terms, but all the more distinctly, of the triumphs which faith has won." In these verses the practical power of faith is seen in two particulars, the second being illustrated in a case outside the covenant, showing that faith in God is the same thing, and meets with the same acceptance with Him, anywhere and everywhere.

I. **Faith that could persist.**—The daily march round the city of Jericho for six days, and the six times marching round on the seventh day, were distinct

testings of faith. There could be no greater test than this—Can you keep on persistently doing an apparently useless, fruitless thing, in simple confidence that He who commanded the doing is surely working towards the realisation of His own purpose. Nothing strains us like having to keep on through failure.

II. **Faith that could inspire devices.**—We are not required to approve of the acts of Rahab. They are indeed to be judged in the light of the right and wrong which is applicable to war-times. Then stratagem to preserve life is universally recognised as honourable, and it almost necessarily includes deception. But we may see how practically the faith she had in Jehovah's word influenced Rahab. It made her inventive, set her upon schemes, and sustained her in carrying through devices.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 31. *Rahab's Faith and Falsehood.*—Rahab was guilty of a falsehood; but here is an evidence of the truth of the history; her moral infirmity is not concealed or extenuated, although she had been received into the family of God's people, and was dwelling in Israel, when the book of Joshua was written. Rahab had been brought up among the idolaters, who have little regard for truth; and she lived in Jericho, one of the greatest cities of Canaan. It was not to be expected that, all at once, she would become a lover of truth, and would think it sinful to employ an artifice to attain a good end. Her case was like that of the Egyptian midwives, who told a falsehood to Pharaoh in order to save the lives of the male children of Israel (Exod. i. 17, 21). In both cases God was "not extreme to mark what was done amiss," but graciously accepted their acts of faith and mercy, although they were sullied and blemished by human infirmity; and thus He gently led them on to higher degrees of virtue. —*Bishop Wordsworth.*

Rahab's Character.—Some commentators, following Josephus and the Chaldean interpreters, have endeavoured to make Rahab only a keeper of a house of entertainment for travellers—a gloss in striking contrast with the simple straightforwardness of the writer of this book, and inconsistent with the apostolic phraseology. Rahab had hitherto probably been but a common type of heathen morality, but she was faithful to the dawning convictions of a nobler creed, and hence is commended by Christ's apostles for that which was meritorious in her conduct. Her protection of the spies has been stigmatised as traitorous, and her concealment of them as a piece of lying and deceit. But as to the first, it is evident that she was convinced that the cause of Israel was that of the true God, to oppose which would have been the greater sin. And as to the deception which she practised, there is no need to defend that which is not commended *in itself.* Rahab is not praised for her *falsehood*, but for her *faith*; although many Christian moralists, besides Paley, would defend deception in word and deed, when practised (as in this case) to save life.—*W. H. Groser, B.Sc.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 32—40.

A Summary of the Triumphs of Faith.—The list given abundantly illustrates how faith may be shown in (1) doing; (2) bearing; and (3) suffering. But the faith which the writer presents in every case found its expression in the material spheres, in outward and earthly relations. It is true that we can learn from them, and be inspired by them to show a similar faith in those

similar earthly spheres in which we too have to take our place and part. And yet it must be seen that an altogether higher faith—a spiritual faith bearing relation to spiritual things—is required of us. And in its application to us the persuasion of the writer is this—If faith in these lower ranges gained for them such splendid triumphs, what triumphs ought our higher faith, in the higher range, to gain for us? "The ancient worthies persevered in their faith, although the Messiah was known to them only by *promise*. We are under greater obligations to persevere; for God has fulfilled His promise respecting the Messiah, and thus placed us in a condition better adapted to perseverance than theirs. So much is our condition preferable to theirs, that we may even say, without the blessing which we enjoy, their happiness could not be completed" (ver. 40).

I. **The sublime decision of persecuted believers in primitive times.**—1. The dangers with which they were threatened. 2. The determination with which they were sustained.

II. **The various considerations which this heroism suggests.**—1. Thankfulness for religious liberty afforded to us. 2. Excitement; their faith and constancy should stimulate us. 3. Expectation.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 32. *What to find in Scripture and Christian History.*—The apostle having given us a classis of many eminent believers, whose names are mentioned, and the particular trials and actings of their faith recorded, now concludes his narrative with a more summary account of another set of believers, where the particular acts are not ascribed to particular persons by name, but left to be applied by those who are well acquainted with the sacred story; and, like a Divine orator, he prefaces this part of his narrative with an elegant expostulation—"What shall I say more? Time would fail me": as if he had said, "It is in vain to attempt to exhaust this subject. Should I not restrain my pen, it would soon run beyond the bounds of an epistle; and therefore I shall but just mention a few more, and leave you to enlarge upon them." Observe—1. After all our researches into the Scriptures, there is still more to be learned from them. 2. We must well consider in Divine matters what we should say, and suit it well to the time. 3. We should be pleased to think how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects thereof were not then so fully revealed. 4. And we should lament it, that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak.—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 35. *The Better Resurrection.*—This chapter is the roll-book of a noble army. Human history records the triumphs of knowledge and courage and energy; the Divine history records the triumphs of faith. Among the "cloud of witnesses" are two groups mentioned in text. The ancient saints were believers in a resurrection to eternal life—a *better* resurrection. One kind of resurrection was a restoration to the life of this world. There is another and superior resurrection—to the life of the eternal world. "Women received their dead again by resurrection; and others, that they might obtain a better resurrection, were tortured, not accepting deliverance."

I. **Consider the better resurrection.**—This is more to be desired than the resurrection of loved ones to us here. 1. *Think of the place of it.* Better than Bethany or Jerusalem—soon to

be the marching-ground of Roman armies. Here the curse, the pain, the disease, the torturing agonies, and the depressions which cloud the soul. The place of the better resurrection is described, "There shall be no more curse, no night, need no candle," etc. 2. *The company in the place.* In this world our dearest friends become at times more dear to us. In that heavenly world we shall have the best at their best. No distrust or selfishness, but deep and true love. 3. *The essence of this eternal love.* Its entire freedom from sin. The presence of sin in our nature is at the root of every other evil, and deliverance from suffering in heaven is connected with perfect deliverance from sin. This is an ideal which it never entered into man's heart to conceive, and which the gospel alone has taught us. 4. *Think also of the security of this state.* The resurrections of earth were a return to a world of change and death—to part again. Once to be raised to this world is twice to die. In heaven the last fight is over. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." 5. *The presence to which it introduces.* The best of these other resurrections brought their subjects into the earthly presence of the Son of God, but this into His heavenly fellowship.

II. **The higher faith required for this resurrection.**—1. *It needs more of the patience of faith.* The faith of the sisters of Bethany demanded one great effort, and the battle was gained. But ours cannot be so compressed. "Till the heavens be no more." This needs patience. The scorn of unbelievers, taunts of the materialist, the murmurs of our hearts, are well-nigh unbearable. 2. *The sanctified imagination of faith.* There is an imagination of faith, not unbridled, nor unscriptural, which has formed for itself a true and real world beyond death, which gives substance to things hoped for, and thereby helps to the evidence of things not seen. 3. *It needs more of the spiritual insight of faith.* It must seek to live as seeing Him who is invisible. It must rest on the nature of God Himself, and the life He infuses into the soul. Christ Himself must be known to us in His ever-living spiritual power.

III. **Some of the ways in which we may strengthen ourselves in this higher faith.**—1. *The first thought is addressed to the reason.* Here are men tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Can you imagine that the self-devotion of the noble army of martyrs was founded on delusion? They loved truth more than life. They believed in a better resurrection. 2. *To the heart.* "*Their* dead." God intended that our deepest heart affections should be the helpers of our highest hopes, and the instinctive guarantees of a life to come. 3. *To our spirit.* Certainty comes from union with the dying and risen and living Son of God. There is a spring of immortality ready to rise up in every heart that will admit Him who is the true God and eternal life. The martyr's spirit descends upon him when the fire is kindled, and the Christian's willingness to depart comes when his Master calls.—*J. Ker, D.D.*

Ver. 39. *What Men of Faith gain and fail to gain.*—It is an absolute law in all earthly relations that gain and loss go together. "There are no gains without pains." To reach the higher is to leave the lower. If faith puts us *into* the atmosphere of God, it puts us *out* of the atmosphere of the world. But the gain always more than compensates for the loss.

Ver. 40. *The Material draws on to the Spiritual.*—The spiritual is climactic; it absolutely satisfies man. The material can never be presented under any conceivable form that satisfies. Man would not be his spiritual self if it did. In the old time perfection was only reached by the *faith* realisation of the spiritual.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1. *Teaching what Faith is.*—The Rev. R. Cecil imprinted upon the mind of his little daughter the true idea of faith, by the following method: "She was playing," said he, "one day with a few beads, which seemed wonderfully to delight her. Her whole soul was absorbed in her beads. I said, 'My dear, you have some pretty beads there.' 'Yes, papa.' 'And you seem vastly pleased with them. Well, now, throw them behind the fire.' The tears started into her eyes; she looked earnestly at me, as if she ought to have a reason for so cruel a sacrifice. Summoning up all her fortitude, her breast heaving with the effort, she dashed them into the fire. Some days after, when I returned home, I opened a treasure, and set before her a bagful of large beads and toys of the same kind; she burst into tears with excessive joy. 'These, my child,' said I, 'are yours, because you believed me when I told you to throw those paltry beads behind the fire; your obedience has brought you this treasure. But now, my dear, remember as long as you live what *faith* is. I did all this to teach you the meaning of faith. You threw your beads away when I bade you, because you had faith in me that I never advised you but for your good. Put the same confidence in God; believe everything that He says in His word. Whether you understand Him or not, have faith in Him that He means you good."—*Sunday Readings.*

Walking by Faith.—Andrew Fuller was to preach before a ministerial association. On his way there, the roads in several places were flooded by recent rains. Mr. Fuller came to one place where the water was very deep, and, being a stranger to its exact depth, was unwilling to go on. A countryman acquainted with the water cried out, "Go on, sir! you are quite safe!" Fuller urged on his horse; but the water soon touched the saddle, and he stopped to think. "Go on, sir! all is right!" shouted the man. Taking the man at his word, Fuller proceeded, and the text was suggested, "We walk by faith, not by sight."

Faith and Sight.—By constant sight the effect of objects seen grows less; by constant faith the effect of objects believed in grows greater. The probable reason is, that personal observation does not admit of the influence of the imagination in impressing the facts; while unseen objects, realised by faith, have the auxiliary aid of the imagination, not to exaggerate them, but to clothe them with living colours, and impress them upon the heart. Whether this is true or not, the more frequently we see the less we feel the power of an object; while the more frequently we dwell upon an object by faith, the more we feel its power.—*J. B. Walker.*

Faith.—

My faith, it is an oaken staff,
The traveller's well-loved aid;
My faith, it is a weapon stout,
The soldier's trusty blade:
I'll travel on, and still bestirred
By silent thought or social word,
By all my perils undeterred,
A soldier-pilgrim staid.

My faith, it is an oaken staff,
Oh let me on it lean;
My faith, it is a trusty sword,
May falsehood find it keen!
Thy Spirit, Lord, to me impart,
Oh make me what Thou ever art—
Of patient and courageous heart,
As all true saints have been.

T. T. Lynch.

Ver. 4. *The Living Power of the Dead.*—Some men we only estimate aright when they have passed from mortal scenes. While most of the members of the vegetable kingdom give out such odour as they may have power to give *during life*, the vernal grass, the woodruff, and others, are not fragrant till they have been taken away from their roots, and have begun to get dry. The rose, the lilac, the daphne, and the acacia pour forth their perfume as a part of their day's duty. The woodruff, that holds up handfuls of little white crosses in the pleasant woods and shady glens, yields no scent till its life has ebbed—beautiful emblem of those who delight us while they live out of the serene abundance of their kindly hearts, but whose richer value we only begin to know when they are gone away, and of whose white souls we then say inwardly, "He being dead yet speaketh." So the hay-field that rolls like sea-waves is scentless when we pass it uncut; we hear the measured swish of the scythe, death lays each green head low, and odour rises like mist.—*L. H. Grindon.*

Forgetfulness of the Dead.—We shall sleep none the less sweetly, though none be talking about us over our heads. The world has a short memory, and, as the years go on, the list that it has to remember grows so crowded that it is harder and harder to find room to write a new name on it, or to read the old. The letters on the tombstones are soon erased by the feet that tramp across the churchyard.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Missions continued after Death. — The

cedar is most useful when dead. It is most productive when its place knows it no more. There is no timber like it. Firm in the grain, and capable of the finest polish, the tooth of no insect will touch it, and Time itself can hardly destroy it. Diffusing a perpetual fragrance through the chambers 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 to the objects around it; and however stately in the forest, or brave on the mountain's brow, it is more serviceable in Solomon's palace, and it receives an illustrious consecration when set up as pillars in the Temple, and carved into doorposts and lintels for the house of the Lord. Every Christian is useful in his life, but the goodly cedars are most useful afterwards. Joseph while he lived saved much people alive, and his own lofty goodness was an impressive and elevating pattern to his relenting and admiring brethren. But as an instance of special providence, and an example of untarnished excellence amidst terrible temptations, Joseph dead has spoken to more than Joseph living. The sweet singer of Israel while he lived taught many to handle the harp, and infected not a few with his thankful, adoring spirit. But David being dead yet singeth, and you can hardly name the psalm or hymn or spiritual song of which the lesson was not learnt from the son of Jesse. Paul in his living day preached many a sermon, and made many a convert to the faith of Jesus. But Paul being dead yet preacheth, and they were sermons from his sepulchre which converted Luther, and Zwingle, and most of our modern evangelists. And Luther is dead, but the Reformation lives. Calvin is dead, but his vindication of God's free and sovereign grace will never die. Knox, Melville, and Henderson are dead, but Scotland still retains a Sabbath and a Christian peasantry, a Bible in every house, and a school in every parish. Bunyan is dead, but his bright spirit still walks the earth in its *Pilgrim's Progress*. Baxter is dead, but souls are still quickened by the *Saints' Rest* and the *Call to the Unconverted*. Cowper is dead, but the "golden apples" are still as fresh as when newly gathered in the "silver basket" of the Olney Hymns. Eliot is dead, but the missionary enterprise is young. Henry Martyn is dead, but who can count the apostolic spirits, who, phœnix-wise, have started from his funeral pile? Howard is dead, but modern philanthropy is only commencing its career. Raikes is dead, but the Sabbath schools go on. Wilberforce is dead, but the negro will find for ages a protector in his memory.—*Dr. James Hamilton.*

Holy Example.—If holy example is, as we so often declare to each other, so beneficial, then it must be counted as worthy of mention among Christian privileges that we have now more holy examples than the Christians of the first century had. Each leaf in ecclesiastical history is illuminated with the noble deeds, words, and sufferings of Christ's people—an illustrious succession of spectators and heroes. The Christian Church is like a magnificent temple; each pious and illustrious man that enters it lights a new lamp therein; one after another they come, in solemn yet kingly succession, each making the temple appear more glorious, and bringing out its hidden beauties, by the holy example they set before us. —*T. R. Stevenson.*

Ver. 6. *Faith in God.*—Faith regards God's word as more real than man's acts, as not less real than a star in heaven; and believes that the least promise that God has written will outlive the last pyramid that all the Pharaohs have ever built. When you have a bank-note in your hand, you have no money, nor have you literally books, and clothes, and shoes, and bread, and wine, and all that it can purchase; but you have a promise upon that slip of paper, as real as if you had all the goods that bit of paper can purchase. You do not lay aside God's word as an obsolete, worthless thing, but you turn it into currency, and treat it as if really fulfilled; for faith is just taking God at His word, and believing the promises just because He says it.—*Dr. Cumming.*

An Infidel's Testimony.—Dr. Elliot, who was well acquainted with Colonel Allen, a celebrated infidel in America, visited him at a time when his daughter was sick and near death. He was introduced to the library, where the colonel read to him some of his writings with much self-complacency, and asked, "Is not that well done?" While they were thus employed, a messenger entered, and informed Colonel Allen that his daughter was dying, and desired to speak with him. He immediately went to her chamber, accompanied by Dr. Elliot, who was desirous of witnessing the interview. The wife of Colonel Allen was a pious woman, and had instructed his children in the principles of Christianity. As soon as her father appeared at her bedside, she said to him, "I am about to die: shall I believe in the principles you have taught me, or shall I believe in what my mother has taught me?" He became extremely agitated; his chin quivered, his whole frame shook; and after waiting a few moments, he replied, "Believe what your mother has taught you."

Enoch.—

Hast thou not seen at break of day
One only star the east adorning,

That never set or paled its ray,
But seemed to sink at once away
Into the light of morning?

From it the sage no portent drew,
It came to light no meteor fires,
But silver shone the whole night through,
On hawthorn hedges steeped in dew,
And quiet village spires.

Like him of old who dwelt beneath
The tents of patriarchal story,
Who passed without the touch of death,
Without dim eye or failing breath,
At once into God's glory—

The patriarch of one simple spot,
The sire of sons and daughters lowly,
And this the record of his lot,
"He walked with God, and he was not,"
For the Lord took him wholly.

C. F. Alexander.

Ver. 9. *Sojourners on Earth.*—A going away to America is only a journey for a few weeks. Even Australia has become an object for adventurous tourists. The every-day leave-takings of this changeful life, be it in the iron age of railways, or in the age of aeronautic expedition and transit—these sad necessities of earthly existence remind us that this is not our rest, that we are but sojourners here, as in a strange land. Farewells are written everywhere, at home and abroad, in birth, in death, in marriage, on the black-edged paper and the marble tablet, over the hatchment, on the ivy-mantled ruin, everywhere. —*S. B. James.*

All Things change.—All things that are, are in condition of perpetual flux and change. The cloud-rack has the likeness of bastions and towers, but they are mist, not granite, and the wind is every moment sweeping away their outlines, till the phantom fortress topples into red ruin while we gaze. The tiniest stream eats out its little valley, and rounds the pebble in its widening bed; rain washes down the soil, and frost cracks the cliffs above. So silently and yet mightily does the law of change work, that to a meditative eye the solid earth seems almost molten and fluid, and the everlasting mountains tremble to decay.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 10. *The Celestial City.*—A city never built with hands, nor hoary with the years of time—a city, whose inhabitants no census has numbered—a city, through whose streets rush no tides of business, nor nodding hearse creeps slowly with its burden to the tomb—a city, without griefs or graves, without sins or sorrows, without births or burials, without marriages or mournings—a city, which glories in having Jesus for its King, angels for its guards, saints for its citizens, whose walls are salvation, and whose gates are praise.—*Guthrie.*

Ver. 13. *Faith and its Fruits.*—St. Chrysostom is wont to insist, by virtue of faith, rustic and mechanic idiots do, in true knowledge, surpass the most refined wits, and children prove wiser than old philosophers; an idiot can tell us that which a learned infidel does not know; a child can assure us that wherein a deep philosopher is not resolved; for ask a boor, as a boy educated in our religion, who made him, he will tell you God Almighty, which is more than Aristotle or Democritus would have told; demand of him why he was made, he will answer you, to serve and glorify his Maker; and hardly would Pythagoras or Plato have replied so wisely. Examine him concerning his soul, he will aver that it is immortal, that it shall undergo a judgment after this life, that accordingly it shall abide in a state of bliss or misery everlasting—about which points neither Socrates nor Seneca could assure anything; inquire of him how things are upheld, how governed and ordered; he presently will reply, by the powerful hand and wise providence of God; whereas, among philosophers, one would ascribe all events to the current of fate, another to the tides of fortune—one to blind influences of stars, another to a confused jumble of atoms. Pose him about the main points of morality and duty, and he will, in a few words, better inform you than Cicero, or Epictetus, or Aristotle, or Plutarch, in their large tracts and voluminous discourses about matters of that nature.—*Barrow.*

Dying in Faith.—A clergyman having occasion to wait on the late Princess Charlotte, was thus addressed by her: "Sir, I understand you are a clergyman." "Yes, madam." "Of the Church of England?" "Yes." "Permit me to ask your opinion, sir, what is it that can make a death-bed easy?" Mr. W. was startled at so serious a question from a young and blooming female of so high rank, and modestly expressed his surprise that she should consult him, when she had access to many much more capable of answering the inquiry. She replied that she had proposed it to many, and wished to collect various opinions on this important subject. Mr. W. then felt it his duty to be explicit, and affectionately recommended to her the study of the Scriptures, which, as he stated, uniformly represent faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only means to make a death-bed easy. "Ah!" said she, bursting into tears, "that is what my grandfather often told me; but then he used to add, that, besides reading the Bible, I must pray for the Holy Spirit to understand its meaning.'

Strangers and Pilgrims.—Leighton had been used to say that if he were to choose a place to die in it should be an inn, for that would look so like a pilgrim's going home, to whom this world was all as an inn. It was his opinion, also, as we read in the memoir of him by Aikman, that "the officious tenderness and care of friends was an entanglement to a dying man, and that the unconcerned attendance of those who could be procured in such a place would give less disturbance." He had his wish. At the Bell Inn, Warwick Lane, Robert Leighton, in his seventy-fourth year, stranger and pilgrim, drew his last breath.—*Jacox.*

A City that hath Foundations.—
Beyond the dark and stormy bound
That guards our dull horizon round
A lovelier landscape swells;
Resplendent seat of light and peace,
In thee the sounds of conflict cease,
And glory ever dwells.

For thee the early patriarch sighed,
Thy distant beauty faint descried,
And hailed the blest abode;
A stranger here, he sought a home
Fixed in a city yet to come,
The city of his God.

Anon.

Citizenship in Heaven.—A Christian man's true affinities are with the things not seen, and with the persons there, however the surface relationships knit him to the earth. In the degree in which he is a Christian, he is a stranger here and a native of the heavens. That great city is, like some of the capitals of Europe, built on a broad river, with the mass of the metropolis on the one bank, but a wide-spreading suburb on the other. As the Trastevere is to Rome, as Southwark is to London, so is earth to heaven, the bit of the city on the other side the bridge.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

The City yet to come.—We do belong to another polity or order of things than that with which we are connected by the bonds of flesh and sense. Our true affinities are with the mother-city. True, we are here on earth, but far beyond the blue waters is another community of which we are truly members; and sometimes in calm weather we can see, if we climb to a height above the smoke of the valley where we dwell, the faint outline of the mountains of that other land, lying dreamlike on the opal waves and bathed in sunlight.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 17. *Abraham's Faith.*—The trial by faith is by finding what we will do for God. To trust Him when we have the securities in our own iron chest is easy, and not thankworthy; but to depend on Him for what we cannot see, as it is most hard for man to do so, so it is most acceptable to God when done, for in that act we make confession of His Deity. Faith without works of this kind is like a fish without water: it wants the element it should live in. A building without a basis cannot stand; faith is the foundation, and every good action, especially where we trust God without seeing Him, is a stone laid.—*Feltham.*

Ver. 21. *Jacob's Blessing of his Grandsons.*—A few days previous to his death, the late Rev. Dr. Belfrage, of Falkirk, hearing his infant son's voice in an adjoining room, desired that he should be brought to him. When the child was lifted into the bed, the dying father placed his hands upon his head, and said, in the language of Jacob, "The God before whom my fathers did walk, the God who fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad!" When the boy was removed, he added, "Remember and tell John Henry of this; tell him of these prayers, and how earnest I was that he might become early acquainted with his father's God."—*Whitecross.*

Vers. 24, 25. *Decision of Character.*—The man will not re-examine his conclusions with endless repetition, and he will not be delayed long by consulting other persons, after he has ceased to consult himself. He cannot bear to sit still among unexecuted decisions and unattempted projects. We wait to hear of his achievements, and are confident we shall not wait long. The possibility or the means may not be obvious to us, but we know that everything will be attempted, and that a spirit of such determined will is like a river, which, in whatever manner it may be obstructed, will make its way somewhere. It must have cost Cæsar many anxious hours of deliberation before he decided to pass the Rubicon; but it is probable he suffered but few to elapse between the decision and the execution. And any one of his friends who should have been apprised of his determination, and understood his character, would have smiled contemptuously to hear it insinuated that, though Cæsar had resolved, Cæsar would not dare; or that though he might cross the Rubicon, whose opposite bank presented to him no hostile legions, he might come to other rivers which he would not cross; or that either rivers or any other obstacles would deter him from prosecuting his determination from this ominous commencement to its very last consequence.—*John Foster.*

Ver. 26. *The Reproach of Christ.*—A curious discovery has been made in Rome. It is a rude caricature scratched on the ruined wall of the Prætorian barracks, representing a man worshipping another man *hanging on a*

cross, the crucified figure being drawn with *the head of an ass*, and the words roughly written beneath, "Alexamenos worships God," *i.e.* in effect, "See what a god Alexamenos worships!" Revolting and hideous as this caricature is, it is deeply interesting as a specimen of the ribald jests to which a Christian soldier was exposed, and also most valuable as a proof that the early Church believed in the Deity of Christ. A woodcut copy of this strange drawing will be found in Macduff's *St. Paul at Rome*, p. 225. Genuine faith influences us to deny ourselves, to renounce the world, to cherish holiness, to bear reproach, and to look beyond the present scene to the world of light and eternal glory. Such an effect will be produced, more or less, on all who possess this Divine grace. The Marquis of Vico, in Italy, when he was come to years, and to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, refused to be called the son and heir to a marquis, a cupbearer to an emperor, and nephew to a pope, and chose rather to suffer affliction, persecution, banishment, loss of lands, living, wife, children, honours, and preferments, than to enjoy the sinful pleasures of Italy for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the honours of the most brilliant connection, and all the enjoyments of the most ample fortune; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

The True Riches.—Elizabeth Christina, Queen of Prussia, was speaking one day to the little daughter of her gardener, and was greatly pleased with the wisdom and gentleness of the child. Some time after, as the queen was about to sit down with her ladies at table, the child was brought in, and the queen ordered her to sit beside her. The queen was curious to see what impression the gold and silver and bright ornaments would make on the little girl. She looked round in silence and astonishment; at last she folded her tiny hands, and said, with a clear voice,—

> "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, and glorious dress;
> Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
> With joy shall I lift up my head."

The ladies were deeply moved. "Oh the happy child!" one of them exclaimed to the queen, "how high she is above us!"

Ver. 34. *Power of Faith.—Julius Palmer*, in Queen Mary's days, had life and preferment offered him, if he would recant his faith in Christ. His answer was, that he had resigned his living in two places for the sake of the gospel, and was now ready to yield his life on account of Christ.—*William Hunter*, when urged by Bonner to recant, replied, he could only be moved by the Scriptures, for he reckoned the things of earth but dross for Christ; and when the sheriff offered him a pardon at the stake, if he would renounce his faith, he firmly rejected it.—*Antonius Riceto*, a Venetian, was offered his life, and considerable wealth, if he would concede but a little; and when his son with weeping entreated him to do so, he answered, that he resolved to lose both children and estate for Christ.—*The Prince of Condé*, at the massacre of Paris, when the king assured him that he should die within three days if he did not renounce his religion, told the monarch that his life and estate were in his hand, and that he would give up both rather than renounce the truth.—*Bradford* said to his fellow-sufferer at the stake, "Be of good comfort, for we shall this night have a merry supper with the Lord."—*Sanders*, in similar circumstances, said, "Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life!"—*Elizabeth Folks*, embracing the stake, cried, "Farewell world, farewell faith and hope, and welcome love!"—*Algerius*, an Italian martyr, thus wrote from his prison, a little before his death: "Who would believe that in this dungeon I should find a paradise so pleasant; in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity and hope and life; where others weep, I rejoice."—*Wishart*, when in the fire which removed him from the world, exclaimed, "The flame doth torment my body, but no whit abates my spirits."—In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was almost always first in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once asked to see the sword. He took it, quietly examined it, and sent it back with this message: "I see nothing wonderful in the sword. I cannot understand why any man should be afraid of it." The captain sent back another message: "Your majesty has been pleased to examine the sword, but I did not send the arm that wielded it; if you had examined that, and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery." We look at men and see what great things they have done, and we cannot understand it. But we only see the sword; we do not see God, whose arm wields it.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Ver. 35. *Persecutions of the Faithful.*—Literally this reads, "they were bastinadoed," or beaten to death with batons or sticks, a mode of punishment still used in the East, and which is capable of taking away the life of the real or supposed criminal, if it be continued for a long time. Some have thought this refers to the tortures thus inflicted upon Eleazar by Antiochus, as described in 2 Macc. vi. Doddridge, from the fact that the Greek verb is used to express the beating of a drum, argues that in

this particular kind of punishment all the limbs were put upon the stretch, and then beaten in such a way as to cause intense pain.

Ver. 37. *Sheepskins and Goatskins.*—Some writers see in this an allusion to the prophets of the Jewish era. Much of a prophet's life, also, was spent in wandering from place to place. In 2 Kings i. 8 it is obvious that Elijah wore a garment of undressed hair, and a reference to the clothing of the prophets in Zech. xiii. 4 indicates that rough skins were their usual dress. We find this remark in Clement's epistle to the Corinthians: "Let us be imitators of those who went about in sheepskins and goatskins, preaching the coming of Christ."

Treatment of the Prophets.—In the parable of the wicked husbandman the outrage reaches unto the killing of some of the subordinate messengers; these are true to historical fact, seeing that not a few of the prophets were not merely maltreated, but actually put to death. Thus, if we may trust Jewish tradition, Jeremiah was stoned by the exiles in Egypt, Isaiah sawn asunder by King Manasseh; and we have abundant historical justification of this description, showing that the past ingratitude of the Jews is not painted in colours too dark; of which treatment this passage in the Hebrews is the best commentary. The patience of God under these extraordinary provocations is wonderful, sending as He does, messenger after messenger to win men to Him.—*Archbishop Trench.*

Dwellers in Caves.—Few of the caves of Western Asia are now occupied as permanent places of abode; they are mostly the resort of shepherds, who make them the stables of their flocks. It not unfrequently occurs at the present day that a people oppressed by war, or the tyranny of their rulers, forsake the towns and villages and take up their abode for a time in these wild and solitary places, in the hope of escaping from their oppressors. Fugitives from the battle-field, leaders of armies, and even princes and royal personages, have repeatedly, in modern as in ancient times, concealed themselves from their pursuers within these dark recesses. Bandits and outlaws have also made these caverns their abode, whence they sallied forth to commit robbery and murder, and in times of persecution on account of religion, men, women, and even children have been forced to abandon their homes and wait for better times in "dens and caves of the earth." The deacon of the present Armenian Church of Sivas, in Asia Minor, was compelled to leave his home in Divrik, for fear of death on account of his faith, and abode for several months in a cave in the mountains, where he was secretly furnished with provisions.—*Van Lennep.*

Ver. 39. *A Good Report.*—As in the motions of the heavens there is one common revolution, which carries the whole frame daily unto one point, from east to west, though each several sphere hath a several cross-way of its own, wherein some move swifter and others with slower motion—so, though saints may have their several corruptions, and these likewise stronger in some than in others, yet, being animated by one and the same Spirit, they all agree in a steady and uniform motion unto Christ. If a stone were placed under the concave of the moon, though there be air and fire and water between, yet through them all it would hasten to its own place; so be the obstacles never so many, or the conditions never so various, through which a man must pass, through terrors and temptations, and a sea and wilderness, and fiery serpents, and sons of Anak; yet if the heart love Christ indeed, having obtained a good report through faith, he concludes that heaven is his home, to which he is hastening, whither Christ the forerunner is gone before.—*H. G. Salter.*

CHAPTER XII.

PERSUASION TO STEADFASTNESS.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

It is necessary to the understanding of this chapter that we keep in mind the persecutions **and** sufferings which were straining the allegiance of the Christian Jews. These were peculiarly distressing at a time when they were also exposed to the solicitations and temptations of the unbelieving Jews.

Ver. 1. **Cloud.**—Familiar metaphor for a great multitude. **Witnesses.**—Who in varied spheres illustrate, and testify to, the power of faith to win spiritual triumphs. There is possibly in the mind of the writer, and suggesting his figure, the scene of the Roman or Grecian public games, in which the combatants are watched by multitudes of spectators. Compare 1 Cor. iv. 9. The idea of "witnesses" as those who cheer by their testimony is however to be preferred. **Every weight.**—R.V. margin, "all cumbrance." *Farrar*, "stripping

off at once cumbrance of every kind": the word "weight" was used, technically, in the language of athletes, to mean "superfluous flesh," to be reduced by training. ὄγκος means "swelling," "weight," and then, morally, "pride," "inflation." The writer, no doubt, had in mind the special dangers of the Hebrew Christians. The "divers and strange teachings," spoken of in chap. xiii. 9, in which would be included the Judaising practices which they were tempted to observe, will probably suit the figure best. **Which doth so easily beset us.**—These words form the translation of a single Greek word, εὐπερίστατον. It is a form of a verb which means to "stand round us"; so the meaning may be "closely clings." The precise reference of the writer is not to particular and individual sins, but to the sin of apostasy which at that time *beset* all Christian Jews. *Moulton* says, "The prevailing opinion amongst modern writers appears to be that the word signifies *well* (or *easily*) *surrounding*; and that the writer is comparing sin with a garment—either a loosely fitting garment by which the runner becomes entangled and is tripped up, or one that clings *closely* to him and thus impedes his ease of movement." But *Moulton* prefers the suggestion of words that are analogous to this one, and that would lead us to render "much admired"; lit. "well surrounded by an admiring crowd." Anyway, the ordinary associations of the term "besetting sin" are not suitable here. *Stuart* paraphrases the verse thus: "Since so many illustrious patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs, who preceded us, have exercised faith, persevered in it, and obtained the rewards consequent upon it, let us, in like manner, rejecting every solicitation to renounce our hopes and our holy religion, persevere in the belief, and in the duties, which the gospel requires."

Ver. 2. **Looking.**—More precisely "looking off," "looking away." It implies "the concentration of the wandering gaze in a single direction." **Author.**—ἀρχηγόν: see chap. ii. 10. Leader, Imitator, Captain, Prince, Bringer-on. He who introduced the new religion. **Finisher.**—τελειωτήν. The one who has Himself reached the goal for which we are striving. There is a guarantee in His having completed the race (1 Pet. i. 9).

Ver. 3. **Consider.**—Place your sufferings in comparison with His. **Against Himself.**—R.V. renders "against themselves," which is a well-supported reading. **Wearied.**—R.V. renders "that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls." *Stuart* renders, "lest, becoming discouraged in your minds, ye grow weary."

Ver. 4. **Unto blood.**—The last extremity; the surrender of life. Implying that Christ had so resisted. From this we infer that there had been no actual martyrs among the Christian Jews addressed by the writer.

Ver. 5.—Better read as a question, "Have ye forgotten?"

Ver. 8. **Bastards.**—νόθοι, illegitimate children, who cannot be properly thought of as God's spiritual children.

Ver. 9. **Father of spirits.**—See Num. xvi. 22, xxvii. 16; Zech. xii. 1. "The Creator of all spirits, who is the Giver of life to all, who knows the spirit which He has made, and can discipline it by chastening."

Ver. 12. **Lift up the hands.**—Lit. "straighten out the relaxed hands and the palsied knees" (Isa. xxxv. 3).

Ver. 15. **Root of bitterness.**—See Deut. xxix. 18.

Ver. 16. **Fornicator.**—The Scriptures do not thus describe Esau. *Farrar* thinks that the writer must have in mind the Jewish Hagadah, in which Esau is represented in the blackest colours, as a man utterly sensual, intemperate, and vile. And this also was the view of Philo.

Ver. 17. **Place of repentance.**—In his father. There is no reference to repentance in relation to God. He could not induce his father to change his mind in regard to the matter. The reference is entirely to the transfer of the rights of primogeniture to the younger of the twins, Jacob. The rest of the chapter pleads for watchfulness and steadfastness on the ground that everything under the new dispensation is of a milder aspect, and of a more inviting, encouraging nature, than under the old. For the references to Old Testament Scriptures, see Exod. xx., xxi.; Deut. iv., v.

Ver. 18. **Might be touched.**—A figure of speech for a "material" thing. "A palpable and enkindled fire." For the terrors accompanying the giving of the law on Sinai, see Exod. xix., xx.

Ver. 22. **Mount Sion.**—The spiritual or heavenly mount. Not Jerusalem, but what is represented by Jerusalem. "The mountain and city of a living God." **Innumerable company.**—Lit. "myriads, the joyful company of angels."

Ver. 23. **Church of the firstborn.**—The saints from the older dispensation. Some regard it as meaning the Christian saints who had gone to glory; but the spiritual association of spiritual Christian Jews with spiritual Jews of all the ages is prominently before the writer's mind.

Ver. 24. **Blood of sprinkling.**—A figure taken from the blood-sprinklings of the old covenant (Exod. xxiv. 8: see 1 Pet. i. 2). That is done spiritually by Jesus which was materially represented in the old blood-sprinklings. See chap. ix. 14.

Ver. 29. **Consuming fire.**—Deut. iv. 24. Not intended as in any sense a description of God, but "an anthropomorphic way of expressing His hatred of apostasy and idolatry. The reference is made in order to show why we ought to serve God with holy reverence and fear."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1, 2.

The Inspiration of Noble Examples.—The "cloud of witnesses" is manifestly that list of noble and heroic men and women which has been given in chap. xi., together with that further list which has been suggested by brief allusion. The good men and true who have lived, laboured, and suffered in the past should always appear to us as a "great cloud of witnesses": in their witnessing is found (in one sense) their immortality. Any goodness gained, any moral triumphs won, never die, in the sense of losing their moral influence on humanity. Every good lifts the race to a higher level.

"Lives of great men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time."

"Those who thus encompass us, a countless host, have had witness borne to them through their faith, and in turn stand forth as witnesses to faith, bearing testimony to its power and works. One and all they offer encouragement to us in our own contest of faith." The picture which the writer brings before us is that of the great public games of his day. We are those who have to fight the spiritual fight, and to run the Christian race, and we may well be inspired to all holy energy, persistency, and self-restraint, as we note the severe discipline of these competitors, the intensity of their struggle, the delight in their victory, and the glory of their rewards. Some, however, see in the "cloud of witnesses" the vast crowding mass of spectators in the amphitheatre, who watch the combatants and the racers, and inspire them to heroic efforts by their loud acclaim. The previous suggestion may be preferred as more precisely connecting this chapter with the previous one.

I. **The cloud of witnesses.**—Setting before us the long roll of godly men who have lived through the ages, there are two things we can see in them which may well inspire us. 1. They were men who mastered their circumstances in loyalty to God. But nobody ever yet mastered his circumstances until he had mastered *himself*. When once that is done, the mastery of circumstances becomes an easy thing. The circumstances of our life never are "according to our mind." They are largely created by wills which conflict with ours, and by events that are wholly beyond our control. What is inspiring in the Old Testament heroes is this—they did not master their circumstances in any mere forcing of their own will and pleasure, but in loyally furthering the will of God as they knew it. And that is the highest law for the ruling of our lives. Circumstances will eventually master any man whose only idea is to make *his will* rule them. Circumstances never can eventually master any man whose one idea is, to make *God's will* rule them. 2. They were men who fulfilled their life-mission in devotion to God. On an Irish tombstone, erected to the memory of a devoted lady, whose life was a service to the children and the poor, is inscribed these words: "She had a work to do, and she did it." That might be said of the Old Testament saints. The recognition of a Divine commission ennobles a life. And such recognition should come to us all. If God "calls us by His grace into the fellowship of His Son," we may be absolutely sure that He calls us by His grace into some special form of work for His Son, and endows us with the gifts for the work, and brings round to us the sphere in which the work can be done.

Every man that watches for it in a spirit of willingness will find his work set before him; and he may be inspired, by the old saints, to fulfil it in absolute devotion to God. He will be ennobled by the sense of *having a trust.* What may be the inspiring power of the Old Testament wrestlers in the fight, and runners in the race, should also be felt as the power of those saintly and heroic souls who have come into our personal knowledge. They are *our* inspiring "cloud of witnesses."

II. **The one sublime Witness.**—"Looking unto Jesus." The writer seems to have designed to say something more precise than appears in our English translation. He seems to have meant this: "Look at that long roll of noble souls, and see what triumphs they gained through their loyalty and devotion to God; but do not fix all your thought on them. Get all the inspiration that you can from them; and then look *off*, look away from them—look unto Jesus, who, in mastery of circumstances, in loyalty to God, in fulfilment of His life-mission, and in devotion to God, is altogether and easily their Head, their Captain. Talk about the practical life of faith which the old heroes lived; here is a practical life of faith in every way more perfect, more complete, more nobly toned, more triumphant, more inspiring. Here is the *Author*, the Head, the First, of men of faith; here is the *Finisher*: for nobody will ever live a nobler life of faith, a life that shall surpass His." Fix attention on three things concerning this absolute model of faith: 1. He endured the cross, despising, mastering, rising above, the shame. 2. His faith in the issue of His enduring brought Him present joy. "For the joy that was set before Him." 3. His persistent and triumphant faith brought round to Him the Divine recognition and reward. "And hath sat down at the right hand of God." There is this additional inspiration in the example of the Lord Jesus—that we can apprehend the Divine future reward with which His life of faith was sealed. We cannot pass in thought with the heroes of the Old Testament into the life beyond, and so estimate, inspiringly, their final rewards. We can only see how rewards came in their heart-joy in God, and in their good influence in their generation. But the New Testament Scriptures labour to help us in the apprehension of the glory and reward which Christ has won, and they hold out before us the hope of gaining that "crown of life" which our Lord Jesus *has.* So Jesus, the sublime witness to the practical life of faith, leads on the double train of heroic souls, from the old age and new, who believed God, and in their faith gained the great life-victory.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Besetting Sins.*—Precision of thinking may prevent our saying that the writer had in his mind precisely what we mean by "besetting sins," but to take his words with our own associations will not put us out of harmony with his thought, or with his teaching. If a man speaks harshly concerning the failings and infirmities of other people, we may be quite sure that he either does not know himself, or has a distorted vision which allows him to see only what he wishes to see. By reason of natural or acquired frailties of disposition, character, and habit, every man finds great difficulty in living through the godly life. In the great Christian life-conflict, as in times of national warfare, there are some battles, and much continuous, skirmishing, guerilla work. The battle-times are special temptations and trials. The continuous warfare is represented by the daily dealing with besetting sins.

I. **All of us have some evil disposition, tendency, or influence, which may properly be called our "besetting sin."**—Usually, because of its subtle and disguised character, it is difficult

for us to find it. Very often we are strangely surprised to find that it is the very thing of which we most readily and most harshly accuse others. 1. Some are directly related to our fallen nature,—as hereditary drunkenness, gluttony, and sensuality; as that love of bloody sports which was so dreadful a feature in Pagan human nature, and which reappears in our day in the strange love of reading about murders, and the fascination of novels containing sensational horrors. 2. Some result from defective moral training, which has failed to deal wisely and effectively with the first signs of evil in child-life,—as vanity, affectation of superiority, idleness, procrastination, cruelty, etc. 3. Some result from the union of fallen nature with outward temptation, *e.g.* pride, unforgivingness, self-conceit, readiness to take offence. With some knowledge of our real selves, we could not fail to pray, with the psalmist, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

II. **Our besetting sins must exert a most injurious influence on our Christian lives.**—A man may be smitten down by a great temptation, and find recovering power, and rise again, shaking off the evil, and becoming henceforth the better for the humbling experience. But the danger of our little falls, through our besetting sins, lies in their so seldom awaking us, and arousing us to exert our recuperative energies. Besetting sins wear away, as the waters wear the stones.

III. **Besetting sins demand our watchful attention and our persistent effort.**—This we feel increasingly with the growing years. The experience of life gradually persuades us that we cannot hope to entirely uproot them. (The Diabolians will persist in lurking in some little-known corners of Mansoul.) What we can do we must do, and keep on doing—we can watch for and crush their opportunities. This we shall never thoroughly do until we can see our besetment to be *sin*.

Looking off unto Jesus.—In the old Grecian games it was necessary to keep the eye of the runner fixed on the goal. So we must turn our attention from everything else and fix it on Christ, if we would run well the Christian race.

I. **Under what apprehensions of Him are we to look to Christ?**—1. As Saviour. Illustrate by the figures, "Alpha and Omega"; ransom; opened prison; slave given his freedom. The *look* should be one of *gratitude*. 2. As Master. Illustrate by figures, captain leading army; king; Joshua seeing "Captain of host"; St. Paul receiving orders from the glorified Jesus. The *look* should be one of *obedience*. 3. Example: Jesus is the model of a man dwelt in by the Spirit of God. Imitation needs the presence of a model.

II. **In what scenes are we to look to Jesus?**—1. Common duty. Christ's image can be reflected in a little pool even better than in a great lake. 2. Times of temptation. 3. Times of difficulty. Imagine Moses anxiously looking every morning, the first thing, to see whether the pillar-cloud had moved. 4. Means of grace. What is ever brought to mind by the church steeples pointing upwards.

III. **What sort of looks should they be?**—1. Trustful. A man on a height looks *up*, not down. 2. Obedient. The proper spirit of servants. 3. Loving, as to our mother or our dearest friend. We shall look to Christ the better, the better we come to know Him. Know Him worthily, and we shall look off to Him altogether.

Weights and Sins.—There is a regular series of thoughts in this clause. If we would run well, we must run light; and if we would run light, we must look to Christ. The central injunction is, "Let us run with patience"; the only way of doing that is the "laying aside *all* weights and sin"; and the only way of laying aside the weights and sins is "looking unto Jesus." The "sin which doth

so easily beset us" is sin generically. All sin is a besetting sin. It is the characteristic of every kind of transgression, that it circles us round about, that it is always lying in wait and lurking for us. Every "weight" is distinct from "sin." We, as racers, must throw aside the garment that wraps us round—that is to say, "the sin that easily besets us"; and then, besides that, we must lay aside everything else which weights us for the race—that is to say, certain habits or tendencies within us.

I. **There are hindrances which are not sins.**—Sin is a transgression of God's law; a "weight" is that which, allowable in itself, is, for some reason, a hindrance and impediment in *our* running the heavenly race. Sin is sin, whosoever does it; but weights may be weights to me, and not weights to you. What are these weights? We carry them about *with* us, and we are to put them away from ourselves. They are the feelings and habits of mind by which we abuse God's great gifts and mercies. We are to put away the dispositions within us which *make things temptations.* It is an awful and mysterious power that we all possess of perverting the highest endowments, whether of soul or of circumstances, which God has given us, into the occasions for faltering and falling back in the Divine life. Every blessing, every gladness, every possession, external to us, and every faculty and attribute within us, we turn into heavy weights that drag us down to this low spot of earth.

II. **If we would run, we must lay these weights aside.**—The whole of the Christian's course is a fight. We carry with us a double nature. Because of that conflict, it follows that, if ever there is to be a positive progress in the Christian race, it must be accompanied and made possible by the negative process of casting away and losing much that interferes with it. There is no spiritual life without dying; there is no spiritual growth without putting off "the old man with his affections and lusts." How is this laying aside to be performed? 1. By getting so strong that the thing shall not be a weight, though we carry it. 2. By taking the prudent course of putting it utterly aside. There are many duties which, by our own sinfulness, we make weights, and we dare not, and we cannot if we would, *lay them aside,*—a man's calling or domestic ties. The duties that in our weakness become impediments and weights we *must not* leave. There is a large field for misconception and misapplication in the settlement of the practical question, Which of my weights arise from circumstances that I dare not seek to alter, and which of them from circumstances that I dare not leave unaltered? There is a large margin left for the play of honesty of purpose, and plain common sense, in the fitting of general maxims to the shifting and complicated details of an individual life. But no laws can be laid down to save us that trouble.

III. **This laying aside of every weight is only possible by looking to Christ.**—Some people suppose that when they have laid aside a weight, conquered a hindrance, given up some bad habit, they have done a meritorious thing. We are, no doubt, strengthened by the very act; but then it is of no use at all except in so far as it makes us better fitted for the positive progress which is to come after it. The racer puts aside his garments *that he may run.* We empty our hearts that Christ may fill them. And Christ must have begun to fill them before we can empty them. "Looking to Jesus" is the only means of thorough-going, absolute self-denial. All other surrender than that which is based upon love to Him, and faith in Him, is but surface work, and drives the subtle disease to the vitals. If you would lay aside every weight, you must look to Christ, and let His love flow into your soul. Then self-denial will not be self-denial. It will be blessing and joy, sweet and easy. Whatever you give up for Christ you get back from Christ, better, more

beautiful, more blessed, hallowed to its inmost core, a joy and a possession for ever.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Cloud of Witnesses.—They are "a cloud" like that background of one of Raffaelle's great pictures, which, at first sight, seems only a bright mist, and looked at more closely is all full of calm, angel faces.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 1, 2. *The Christian Race.*—This passage is, in the main, an exhortation to that steadfast pursuit of the Christian ideal to which we are all bound by our upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. Nor is there any doubt that its leading image is that of a race such as the athletes of classical times used to run; possibly the race that was in the writer's mind was one of those that were run in the vast Roman amphitheatres, in which the spectators sat in seats that rose tier above tier, so that to the runners, swiftly flashing by, their white faces and many-coloured robes would look like an illuminated "cloud" stooping from the sky.

I. **How are we to prepare ourselves for the Christian race?**—By "*laying*" or putting "aside"; by stripping off, by getting quit of, "*every weight*," or better, "all encumbrance," all that would hinder or impede us, "*and the sin that surrounds us*," or, as the English Version has it, "the sin that doth so easily beset us." As to the first phrase, we need not limit ourselves to the acts of the athlete, and what they may suggest. "Every weight," "all encumbrance," cannot mean less than this—that we are to lay aside *whatever* impedes us, whatever would hamper or delay us, from whatever cause, in whatever way. The second clause is more difficult. It seems as if "the sin that doth so easily beset us" must be our most besetting sin, the sin to which we are most inclined by our personal make, temperament, habit, and into whose hindering and degrading clutches we are most apt to fall. But the simple fact is, that our eight words, "the sin that doth most easily beset us," are a translation, or a paraphrase, of only three Greek words, which might be translated by "*the circumambient sin.*" What the writer meant to convey was, that, in addition to all other encumbrances, all else which is adverse to the Christian life, we must lay aside the ruling sin of the age, the sin which is in the very air of our time, which besets or surrounds us like an atmosphere—the sin which, as everybody shares it, we may half persuade ourselves is not a sin at all, or is not a sin so deadly that it need be very strenuously opposed or renounced. It is a *popular* sin which the inspired writer had in his eye—probably that "fear of persecution" about which he, again and again, warns his readers. These common and admired sins of the time, sins which we can readily excuse to ourselves, which make men, in some sense, think better of us and associate with us on easier terms, which at all events gain for us a more peaceful and quiet life, are among the most dangerous, because the most subtle and plausible, sins; they are among the most fatal hindrances to our advance in the spiritual life; and the temptations to them offer us our noblest opportunities for serving God and man. And these sins are as active, as potent, as fatal, to-day as they ever where.

II. If we ask, **How are we to run this race?** the answer is, With "patient endurance," with cheerful constancy, with a resolute and ever-renewed exertion of our whole strength, with an unflagging and whole-hearted devotion which will shrink from no trial, succumb to no temptation.

III. In running this race, **we are encouraged by the example and testimony of a great cloud of witnesses.** For the writer of this epistle the cloud was composed of the heroic men and women whose famous achievements he had summarised in the previous chapter, from the father of the faithful downward. But in what sense were they witnesses? Are they the interested and approving spectators of our exploits?

Or are they, rather, witnesses and martyrs to the truth, and to the God in whom we believe—witnesses in whose lives we may see our own experiences reflected, and from whose lips we may gather consolation and encouragement? *How* does their presence help us? By stimulating us to a keener emulation, a braver effort, a stronger determination to win, because they are looking on; or by furnishing us with guidance, counsel, courage, hope, as we remember how much they endured, what perils and defects they surmounted, and how gloriously they conquered at last, and how richly they were rewarded? If we must choose between these interpretations, we choose the latter. But we need not choose; we may accept both motives, in so far as they are good and helpful motives; for all things are ours, all motives, aids, encouragements, to that strenuous and continuous effort by which alone we can rise into the life eternal, and receive its crown. There is no kind of reading by which we profit more than the biographies of men who were genuinely or greatly good. But of all biographies those which are the most helpful to us are those which we find in the Bible, when once we have learned that the men whose lives are recorded there were men of like passions with ourselves, and that their faults and sins are recorded for our warning and instruction, not that we may justify them, or allow ourselves in them; for these biographies were written by men who had a special eye for the trials of faith and the triumphs of righteousness.

IV. If we ask, **How may we win?** how may we best *assure* ourselves of winning this race, of ultimately obtaining that perfect ideal of character which has been set before us?—the answer is, By "looking unto Jesus." In the imperial games the goal was placed in front of the emperor's seat. And the image of this verse seems to be, that that victorious athlete and champion, Jesus Christ, after having run the race as it had never been run before, and reached the goal in face of such opposition and under the pressure of such a burden as man never before endured, had been called up by the Imperator to sit on His right hand, and to adjudge the prize in all races that should be thereafter run. Because He sits high above the goal, because He is to judge the strife, and His hand is to confer the wreath of victory, we are to look to Him as we run; nay, as the Greek verb implies, *looking away from* all others, or else, we are to *look only to Him*. There is to be a deliberate and energetic concentration of our whole power and aspiration on Him. We are to concentrate our thoughts on Christ, because He is "the Author and Perfecter of faith"—not only of *our* faith, but of *faith*. To this writer faith is a principle, not a creed—not a system of co-ordinated beliefs, but a condition and adventure of the soul, or a life of which this condition is the animating and inspiring motive. When he speaks of Jesus as "the Author and Perfecter" of this faith, he may mean—1. That even the great cloud of witnesses, from the father of the faithful down to the last of his children who had "wrought righteousness," owed their faith to Jesus Christ, the everlasting Word, by whom all things were made and all men redeemed. 2. That in Jesus this Divine principle of life first received its full incarnation, that in Him this ideal was first perfectedly realised. 3. And that, if we are to live a life of faith, He must both originate this life in us and complete it. How confidently we may look to Him for all the grace and help we need, we learn from the next clause of the verse: "who, for the joy set before Him, endured a cross, despising shame." "The joy of the Saviour was the salvation of mankind" (*Theodoret*). Even the cruel and shameful burden of "a cross" could not abate His zeal nor rob Him of the prize; nor could the shame of it daunt His courage or turn Him from His aim. And what was His cross

but the sense and burden of our sin? What the shame which He despised but our shame in that, seeing the very Ideal of virtue and righteousness, we did not recognise it, did not love and desire it; nay, hated it, and, so far as we could, banished it from the world? He who endured all this *for* us, and *from* us, can He withhold His sympathy and aid when, instead of opposing and rejecting Him, we set out on the very course He trod, press forward in it under manifold weaknesses and discouragements, looking steadfastly to Him for guidance, sympathy, and grace?—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Plodding through the Uneventful.—It is a great deal easier to be up to the occasion in some shining moment of a man's life, when he knows that a supreme hour has come, than it is to keep that high tone when plodding over all the dreary plateau of uneventful, monotonous travel and dull duties. It is easier to run fast for a minute than to grind along the dusty road for a day. We have all a few moments in life of hard, glorious running; but we have days and years of walking—the uneventful discharge of small duties.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 2. *The Saviour rejoicing to suffer for Mankind.*—The apostle Paul frequently illustrates the position and prospects of Christians by a reference to the social customs existing among the persons to whom his writings were addressed. Here is a reference to "the games." Spiritually applied, the Christians addressed are regarded as the spectators; the departed saints; and the Lord Jesus, once a successful candidate, and now the Arbiter at the goal, by whom the reward is to be adjudged and bestowed.

I. **The humiliation and suffering to which the Lord Jesus Christ submitted.**—1. *In their nature.* "The cross" signifies death by crucifixion. "The shame," of being deserted by the Father, being accursed and outcast, of bearing the guilt of millions, and the wrath for those sins. 2. *The spirit in which they were encountered and borne.* "Endured" with resignation and fortitude; "despised the shame." He delights in the scorching of the fire, and He scorns the woe.

II. **The prospects, by the pleasurable contemplation of which, amidst His humiliation and shame, the Lord Jesus Christ was animated.**—1. *The ordained mediatorial results by which the joy of the Lord Jesus was actually inspired.* He was to enter through His sufferings into pre-eminent personal elevation and glory. By His humiliation and sufferings He vindicated the government and character of the Godhead, and secured the redemption and happiness for unnumbered multitudes of mankind. 2. *The inherent characteristics by which the joy of the Lord Jesus, so inspired, was distinguished.* (1) *The purity of His joy.* Absolutely unsullied. (2) *The vastness.* Its extent cannot be measured or fathomed. His joy, like His love, passeth knowledge. (3) *The perpetuity.* Never fade. (4) *The diffusiveness.* The fulness of His joy sends forth streams to the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect.

III. **The influence which the pleasure of the Lord Jesus, so excited and constituted, ought to have upon His people.**—1. *They ought to rejoice with Him in His joy.* We ought to congratulate our Lord Jesus on the pleasure arising from His mediatorial work. Exult with Him, and for His sake. 2. *They ought to accord to Him the entire surrender and devotedness of their hearts.* If the majesty and splendour of His celestial glory are now continually employed for our welfare, is there not a solemn and resistless call upon our unreserved practical dedication to His will? 3. *They should bear their own afflictions and sorrows in imitation of His example.* Mental resignation and fortitude, and in holy contempt of what He had to suffer—thus He endured; and here is our obligation too. 4. *They should habitually anticipate the period when they*

shall meet their Redeemer in the world of joy where now He dwells. The eye of faith can detect Him standing by the goal, holding out not the crown of fading laurel, but the incorruptible crown of life. Endeavour to participate in the spirit of this high and noble feeling.—*J. Parsons.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—8.

The Strain of Maintaining Christian Profession.—These verses indicate three sources whence strain cannot fail to come, and they suggest considerations which may help the professor successfully to endure the strain, whencesoever it may come.

I. **One source is the contradiction of sinners.**—They that would live godly will, in every age, suffer some form of outward persecution. The persecution need not always take coarse and violent forms; in our times it takes refined and subtle forms, which are often harder to bear. Let any man to-day try to live a really spiritual life, and teach men really spiritual truth, lifting off material coverings, and bringing to view spiritual realities, he will be sure to meet with persecutions at the hands of those who are zealous for the literality and materiality of religion. Our Lord embodied an ever-acting principle when He said to His disciples, "Ye are not of the world; therefore the world hateth you." Put the earnest young Christian into the worldly-toned house of business to-day, and he will get the "contradiction of sinners against himself," as certainly as did the Christian men and women in the old Pagan days. The peril of persecution from without, on account of our religious opinions, or our religious life, must be duly estimated. What can bring us strength to endure? "Consider Him." "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master." We need not wonder that we should be misrepresented and misunderstood, for so was He. We need not wonder even that our words should be resolutely turned against us, for so were His. We need not wonder even if we are the victims of hostile schemes and combinations, for so was He. But He triumphed over all; and, in spite of all, lived through His "godly, righteous, and sober life": and so may we. The principles on which He triumphed may be ours. The spirit in which He triumphed may be ours. We need not *faint.*

II. **Another source of strain is the weakness of self.**—There is such an easily reached limit to our power of resistance. We can try a little; but if we do not immediately succeed, we give up trying. Our striving against sin is at best but a poor thing; there is seldom anything heroic about it. Cranmer may be weak enough to yield when the stake is right in view, but we weakly shrink back long before we reach any such extremities. To us it can be said, with a most pointed application, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." We are far enough away from the martyr spirit. What shall so inspire us as to lift us into moral strength for enduring? To some extent the story of the martyr ages; but chiefly the thought of Him who did resist unto blood—who did wrestle with sin, and yielded His life in the struggle, but yielded it only when the victory was won. We must never wonder if the demand upon our moral strength is such a demand as was made upon Christ's. It is inspiration to us to look and see how He "resisted unto blood."

III. **Another source of strain is the discipline of God.**—We wish that to be saved was to be saved once for all. And it is not. It is to be put into the school of God for discipline, involving chastisements, with a view to full sanctifying. God's discipline is as that of a father with his sons. 1. There is love at the heart of it. 2. There is wisdom in the arranging of it. 3. But there is no hesitation in putting all needful severities into it. The Christian can no more

expect to understand the discipline of God than the son can expect to understand the corrections and restraints of his father. The son endures through the trustfulness of his love. And the Christian endures in the same way. No noble human character ever yet existed that had not come out of a school of discipline; and no saintly character ever yet was found among us which had not come out of the disciplinary school of God. What shall help us to bear this form of strain? Looking unto Jesus, who, "though He were a Son, learned obedience by the things which He suffered," while in God's earthly school of discipline.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 3. *Christ's Enduring Contradiction.*

I. **What forms of contradiction Christ was subjected to.**—1. His design in founding a spiritual kingdom was contradicted. 2. His spirit and character were misunderstood both by His own disciples and by His enemies. He was often hindered, as at Capernaum and Gadara, and above all at Jerusalem. And at last He was turned out and crucified.

II. **In what forms, and on what principles, did Christ overcome the contradiction?**—1. An amazing patience was shown by Him. He proved the power that lies in "patient continuance in well-doing." 2. The consciousness of His Divine mission sustained Him. A man can always be strong if in his soul is the cherished conviction that he *has a work to do.* "A man is immortal until his work is done." 3. His faith in the abiding presence of God with Him constantly sustained Him. St. Paul in this sense of God's presence comes a long way behind our Divine Lord, and yet he could say, "I can do all things through Him who strengtheneth me."

III. **How does Christ's overcoming contradiction become an encouragement and a help to us?**—None of us can ever have so extreme a conflict as He had. But none can ever have any conflict that will be really different to His. 1. His was a conquest on our behalf. It was really *our* foe He disabled. And it is a weakened, humbled foe that is left to us to fight. 2. He presented the example which may guide us to wise methods in our conflict. 3. His triumph has brought Him a trust of grace which He now dispenses to all who follow Him in the same holy war, and are subject now to a similar "contradiction of sinners." Whatever then may be the precise form which our difficulties take, as we endeavour practically to live the Christian life amid depressing and opposing circumstances, we are distinctly called to *endure*, in Christ's strength, for Christ's sake, and after the pattern of Christ's example.

Ver. 4. *War with Sin to the Death.*—Read only with the imperfect human vision, the "great cloud of witnesses" are but men, who sustained human relationships, fulfilled human duty, and suffered human sorrows. Read with the illuminations of the Divine Spirit, they are more than men; they are spiritual men, carrying on a spiritual warfare, gaining spiritual triumphs, and looking for the eternal rewards of righteousness. And such as they were we are or may be. Looking down on our lives, they may seem to be wholly human things, full of human cares, human toils, and human associations. But learn to, look aright, and then, though our world-sphere may seem to be insignificant, we are really occupying the places of the old heroes, and doing the work of the old giants. We are spiritual men, wrestling with human circumstances, and forcing them to yield us spiritual strength, spiritual riches.

I. **Christian life, in all its aspects, presents to us sin as a fact.**—St. Paul says, as an unfolding of private and

personal experience that somewhat surprises us: "For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do. . . . I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. vii. 15, 21-23). We can sympathise with him. It is the fact, that conscious evil is intimately connected with all the expressions and associations of the Christian life. 1. The field of Christian thought. The conceptions, imaginations, desires, of Christian thinking. Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"? There is no side of the Christian life in which the subtlety of sin is so painful and oppressive. Even in the house of God we cannot keep our thoughts free from that which is unsuitable and disturbing. 2. The Christian's bodily nature. Desires, dispositions, passions, tempers, lusts, are closely related to bodily conditions, and the sincere man is conscious that they are not always kept under hand, subject to authority. There are indulgences of bodily evil which do not come forth to public view, or bring us into the condemnation of even social law. In even the outer relations of life evil is always near, in forms of omission or of commission. There are falterings in honesty, in truth, in long-suffering, in faithfulness, in speech, and in duty. He must be a very bold man, and withal a very foolish one, who thinks he can read his life in the light of the spiritual and holy laws of God, and can say, "All these have I kept from my youth up." Sin is not only an existing thing; it exists in activity; it is ever moving and working as an opposing force. The "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; in it is a world of undeveloped evil capacity. Out of the heart proceedeth all kinds of evil. It is not properly *sin* that all these evil things should be in our hearts. Sin is really something done, something wrong cherished, something bad that is sought after. The sadness of sin lies in this—that it exists in activity; the evils in our hearts are always proceeding forth, coming out. St. Paul speaks of the "*motions* of sins in our members." It would have mattered little if they had kept still. It was imperilling, it was humiliating, that, serpent-like, they writhed and twisted, and strove to lift up the head and thrust forth a deadly sting. He speaks of evil as warring within him. He had not cared, if it had only sheathed sword, and lain still; but it was perpetually harnessed, sallying forth, and watching for every opportunity of striking a deadly blow. We need to face this fact—the evil in us is evil in activity, in an activity of opposition to the work of grace in our souls. It is a masked thief, actively engaged in stealing our peace; a masked slanderer, trying to make us think ill of our God; a masked serpent, watching to thrust out a sting, and fill our natures with the poison of hell; and a masked murderer, who would, if he could, destroy both body and soul.

II. **The Christian life in us is a Divine force, also existing in activity, and conflicting with sin up to the measure of blood.**—St. Paul says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That gives the true idea of Christian life. It is "Christ living in us." It is the power of God dwelling in us, so as to be the main-spring, the motive-power, the controlling principle, of our life. As truly as the soul possesses the body and uses its faculties, so truly does God possess the soul and express Himself in all the powers and workings of the soul. Evil is near to us, closely associated with every aspect of the religious life; but this new thing, this vital force, this power of the Divine, is nearer, is in closer relations, is truly ours. However the evil may *get in* to us, it is still an outside thing.

It is a parasite on the outside of the tree: this Divine life is the very sap which flows in the tree itself. The parasite may cling very closely, it may even pierce the bark, but it can never be more than an outside thing; while every duct and vessel of the tree is filled with this flowing life of God. Being the Divine Spirit, it must be active. We cannot think of God otherwise than as ever working. And it is active, we may be sure, to mould character, to settle right dispositions, to influence and tone human relationships, to recover from human failings, to battle with spiritual foes. The activity of the Christ-life will be seen in opposition to that evil which comes so close, puts on so many forms, and stands in such constant antagonism to everything that is good and God-like. Wherever there is active evil there is an opposing active good. Wherever there are microbes there are also phagocytes. Every man's life is the scene of a twofold conflict. Each of these represents the other. In the physical sphere there is a perpetual struggle between disease and health, death and life. Every breath of air we breathe, every measure of food we eat, has poisonous matter with it, and may breed disease. Our vital force is constantly trying to eliminate the poison. So in the sphere of morals. In our spirit is present, active evil, only kept down by the unceasing activity of the new life in Christ. Our text gives the measure up to which God expects this conflict to go. "Resisting unto blood." There must be this striving against sin, even at the peril of expending life itself in the striving. As the martyr stands for the truth, and resists evil, up to the very sacrifice of his life, so must every Christian man expect, and even desire, to stand for purity, for truth, for God, resisting all the forms of evil that may assail him, even up to the measure of the sacrifice of life itself. In the old days of chivalry, when tournaments were held, and knights, clad in armour, met within the lists to prove their prowess, and young squires fought to win their knightly spurs, the struggle was not usually for life: whoever was unhorsed was reckoned to be vanquished. But if there was family feud, and deadly hatred filled the mind of the combatant, he would go up and touch his foeman's shield with the point of his lance. That meant war to the death. In that case there must be "resisting unto blood"—the life of one or the other of those combatants must stream forth upon those lists. Such is the conflict of evil and good within the Christian. It is an irreconcilable feud; no play of blunted spears. When a man becomes a Christian, he virtually goes up to strike with the lance-point the shield of his foe, and there must be no putting spear in rest, no sheathing of the sword, until the foe is vanquished, and the victory of righteousness is won. This is the standard of the Christian conflict; but in us the conflict too often falls below the standard. God, indeed, does not often call for the extreme self-sacrifice. Within this limit, how real is our battle with sin? How much has it cost us to resist sin, taking form as (1) weaknesses of Christian character; (2) neglect of Christian duties; (3) besetting sins; (4) social and business errors and failings? Unto blood? So far from our life-struggle reaching unto blood, there is a much smaller test which we cannot bear to have applied to us. It has not reached to the imperilling of a limb. What passion, like a hand, has been resolutely cut off, and cast away? What sinful appetite, like a right eye, has been determinedly plucked out, and cast away? What questionable business habit which brought money in, what comfortableness which led to the neglect of Christian ordinances, has, like a foot, been cut off, and cast away? Would we gain the full victory? Then must we keep "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

Ver. 5. *Men's Persecutions as God's Chastenings.*—"The chastening of the

Lord." This expression might seem to be especially suited to the distresses that come by disease, calamity, failure, pain, bereavement—things in which man's action is not evident, but God's providential workings are very manifest. It is, however, singular and suggestive that the writer has so distinctly in mind the *persecutions* which the Jewish Christians were then suffering, and the strain which those persecutions were putting on their loyalty to Christ. Even those persecutions he would have them think of as God's chastisements—things which God was graciously using for the carrying out of His disciplinary work. Illustration may be taken from the nation of Israel. They were subject to oppression and persecution from many outside foes—Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Syrian, Roman; but those foes could never be other than instruments in the hands of Jehovah, for the disciplinary work needed by His people. The manifest *human* element in outward persecutions makes it difficult to realise the *Divine* element in them. If God is in them, and working His work by means of them, then of these things we may be sure: 1. They are held within strict limitations. 2. The schemes of men in arranging them have no security of being carried out. 3. We are not left alone in the enduring of them. 4. Instead of injuring us, they can only do us the good God has assigned for them to do.

Vers. 7, 8. *The Fatherliness of the Heavenly Father.*—We are permitted to use our earthly paternal relations in the endeavour to understand the paternal relations of God. But this is often a difficulty to devout souls, who hesitate to compare the heavenly Father with imperfect earthly fathers. It may be helpful, therefore, to present and to illustrate this point. There is a perfect fatherliness conceivable. If we could put together the many forms of fatherliness which have been presented by unusually good fathers, we should have a satisfactory apprehension of it. *That* fatherliness can but be incompletely represented in any one human father; but *that* fatherliness—ideal fatherliness—is found in the relations of God with us.

Ver. 7. *Life an Education.*—God's purpose in placing us in this world is not chiefly that He may put us to the proof, but that He may educe and train our faculties and gifts, and make the best of us, whatever our natural virtues or failures. This is the proof of Scripture, and of the teachings of experience. Life is an education.

I. **God educates us by means of our physical needs.**—We alone, of all God's creatures, are sent into this world unprovided with any of those things which are necessary to the support of physical life. God has not made our task easy. He does not mean that work shall be mechanical, but that it shall tax our ingenuity, and bring out our mental powers to the uttermost. Relatively, too, we are one of the weakest of living beings. We must work. That is the law of life. It strengthens the mind, produces patience, endurance, forethought, courage. Thus is God educating us.

II. **God educates us by means of our mental needs.**—He has implanted in nature that which awakens our curiosity, and He has implanted in us a hunger and thirst after knowledge and truth, and the result is education. There is in us all a love of the beautiful. Our hearts go out after these things in nature. They have a strange power to make us think.

III. **God educates us by the sorrows and trials of life.**—The lower animals are almost exempt from suffering. "Life to them is a maximum of enjoyment, with the minimum of suffering." Man is born to trouble. All life is leavened with pain, forebodings, vain regrets, unsatisfied longings. Why? Because "God dealeth with you as with sons." "Mystery of pain." The saintliest of men are those who have suffered the most. It be-

hoved even the great Captain of our salvation to be made perfect through suffering.

IV. **God educates us by our spiritual needs.**—Our greatest want is to know God. All feel the need of propitiation and reconciliation. Just as nature satisfies mind, so the Bible satisfies spiritual needs. 1. *The text throws light on the mystery of the present.* We are often puzzled by the question, "What will become of the heathen?" If life is only a probation, I can show no light; but if life is an education, then this earth is only the lowest room in God's school; and in other spheres and at other times the education which circumstances thwarted and hindered here can be carried on under happier circumstances. 2. *It throws light on the mystery of the future.* Here is a powerful argument for a future life. Our education here is at best but in its initial stage when death removes us. Our education here is only the learning of the alphabet. In our Father's house are many mansions, and in one of these our education will be continued.—*Angus M. Mackay, B.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—17.

Vers. 9-11. *The Father of Spirits.*—The contrast here presented between our earthly father and our heavenly Father, and the arguments for the superior claims of our heavenly Father, are based upon a distinction which needs to be more fully recognised. Our earthly father is father of the body and the animal life that we *have*; our heavenly Father is Father of the souls that we *are*. The natural relations illustrate the spiritual, but the spiritual are altogether higher than the natural.

I. **We recognise authority in the natural relation** (ver. 9).—That sense of parental authority is the basis of moral character. It associates right and wrong with the will of a person, and prepares us to see absolute right and wrong as the *will of God.* It is to rise into the higher plane of being to recognise the authority of God in the spiritual relation.

II. **We yield to the natural authority, even though we know it is imperfect** (ver. 10).—The sense of fatherly unwisdom comes to the son. His judgment does not go with his father's. He is keen enough to see that the father is serving his own ends, rather than doing the best for him; and, nevertheless, the loyal and good son yields to his father, does what he wishes, submits himself in obedience. How much more then should the submission and obedience be offered when the Father's wisdom and judgment and motive are absolutely unquestionable, and the child knows that the fatherly dealings are altogether *for his profit?*

III. **When there is full trust in the natural relation, things painful can easily be borne.**—This may be illustrated by things required to be done or borne in times of illness. The assurance that parental love aims at restored health and strength enables the child to endure. And in the higher, spiritual relation we may be so sure that our heavenly Father is ever working to produce the "peaceable fruits of righteousness in us," that we may find it easy to bear chastening which, "for the present, is not joyous, but grievous."

Vers. 12-17. *Christian Ways of helping One Another.*—It is evident that the writer had the passage from Isaiah (chap. xxxiii. 3) in mind. Four ways of mutually helping under the Christian strain are here indicated.

I. **By considerateness for the weak.**—Lit. "Straighten out the relaxed hands and the palsied knees" (ver. 12). Make one effort to invigorate the flaccid muscles which should be so tense in the struggle in which you are engaged.

This, however, unduly confines the advice to the Christian's work *upon himself*. It seems better to refer the words to the way in which the strong ones in a Church can bear the infirmities of the weak. In the Christian chain there always are *weak links*. They may be a peril. They should be an anxiety. They can be strengthened. That is the work of the experienced and strong-principled.

II. **By personal example.**—"Make straight paths for your feet" (ver. 13). Let those about you see you "walking worthily of the vocation wherewith you are called." Every steadfast Christian is a power; every beautiful Christian is an inspiration. Integrity helps all who watch it.

III. **By wise ordering of relationships.**—"Follow peace with all men" (ver. 14). That is, shape your conduct, meet your obligations, and show a graciousness in all the daily associations of your life: they shall disarm your foes, and make peaceful all your human relations. "Blessed are the peace-makers." And those who follow after holiness always find that holiness makes for peace.

IV. **By anxious watchfulness and resolute dealings with the beginnings of evil.**—"Looking carefully" (vers. 15-17). The care concerns things and persons. 1. *Things.* "Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." Things include opinions, teachings, attractions of worldly pleasure, neglects of duty, self-indulgences, etc. 2. *Persons.* "Lest there be any profane persons." Persons are always more mischievous than things, because there is life, and activity, and power of influence in them. It is the person whose word, example, or influence is *morally* mischievous against whom the writer inveighs.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 10. *Different Principles in the Chastening of Sons.*—R.V. "Chastened us as seemed good to them." It is an indication of the thoughtful observation and intelligent insight of this writer, that he discerns the weakness usually attaching to the discipline of earthly parents. It is the expression of the father's ideas and wishes, rather than a careful adaptation of method and rule to meet the differing dispositions of the children. So often the family rules are applied without modification, and the maintenance of the parental authority is more cared for than the moral well-being of a particular child. It has also to be said, that the yet graver mistake made by human parents is punishing when in a temper, and making the chastisement represent the wounded personal feeling, rather than the care for the child's good. On these sides of parental weakness there can only be *contrast* between man and God. We may never think of the heavenly Father as losing His self-control under any aggravation of His sons. And we may think of Him as so concerned for the individual well-being of each son as to adapt the outworking of His parental principles so as to secure the "profit," the moral and spiritual good, of each. Restlessness of sons under the weak fatherhoods of earth may be reasonable. The restfulness of sons under the strong, wise, gracious fatherhood of God should be expected.

Ver. 11. *Grievous Now, Joyous By-and-By.*—It seems to be an ever-working law of life for moral beings that joy shall not come first—that joy shall always be a consummation, an issue, of something which, in one form or another, involves struggle, self-restraint, "strain and stress." Things can only gain moral character out of conflict. The moral life is recognising the good and the evil, with inclination to choose the evil, and judgment, based on knowledge, approving the good; and then a conflict resulting in following the

judgment, and not the inclination. That struggle must come first; it is always grievous; but triumph brings joy.

The Happy Fruit of Righteousness. —εἰρηνικός is that which bestows happiness or produces it. This corresponds with the writer's design, who means to say that afflictions, rightly improved, will be productive of *fruit that will confer happiness*, such fruit as *righteousness* always produces.—*Moses Stuart.*

The Purpose of Affliction relieves the Pain of Affliction.—"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." That may be true as a fact of observation, but we must never think it be true as a matter of Divine appointment. If we could clear away all the troubles which men bring upon themselves, there would be very little, if any, trouble left in the world to account for. Concerning earthly trouble we may say, Man made it, by disturbing the Divine order in His wilfulness; but God overrules it, takes the evil thing up into His service, and works out a surprising benediction—a benediction that could not be wrought in any other way—by means of it. But the use which God makes of it must never be allowed to blind our eyes to the evil of it. Trouble is trouble, though we may be lifted up, by our confidence in the fatherliness of God, to call it chastisement and correction. But though man is the cause of all, or almost all, the trouble under which this fair earth of ours groans continually, we have the perplexing fact to deal with, that those who suffer are by no means always those who sin; and it is not easy for us to discern why those who suffer need the chastening. The tower in Siloam falls in a way that men call accidental, but those who were crushed to death were not sinners above all who dwelt in Jerusalem. The Judæan Christians suffered bitter persecutions at the hands of Jewish brethren and heathen neighbours, but the troubles were not brought upon them through their evil-doing, but through their well-doing. See these things standing on the level with them, and they are hopelessly perplexing, and it is easy for us to say, There either is no God, or He is a very inefficient one. This kind of thought has troubled the people of God from the times of Job and Asaph, and led many to make shipwreck of faith. The writer of this epistle does not propose to explain to the Hebrew Christians the meaning of their troubles and persecutions from the level. He tries to lift them up above, so that they may look down upon them, see how they are being overruled, and what they are working towards. On the level you can only see the things that are close to you; up above you can see other things, you can form some idea of the relations of things, and begin to trace how things work together. Up above we can begin to discover working principles, and Divine purposes and meanings. But precisely our difficulty is the difficulty of getting and keeping up above. If we follow the lead of the writer of this epistle, we shall find that the best way is to fill our minds and hearts full of the glory of the Lord Jesus; the marvellous wisdom and grace of His mission; the moral life that He quickens; and the power of His abiding presence in the world as its Redeemer, not only from sin, but also from all the woes that sin has brought in its train. Enter into the mind of Christ, and you will rise above the level of earthly troubles; and looking down upon life as He looks, you will see a great moral purpose being outwrought: the world is being kept, and afflictions are the moral salt that is keeping it; the world is being cleansed, and human troubles are the refiner's fires and the fuller's soap, that are doing the cleansing work. Just this seems to be expressed in our text, which the R.V. gives in a somewhat sharper form: "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth

peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Mr. Spurgeon has a clever illustration of the point of this text. There is a little plant, small and stunted, growing under the shade of a broad-spreading oak, and this little plant values the shade that covers it, and greatly does it esteem the quiet rest which its noble friend affords. Once upon a time there comes along the woodman, and with his sharp axe he fells the oak. The plant weeps and cries, "My shelter is gone, every rough wind will blow upon me!" "No," says the angel of the flower, "now will the sun get at thee, now will the shower fall on thee in more copious abundance than before, now thy stunted form shall spring up into loveliness, and thy flower, which could never have expanded itself to perfection, shall now laugh in the sunshine, and men shall say, How greatly hath this plant increased, how glorious hath become its beauty through the removal of that which was its shade and delight!" This is the truth now presented to us—the purpose of affliction relieves the pain of affliction.

I. **Affliction passing over us is hard to bear.**—The heap of wheat as it is brought in from the fields, and spread out all over the threshing-floor, cannot but feel it hard when the heavy threshing-roller, with its cutting teeth, is drawn backward and forward over it. That tribulum-work, that tribulation, cannot be joyous, but grievous. But presently it appears what good work has been done by the severe discipline: the husks have been split, and have fallen away from the grain; and it only needs now the winnowing fan to secure the pure corn for the food of man. In every human life there is a mission for the threshing-roller of afflictive discipline. Human trouble takes on a great variety of forms, but it never takes any that are easy to bear at the time. It is in the very nature of trouble that it must be pressure, strain, distress. It would not have its ministry in character if it were not. It is easy to classify the afflictions that befall humanity. They take form as suffering, as sorrowing, as sinning. 1. The form of suffering. Suffering, pure and simple, without the element of sin embittering it, is part of the economy of nature; man only shares it in common with the creature, and we need to speak cautiously and carefully concerning it when we speak of it as evil. It would be possible to show that even important animal qualities, and much more moral qualities, can only be wrought by simple suffering. At once it will come to mind that the motherliness of motherhood, both in the creatures and in humanity, follows upon, and can only follow upon, the suffering of the birth-time. Think closely, and it will soon appear, that moral character can never be made anywhere, save by the agency of suffering. Of Christ it is said, "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." We must therefore speak thoughtfully and wisely on this matter. But this is certainly true, and always true—suffering is hard to bear. Personal suffering, taking shape as sickness, frailty, pain, always is. Disease comes in so many painful and repulsive forms. It comes at what seem such unfitting times. It brings in with it such a trail of other woes. It breaks into the enterprise of life, disturbing and imperilling our business relations. It often wholly upsets the plan of our life, and leaves us, when convalescent, to battle again for lost position. It brings strain and stress on those whom we love more than we love ourselves. Hezekiah is the type of all sick folk in his experience of the hardness of his lot: put aside, in pain and helplessness, when life's schemes were just working out well, but nothing seemed really accomplished. It was hard to be cut off in the midst of his days. It is hard to be sick for a while; it is hard to be frail and weak all life long. While the cloud hangs low over us, we can but walk in the darkness, and feel depressed by it. No personal suffering for the

present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. It has to feel grievous; it is just its ministry to make us feel burdened and distressed. Do not be surprised that you find your frailty hard to bear: it is precisely what you ought to find it and feel it. 2. The form of sorrowing. A very large portion of human affliction is not personal, but relative, suffering. It is such affliction as David knew when he wailed over his ruined son. It is such sorrow as St. Paul knew when he feared his companion would be taken away, and he would have "sorrow upon sorrow." It is such sorrow as our Divine Lord felt when He stood by the tomb of His friend Lazarus, with the heart-broken sisters beside Him. It is the sympathetic entering into the sorrows of others which brings their burdens to lie on our hearts. And the sympathy is keen according to our dispositions. There are some who can pass amid the suffering with a chilly self-control, a calmness that keeps them from undue distress; but there are many who, in the quickness and keenness of their sympathy, sorrow unduly, suffer more than the actual sufferers. Perhaps many of us can see, in looking back over our lives, that we have known more affliction through sympathy than through personal suffering. Maybe we have had to deal with great sufferers, or to come helpfully near to those who have been in overwhelming distress; and the strain for us has almost been overstrain. And sometimes our utter helplessness, our inability to meet occasions, the misery of having to stand by with folded hands while the great billows of woe have rolled over our beloved, has been overwhelming woe for us. Even public distress may try us greatly. What do the clergy feel when they bury the bread-winners, and the mothers for whose love and tending the children will lift a life-long wail? Sometimes one is disposed to say that the burdens of sympathetic sorrowing are far heavier than the burdens of personal suffering. How much is suggested when it is said of our great High Priest, that He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"! 3. The form of sinning. The bitterness of suffering, to us moral beings, lies in our conviction of its close association with sin. But this is no overwhelming distress while we keep to the general fact, that the Divine order has been disturbed by human wilfulness, and the penalties fall upon the whole race, and, vicariously, fall heavy on some members of it. The weight of the woe comes when we are distinctly able to associate personal sin with personal sufferings. What revelations the doctor could make to us if he would be open and true in dealing with us! We go with him round the wards of the hospital, and he *could* say—There, that miserable sufferer is reaping the drink-seed that he sowed; that wreck of humanity on whom you can hardly bear to look is ending in unspeakable wretchedness a life of vice. When that association of sin and suffering comes close into our spheres, when *our* prodigal comes home to die, *our* wilful girl drags life-ruin upon herself, then we have sorrow upon sorrow—sorrow in which is the bitterness of death. That sorrow is hardest of all to bear. While passing over us it is altogether grievous. And you will have found in your experience, that it is very hard to deal with sufferers when you know that they are sinners, and when the sufferings take offensive and repulsive forms, as they always do when they come directly out of sin. It seems so wonderful that our Divine Lord could be so sympathetic with outcasts and sinners, and could deal so graciously with those who were possessed with the devil of uncleanness. But it is the Christliness of Christ that He could take the sin with the suffering, and help at once the sinner and the sufferer. They let a sufferer down through the roof, right in front of Him. Jesus looked upon him, and saw a sinner. But He did not therefore despise him. He only saw the severest feature of his need, the root of all the mischief, and He dealt first with that. It is our Christ-

likeness if we can bear the suffering that comes out of sin, though that kind of affliction is hardest of all to bear. Whatever form our human troubles take, our text—the first half of it—certainly is true: "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." While passing over us it is hard to bear.

II. **Affliction passed by is good to remember.**—The psalmist must have felt that it was when he said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now will I keep Thy word." Affliction had done something for him, and something so good that he liked to think about it. It is well to remind ourselves of the temporary character of all human suffering and affliction. It is always "a light affliction, and but for a moment." It is always a cloud, light or dark, high or low, that is passing on, and drops its rains upon us as it passes. We always have a chance of standing under a clear sky, watching our clouds sail away to the west. We have had our troubles, but they never stayed. They came and went. And when they were gone right past, somehow we began a little to understand them; and the farther they receded into the distance, the more clearly we saw how they—strange puzzle-pieces though they were—fitted into the plan of infinite Wisdom. They bore to us a mission. They carried out their mission. They left us with the blessing of their mission. What have the suffering and sorrowing times of our lives done for us? Perhaps it would be wiser not to try and read the answer by going over the scenes of our own lives. We can never be quite sure of being just to ourselves. It is better to see what suffering did for Jesus. There is so much in that sentence, "Made perfect through suffering." But we may also each one of us think of some saintly soul who has come, like the silver, through a seven-times refining. It is quite safe for us to trace in them what sublime moral and spiritual agencies these our human afflictions prove to be. We watch them, and see "what almighty grace can do," and then we hope that almighty grace is doing it for us. Only a word or two can be given to this point, but they may suffice to guide thought along helpful and comforting lines. We can sometimes see—1. How afflictions have loosened the grip of the world upon the soul. What an enslaving power things seen and temporal have! What would they have if God did not break in upon them with His afflictive dispensations? The claims and rush of life keep our souls looking down and around. The visions and quietness of sorrow-times lift our souls up and away. The other life is far off, and the world is near, while health and energy are with us. The other life comes near, and the world-interests recede, when God puts us into desert places of sickness and trouble. It is said that we never really see the full splendour of God's sky in the smoky towns. Go out into the broad desert spaces, away from the world, and the stars fairly glitter, and the blue is unspeakably beautiful. Can we not look back and see how trials that were hard to bear loosened our hold of life a little? And what is the mystery of all life save this—gradually getting loosened from the world, and getting soul-anchored in the city of habitations, whose builder and maker is God? It is good to remember how God has been loosening our world-grip, and teaching our hearts to say, "This is not our rest." 2. We can see how afflictions have tightened our trust in God. Have you held a child's hand in a first railway journey. It just lay quietly in yours, for the child felt all safe with father; but then the train rushed screaming into the dark tunnel, and the child's grip tightened, and held tight till long after the calming sunshine had come back again. That is the way it is with us and the Father-God. When the strain-times of life come, we grip His hand hard. And after the strain-times of life are passed by, we love to remember how

our Father's hand clasped ours in the time of fear, and thrilled our souls with the feeling of uttermost safety. We should never be trusting God as we are trusting Him to-day, if it were not for those experiences of sorrow and trouble which are passed and gone long since. The writer of this epistle has a very suggestive term for the issues of Divinely sent afflictions. He calls them the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," or "it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." Why does he call it "peaceable fruit"? I think he must have had this in mind: When our life-troubles first come to us, the trouble in the trouble is the resistance of our wills, the warfare that we make over submission and obedience. But as we learn the Christ-lessons of afflictions, we gain the Christ-mastery over self-will, and then gradually, as afflictions come, there is little or no resistance, little or no warfare. Our souls gradually gain the peace of righteousness, the peace of right-mindedness, that can quietly say, facing each new woe—

> "Is this Thy will, good Lord?
> Thy servant weeps no more."

"To them that have been exercised thereby." You have had many a trouble; but have you been "exercised thereby"? Has your soul-life of love and submission and trust been exercised thereby? Can you gratefully recognise what God has done for you through times of strain and stress? Let us sit down beside St. Paul, and feel that he is writing for us, as truly as for himself, when he says—"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Ver. 13. *The Removal of Hindrances.*—There are two ways of training children, and two ways of exerting our influence in the associations of life: 1. We may directly mould the child-mind, habits, and life to a pattern which we ourselves form. 2. We may watchfully and carefully take out of the child's way everything that would *hinder* the child from naturally and healthily developing itself. This is the kind of influence which can be so wisely and helpfully exercised in the Church, and in the ordinary associations of life.

Ver. 14. *The Christian's Race and Goal.*—The idea running through this chapter is that this world is the Christian's training for heaven. Our Christian course is compared to a race, which implies our effort; not to a voyage, in which we are borne by the effort of others. The images employed in Scripture imply the most sustained effort. A race which is to be run; a narrow path by which many shall seek to enter into life, and those only who strive shall enter; a battle to be won, which requires the whole armour of God, and this we are invited to put on. How far has the reception of the good news that "Christ died for all" really had the effect of leading men to live "not unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again"? How, then, are we to run this race that is set before us? The answer is, "Looking unto Jesus." He is our pattern. Christian holiness is a growing conformity to the image of Christ. He saves both from the guilt and from the power of sin—gives purity as well as pardon. He has brought in everlasting righteousness.—*Robert Barclay.*

Peaceableness and Purity.—The connection between "peace" and "holiness" may profitably be thought out. 1. Peace as a state and condition, peace as an atmosphere, is the surrounding in which Christian holiness can alone thrive. Other good things

may thrive in time of war: holiness cannot. There is a *bloom* on it which cannot stay unless the air is still. 2. But there is a more precise point in the text. It is this—the man who seeks peace, who "follows after peace," is the man who will be sure to seek also holiness, and follow after purity. Let any one make for peace, keep peace, that man will be sure to make things clean, and keep things clean. He knows that the one thing that spoils peace is self-indulgence and sin.

The Peaceful Temper.—Christianity and worldly wisdom meet in commending the duty of this text. Wise advice is, Beware of getting into quarrels with people. The reason for "following peace" which worldly prudence suggests is the quietness and happiness of life, which are interfered with by relations of enmity to others. The reason which religion gives is the duty of brotherly love, of which the peaceful disposition is a part. The frequency of the advice indicates that there is some strong prevailing tendency in human nature to which it is opposed. What can that tendency be? Some rush into quarrels from simple violence and impetuosity of temper, which prevents their examining the merits of a case, and permits them to see nothing but what favours their own side. And there is the malignant temper, which fastens vindictively upon particular persons. Men of this character pursue a grudge unceasingly, and never forget or forgive. There are also many persons who can never be neutral, or support a middle state of mind. If they do not positively like others, they will see some reason for disliking them; they will be irritable if they are not pleased; they will be enemies if they are not friends. This disposition has the necessary result of placing them in a kind of enmity towards numbers of persons to whom there is not the slightest real reason for feeling it. It is simply irksome to them to maintain an attitude of indifference and neutrality. The relation of peace towards others is exactly that which the temper described has such a difficulty in adopting. A state of peace is precisely this middle state to which such objection is made. It is not a state of active love and affection; nor is it a state that admits of any ill-feeling; but it lies between the two, comprehending all kindly intentions, forbidding the least wish for another's injury, avoiding, as much as possible, dispute and occasion of offence, consulting order, quiet, and contentment, but not arriving at more than this. Peace implies the entire absence of positive ill-will. The apostle then says that this is our proper relation toward all men. More than this applies to some, but as much as this applies to all. Be in fellowship with all men, so far as to have nothing wrong in your relation to them—nothing to disunite. Is any other principle of conduct and kind of temper indeed *fit* for this world in which we live? There are so many obstacles to mutual understanding in this world, and so very thin a veil is enough to hide people from each other, that any other line is hopeless. Two reasons have much to do in promoting the temper to which we are referring: 1. It is very irksome to keep watch over ourselves, and to repel the intrusion of hostile thoughts by the simple resistance of conscience, when we are not assisted by any strong current of natural feeling in doing so. 2. The hostile classes of relation are evidently accompanied by their own pleasures in many temperaments. There is a kind of interest which people take in their own grievances, their own grudges, their own causes of offence at various people, their own discords and animosities, which occupies their thought, it must candidly be said, in a manner not disagreeable to themselves. They enjoy these states of mind towards others in their own way. It is with the entire knowledge of these weaknesses and frailties of human nature, and these elements of disturbance, even in minds of average goodness, that

St. Paul said, "Follow peace with all men." It is not without design that the two things "peace" and "holiness" were connected together by the apostle. A life of enmities is greatly in opposition to growth in holiness. All religious habits and duties—prayer, charity, mercy—are formed and matured when the man is in a state of peace with others, when he is not agitated by small selfish excitements and interests, which divert him from himself and his own path of duty, but can think of himself what he ought to do and where he is going.—*J. B. Mozley, D.D.*

Holiness bringing Sight of God.—1. Seeing God is, to all Scripture writers, the very highest conception of bliss. Such a conception attests their superiority to ordinary men. What a sublime conception it is! It really means full, satisfying, up to capacity, knowledge of God. Present knowledge is not restful; the knowledge which comes by *faith* is. The future knowledge of God may be called "seeing," in the sense of restful, satisfying, sure knowledge, but not in the sense of being absolutely complete. He must be God who can fully see God. 2. Holiness is, for all Scripture writers, the necessary condition of bliss. Here also is a conception beyond the reach of ordinary men. Holiness is an idea wholly limited to religion. The ordinary man reaches to conceive of goodness according to the standard of the Golden Rule. The religious man reaches to conceive of goodness as "godliness," according to the standard of his spiritual apprehension of God. With that altogether higher conception all his life becomes higher-toned. See what belongs to the Scriptural idea of holiness. (1) Sincerity—no guile. (2) Right-principled. (3) Right-hearted. (4) Separated from. (5) Consecrated to. (6) Sanctified and sanctifying; white and whitening. 3. How does holiness become the condition of seeing God? (1) Holiness is the trained vision that alone gives perfect sight. (2) Holiness fully seen and apprehended is God. It is inseparable from Him. He is the embodiment of it to us. Like alone sees like. The holy alone can see the Holy One. But as our apprehension of holiness grows, we lift it more and more away into the future. It seems to be something attainable in the by-and-by alone. Then there is the danger of our becoming content with an imperfect Christian life *now*. It should therefore be duly impressed upon us that the Scripture sets holiness before us as *present*, and *practical*, and *attainable*. Absolute perfection is unattainable anywhere, in any world, by a dependent creature; but high measures of holiness are attainable by us, though we are creatures—attainable, if we will live the life of faith.

Vers. 15, 16. *The Perils of Churches.*—Our Lord made it quite clear that the sincere and insincere would be blended in His earthly Church; that no strict attempts could ever be wisely made to separate them; and that the presence of the insincere would have a disciplinary influence on the sincere. Dr. A. B. Bruce says: "In the parables of the tares and the drag-net, especially in the former, we are warned that in the future history of the kingdom there will appear a revolting and unnatural mixture of good and bad men, Christians and anti-Christians, children of the heavenly Father and children of Satan. . . . Christ deliberately recommends patience as the least of two evils, the other being the uprooting of wheat along with tares in headlong zeal to get rid of the noxious crop [of tares]; which implies a close inter-relationship between the two kinds of growths that may well seem an additional calamity." St. Paul, in his address to the elders of Ephesus, pointed out the main sources of peril for Christian Churches. "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking per-

verse things, to draw away the disciples after them." It is a point of importance to see that the supreme peril of any Church never comes with its circumstances, but always from the character and conduct of its members. The Church's foes are traitors within the city.

I. **Peril comes from the inconsistent member.**—The man who is sincere, and has the grace of God; but fails to respond worthily to the grace; fails to order his life by the grace; fails to rise to the spiritual level to which the grace would lift him. The man who permits his life to be below the Christ-standard.

II. **Peril comes from the quarrelsome member.**—That is the "root of bitterness"—the man who makes disturbance, because nothing is ever to his mind, and somebody is always hurting his feelings. The quarrelsome man does the supreme mischief of introducing the quarrelsome spirit.

III. **Peril comes from the insincere member.**—There are those who are *in* the Church, but not *of* it. Their insincerity may be indicated in their (1) profanity; (2) in their immorality. There never can be any right sense of God when there is no cleanness, no moral self-restraint, in the life.

Ver. 16. *Selling the Birthright.*—"So Esau despised his birthright." It was done in a moment; but such moments cannot occur except as the epitome of years. There is a plant which is fabled to rush into crimson blossom once only in a hundred years; but even then all the hundred years have been causing, have been maturing, that one crimson flower. So it is with every great sin. It is but the ripened fruit of hundreds of little tendencies. Esau's guilty moment was but the expression and heritage of all his past life. It was as a youth that he had sold his birthright; it was as a man, it was forty years afterwards, that the seed of that youthful profanity set into the bitter fruit of irreparable grief. It was forty years afterwards that he stood before his aged and trembling father, and found that what he had sold for a mess of pottage was not only the birthright, but the blessing, the glory, the dominion, the prosperity, of years. Then he read his boyish sin under the terrible glare flung upon it by its consequences. It is the epitome of retribution. What was Esau's sin? He sold his birthright because he despised it; and he despised it because it was not a thing which he could see, or eat, or drink, or grasp with both hands; because it was a glory and a blessing which pertained not to the body, but to the soul. And is this sin rare? Is it not the very commonest of all sins? Is it not distinctly the sin to which every one of us is tempted? And why? Because all men have not faith; and this sin is the absence of faith, the opposite of all faith. For faith is the power to recognise the spiritual, and to trample on the carnal. Want of faith often looks like the sin of a moment, but it is the abstract of a tendency, it is the habit of a life. It is that profane self-indulgence to which an ideal blessing is as nothing compared to a momentary pleasure. What then is the birthright that each one of us has? It is the synthesis of all spiritual blessings. It is a body rightly endowed: it is a mind thrilling with bright affinities for all things beautiful and high; it is a spirit, in which are folded the wings which can soar to heaven, and hold communion with the Divine. It is life; the innocent brightness of childhood, the spring of youth, the force of manhood, the snowy and sunlit heights of age. Do men keep their birthright? Our birthright is innocence, holiness, peace with God, life, light, immortality. Where is the holiness of the liar, the schemer, the blasphemer? Where is the innocence of the drunkard? Where the peace with God of the impure? Yet there are among these crowds some who have not sold their birthright—some who, even in Sardis, have not stained their raiment; the holy, and the brave, and the merciful; the white souls who

have toiled, and fought and overcome—souls "transparent as crystal, active as fire, unselfish as the ministering spirits, sweet and tender as grace; strong, generous, and enduring, as the hearts of martyrs." But how comes it that all are not such? It is because, for one morsel of meat, they have sold their birthright. The one aim and object of all God's education of us in life is the cherishing, the preserving, the securing, of our birthright. It is in youth that the birthright is most often sold. This should be the aim of every man who would make something of his life—to keep his birthright unimpaired, not to sell it for a mess of pottage, not to sell it for the careless hour or the sensual snare. That youth is in the highest sense well educated who by God's grace passes into the battle of life strong, self-denying, pure; scorning mean pleasures, scorning vulgar comforts, scorning idle uselessness; brave to meet danger, brave to defy sin, brave to fight in the cause of God; strenuous to do and to do dare; ready to spring to the front in every good cause; not following the multitude to do evil. To be thus is to have the birthright of a man. To strengthen the higher, to control the lower, to enlist on the side of the higher every pure spiritual influence, to help you to win the tranquil mastery over yourselves—this should be your aim.

> "One there is can curb myself,
> Can roll this strangling load off me,
> Break off my yoke and set me free."

That *one* is Christ.—*Farrar.*

Profanity in the Home.—In Scripture there are few characters more profitable for study than Esau. Here is a man who came to sin by birth into it, by the sins of others as well as his own, by every-day and sordid temptations, by carelessness, and the sudden surprise of neglected passions. There is everything about Esau to engage us in the study of him. The mystery that haunts all human sin, the pity that we feel for so wronged and genial a nature, only make clear to us more fully the central want and blame of his life.

I. **Esau was sinned against from his birth.**—His father and mother were responsible for much of the character of their son. The marriage of Isaac and Rebecca began in a romance, and it ended in the sheerest vulgarity, just because, with all its grace and wonder, the fear of God was not present. Their introduction was very picturesque. The Nemesis of picturesqueness without truth is always sordidness; the Nemesis of romance without religion is always vulgarity; and vulgarity and sordidness are the prevailing notes of Isaac and Rebecca's wedded life. Throughout we see a divided house—father and elder son upon one side, mother and younger son upon the other. Of such a false and hasty mother was Esau born, and he had her haste. Sin, whatever form it assumes, always works itself out, if not in the first generation, then in the next, to violent ends. The faults that spoiled Rebecca's character were the same faults that ruined Esau's life.

II. **Esau got his "profane" character at home.**—"Profane" means "thoroughfare." A "profane" character means an open, common character, unhallowed, no guardian angel at the door, no gracious company within, no heavenly music pealing through it, no fire upon the altar, but open to his dogs and his passions, to his mother's provocations, and his brother's fatal wiles. The home was not walled in by reverence and truth, and the steadfast patience of father and mother.

III. **In the subsequent tragedy we see the climax of minor vices.**—Two habits came to their fatal head in Esau's confession and his offer to sell his birthright (see Gen. xxv. 30-34). 1. *First, his hunger; second, exaggeration.* The physical selfishness of hunger, stimulated by the mental selfishness of thinking and feeling in an exaggerated way about oneself, sprang

to fatal empire, and at their bidding the deluded man sold his birthright, his life, and his honour. There are more people cheated out of their spiritual birthrights by ordinary selfishness than by great crimes. The habit of insisting upon getting our own way in every little matter distorts the true porportion of life to our eyes. The habit of thinking in an extravagant way about oneself, how often it cheats us out of the great chances of life, and renders us unfit for life's noblest callings! Some are needed to take the lead in Church or State, for inspiration in the crowd, for God's work; but a base love of comfort, a selfish exaggertion of their impotence or weakness, a cowardly succumbing to the sorrow that should have been the flood-tide to carry them to triumph, turned them from their idea and their God-given right. 2. *The other point in the development of Esau's tragedy is this—his passion made him the prey of the first designing man he came across.* There is not a pleasure or a passion which to-day tempts any one, but there are men and women waiting to make something out of it for themselves, and to make fools of us. Let no one be deluded by either of the two great temptations to a life of pleasure—by the fancy that you are going to play the full-grown man in it, or by the fancy that you are going to enjoy a cordiality and a friendship that you will fail to find in more sober or steady circles.

IV. **Let us get back to this word "profane."**—It is the centre of the whole evil. Fence your characters; make yourselves not common. Guard against little vices. Keep the virtue of truth. Jealously guard your hearts from the vulgar world; jealously fill them with the inhabitants of the world of holiness and truth. An empty mind is the unsafest and unhallowedest thing in the world.

V. **God has provided something more for us than guardian angels: He has given us a Saviour.**—A Saviour sufficient for the world. Let Him dwell in your hearts by faith, and, like Jacob, you may be lifted from your low level to the very heights of spiritual character and genius.—*Prof. G. Adam Smith.*

Ver. 17. *Lost Opportunities.*—This verse is easily misapprehended. It is quite misused when it is made to mean that a man may at some time want to repent, and find repentance impossible. It is equally misused when it is made to mean that a man may seek forgiveness from God, and fail to gain it. All that is said is, that Isaac, having given the blessing, refused to undo what he had done.

Estimating the Value of Things Lost.—Wonderful is the *intelligence* with which we can perceive the value of anything we have lost. The collector of household treasures is cited, who in his daily walks may see in a shop-window a little bit of china, a picture, an apostle spoon, a quaint old volume, which he intends to bargain for one day when he shall have leisure; so he passes it a hundred times, indifferent as to its merits, half uncertain whether it is worth buying. But he discovers some day that it is gone; and then in a moment the doubtful shepherdess becomes the rarest old china, the dirty-looking bit of landscape an undeniable Crome, the battered silver spoon an unquestionable antique, the quaintly bound book a choice Elzevir. "The thing is lost; and we regret it for all that it might have been, as well as for all that it was, and there are no bounds to the extravagance we would commit to regain the chance of possessing it." This is but the subjunctive or potential mood of what is simply but largely indicative in Scott's sufficiently commonplace couplet—

> "Those who such simple joys have known
> Are taught to prize them when they're gone."
>
> *Francis Jacox.*

Blessings Estimated when they have Vanished.—Possession drowns, or at

least mightily cools, contentment. Want teaches us the worth of things more truly. How sweet a thing seems liberty to one immured in a dungeon! How dear a jewel is health to him who is in sickness! I have known many who have loved their dead friends better than ever they esteemed them in their lifetime. . . . When we have lost a benefit, the mind has time to reflect on its several advantages, which she then finds to be many more than she was aware of while in possession of it. It is a true remark, that blessings appear not till they have vanished.—*Owen Feltham.*

Belated Appreciation of Blessings Past.—Coming home faint from the field, Esau, that cunning hunter and man of the woods, preferred to his birthright a meal of Jacob's bread and pottage of lentils. Behold, he was a-hungered; felt even at the point to die of hunger: what profit should that birthright do to him? Let it go. And it went. Thus Esau despised his birthright. Time passes; and we see the red hunter, even Edom, plying his aged father with savoury meat, that Isaac may eat of his son's venison, and bless his elder-born, before he die. But the blessing is forestalled. The subtle purchaser of the birthright is the fraudulent possessor of the blessing. In vain, for all too late, is Esau's great and exceeding bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" The blessing is gone, like the birthright. For one morsel of meat was the birthright bartered. And he who stigmatises the barterer as a "profane person" tells us that we know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance—τόπον μετανοίας: by some of our best commentators referred to Isaac, who could not be induced to alter his decision, though the disinherited suppliant sought it carefully with tears. A morsel of meat was worth more than the birthright till the birthright was gone. Gone, the valuation of it was declared with streaming eyes and an exceeding bitter cry, with, as it were, groanings that could not be uttered—a flood of unavailing tears, shed all the more because shed in vain. And such is the way of the world.—*Francis Jacox.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18—21.

Emblems of the Older Revelation.—The rhetorical character of this passage is very marked, and it should be treated as we properly treat rhetorical work. It is unreasonable to press for a precise meaning and a logical relation in the terms of a rhetorical passage. *Farrar* says: "At the close of his arguments and exhortations the writer condenses the results of his epistle into a climax of magnificent eloquence and force, in which he shows the transcendent beauty and supremacy of the new covenant as compared with the terrors and imperfections of the old." The point which comes out most prominently is, that the old was an outward and material religion of bodily acts, relations, obediences, and ceremonies. Its character could therefore be indicated by material signs: nature-moods and nature-forces could be wisely associated with the founding of that religion, and the promulgation of that law. *Dr. Geikie* recalls to mind the sublimity of the great day of Sinai: "At last, on the morning of the third day, the peaks of the mountain were seen veiled in thick clouds, through which lightnings quivered vividly and unintermittently, as if the vast height were aflame; terrible thunders leaped from crag to crag, and reverberated in multiplied echoes, like the sound of mighty trumpets announcing the approach of God. The phenomena of thunder-storms were in all ages associated by the Hebrews, as by other early and simple races, with the Divine presence, and were

its fitting accompaniments when Jehovah now actually drew nigh. All nature was moved, and seemed to tremble before Him. The people had been led out by Moses to see a spectacle so august, but its terrors awed small and great; for as they gazed the mountain appeared to smoke like a furnace, and to reel on its foundations. But if the sight presented were august, the words which sounded above the thunders were still more so. . . . What, in comparison with a moment like this, was the whole record of the Hindoo, Egyptian, or other nations, however ancient—with all their wisdom, or their gigantic creations of temples, pyramids, and colossi? The transaction on Sinai was for all time, and for the life beyond. It laid the foundation of true morality and human dignity among mankind. It was the birth-hour of a people differing from all yet seen. The simple but profound truths of a spiritual God of whom no likeness was to be made—a Being who draws to Himself the oppressed and wretched; of the veneration to be shown to parents; of chastity; of the sacredness of human life and of property; of truth between man and man; and of the necessity of a clear conscience, were first revealed at Sinai, as a legacy for all ages." *Dean Stanley* gives us even a deeper impression of the relation in which nature stood to the old revelation: "The outward scene might indeed prepare them for what was to come. They stood in a vast sanctuary, not made with hands—a sanctuary where every outward shape of life, animal or vegetable, such as in Egypt had attracted their wonder and admiration, was withdrawn. Bare and unclothed, the mountains rose around them; their very shapes and colours were such as to carry their thoughts back to the days of primeval creation, 'from everlasting to everlasting, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made.' At last the morning broke, and every eye was fixed on the summit of the height (*Ras Sufsafeh*). Was it any earthly form, was it any distinct shape, that unveiled itself? . . . There were thunders, there were lightnings, there was the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; but on the mount itself there was a thick cloud—darkness, and clouds, and thick darkness. It was 'the secret place of thunder.' On the summit of the mountain, on the skirts of the dark cloud or within it, was Moses himself withdrawn. . . . They saw not God; and yet they were to believe that He was there. They were to make no sign or likeness of God, and yet they were to believe that He was then and always their one and only Lord." This sublime scene the writer of the paragraph before us recalls to mind; but it is the *materiality* of it all on which he dwells. These were nature-emblems of a ceremonial and outward religion.

I. **A material mountain.**—"A mount that might be touched." It had substance. It was a real mountain. It has been noticed that those who are born and dwell in mountain districts, though they feel passionately attached to their country, seldom either intellectually or poetically interest themselves in the hills. Those who visit such districts receive the mental and spiritual impressions which they are calculated to produce. And the Israelites were visitors to Sinai, to whom the mountain impressions fully came, giving thoughts of the eternity, stability, and sublimity of Him who made these everlasting hills His throne. How the mountains waken thought may be illustrated by one of R Buchanan's *Coruisken Sonnets.*

"Ghostly and livid, robed with shadow, see!
Each mighty mountain silent on its throne,
From foot to scalp one stretch of livid stone,
Without one gleam of grass or greenery.
Silent they take the immutable decree—
Darkness or sunlight come—they do not stir;
Each bare brow lifted desolately free,
Keeping the silence of a death-chamber.

Silent they watch each other until doom;
They see each other's phantoms come and go,
Yet stir not. Now the stormy hour brings gloom,
Now all things grow confused and black below,
Specific through the cloudy drift they loom,
And each accepts his individual woe.
Monarch of these is Blaabhein. On his height
The lightning and the snow sleep side by side,
Like snake and lamb; he broodeth in a white
And wintry consecration."

II. **An earthly form.**—The awful majesty of tempests in mountain districts is told by travellers. The thunders roll from hill to hill, and gather force as they roll. The might of nature-powers is overwhelmingly impressed on the soul, and man feels his utter nothingness and helplessness in their presence. And yet Elijah learned in this very region of Sinai, that the fire and tempest are but material forces, and belong to the lower ranges of Divine revelation. Those lower, earthly ranges were the only ones which the Israelites could then reach. The time for the spiritual revelations was not then fully come.

III. **A trumpet-voice.**—Which seems to mean sound without sense. The appeal to fear, rather than to love. A call to attention, an awakening to concern; but the time was not fitted for the utterance of words which could be taken into thought and heart, and made the guide and rule of life. At least the words could not then come from God Himself. His voice sounded to Israel but as the blare of some mighty trumpet, and it did but fill them with fear.

IV. **A strict injunction.**—They were to consider that mountain so entirely sacred, that they must not permit even a stray beast to overpass the boundaries. The living symbol of that sacredness of the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt, which was the very centre of their religious system. All the emblems suggested a formal, outward, material revelation and religion. And it is of the very essence of outward, material religion—the religion of forms and rites and ceremonies—that it treats men as children, and helps them to goodness *through fear*. A spiritual revelation and religion—which comes to man and spirit in the power of the Holy Spirit—alone can treat men as men, and help them to goodness by principle and trust and love. The way of "help to goodness through fear" is always called for, since in every age there are found men who are but children, and therefore must be treated as such. Sinai that may be touched, till there can be apprehension of Zion that cannot be touched.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 18, 19. *Sinai and Zion.*

I. **Christianity is a spiritual, not a material, dispensation.**

II. Though it is spiritual in its nature, **it employs material forms as adjuncts.**

III. **Sinai and Zion are only marks of progress, not final destinations.**—Jesus is the grand resting-point.

Learn—(1) that privilege is the measure of responsibility; (2) that there is no limit to progress in love and knowledge.—*Dr. J. Parker.*

Vers. 18-21. *The Gospel Church and the Jewish Church.*—Here the writer goes on to engage the professing Hebrews to perseverance in their Christian course and conflict, and not to relapse into Judaism. He shows how much the gospel Church differs from the Jewish Church, and how much it excels. We have a very particular description of the state of the Church under the Mosaic dispensation. 1. It was a grossly sensible state. Mount Sinai, on which that Church-state was constituted, was a gross, palpable place. It was very much external and earthly. 2. It was

a dark dispensation. Upon that mount there were blackness and darkness; and that Church-state was covered with dark shadows and types. 3. It was a dreadful dispensation; the Jews could not bear the terror of it. 4. It was a limited dispensation; all might not approach to that mount, but only Moses and Aaron. 5. It was a very dangerous dispensation. The mount burned with fire, and whatever man or beast touched the mount must be "stoned" or "thrust through with a dart." This was the state of the Jewish Church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hard-hearted people, to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God, to wean the people of God from that dispensation, and induce them more readily to embrace the sweet and gentle economy of the gospel Church, and adhere to it.—*Matthew Henry.*

Vers. 18-24. *The Two Mounts.*—There, on the right hand, are the flowery slopes of the mount of blessing; there, on the left, the barren, stern, thunder-riven, lightning-splintered pinnacles of the mount of cursing. Every clear note of benediction hath its low minor of imprecation from the other side. Between the two, overhung by the hopes of the one, and frowned upon and dominated by the threatenings of the other, is pitched the little camp of our human life, and the path of our pilgrimage runs in the trough of the valley between. And yet, might I not go a step further, and say that above the parted summits stretches the one overarching blue, uniting them both, and their roots deep down below the surface interlace and twine together?—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22—24.

Emblems of the Spiritual Dispensation.—These verses give the antithesis to all this scene of terror which accompanied the introduction of the ancient law. Worshippers, under the new dispensation, approach a scene of a very different nature. There should not be sought anything *material* to answer to these emblems; the suggestion of them, and explanation of them, lie wholly in the spiritual range. *Dr. Moulton* quotes a valuable and helpful passage from *Delitzsch*: "What it was to which Israel in the time of the old covenant drew nigh we have now heard. Their drawing nigh was at the same time a standing afar off; the mount of the revelation might not be approached by them; the voice of God was too terrible to be borne; and yet it was only tangible material nature in which God at once manifested and concealed Himself. The true and inner communion with God had not yet been revealed; first must the law lead to the painful consciousness that sin prevents such communion, and intensify the longing that sin may be taken out of the way. Under the new covenant, no longer is a tangible mountain the place of a Divine revelation made from afar; but heaven is thrown open, and a new super-sensuous world, in which God is enthroned, is opened to admit us—opened through the Mediator of the new covenant, accessible in virtue of His atoning blood." Sinai and Zion are contrasted in six particulars, as emblems of the respective dispensations.

I. **An immaterial mountain.**—A mountain still, because Zion as truly conserves the impressions of the eternity, stability, and sublimity of God. Zion is not the familiar mount at Jerusalem. It is the name for the heavenly abode, the spiritual abode of God.

II. **An intangible city.**—The heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem. Jerusalem which is above. The city which in his vision St. John saw descending from God. The place where are gathered all who are spiritually quickened, whether they be alive or, as we say, dead.

III. **A company of angels.**—Conceived of as spiritual beings, and therefore kin with men when men are spiritually quickened.

IV. **A Church of firstborn souls.**—"To myriads of angels, and to a festal assembly and Church of the firstborn." The reference is meant to appeal directly to personal feeling. The firstborn are those who first received Christ, and eternal life in Him. They had passed from the mortal sphere; but they formed a festal, happy company in the spiritual spheres. "Spirits of the just made perfect."

V. **A satisfying relation with God.**—"And to God the Judge of all." Intimating the absence of all fear of the Judge, seeing that the Judge is their Saviour. They can come unhesitatingly to Him.

VI. **A living and spiritual Redeemer,** whose work is a spiritual work in souls. There is no intended reference to the Church, or to any Church on earth. "It is to the living, the universal Church that the words are from age to age addressed. They describe the blessed, heavenly fellowship to which each servant of Christ now toiling on earth is joined; when he has run the race set before him, he will, through the blood of sprinkling and through Jesus the Mediator, reach the company of the just made perfect, and stand before the God of all." So constantly and so seriously are spiritual men being enticed back to material conceptions, material relations, and material religion—as Christian Jews were to formal Judaism—that it needs to be ever freshly impressed upon us that, though the *material* will ever seem to be the *real* so long as we continue imprisoned by the senses, the *spiritual* is the *real;* and this we shall fully apprehend when we are free to be the *spirits that we are*, and free to exercise the spiritual powers that we have.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 22-24. *Privileges of the Christian.*—Remember the great tenacity with which the Jews held fast to their historical faith; how, over and above pride and worldliness, there was what I might almost call a relentless tenacity in their religious convictions. Therefore apostles urged that, in accepting Christ, the Jew really gave up nothing. You do not abandon the Jewish law, the Mosaic economy, when you accept Christ. You fulfil it more perfectly than when you leave Christ out, and attempt to follow Moses. And, still better, you lose nothing. Under the old dispensation you were constrained, you were under bondage. We ask you not to abandon that in any such sense as to be recreant to its real spirit, but to accept it in the larger presentation which it has in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you shall have a thousand times more. You lose nothing, you gain everything. Do not fear to accept Christ, for it gives you all that you had before, and a thousand times more. It advances you out of the twilight, and out of the storm-clad horizon of your past faith, into the glorious illumination of a more spiritual worship, where all forms of fear and ghastly motives of terror cease, and where companionship and Divine guidance and infinite blessings await you. And ye are actually *come* to these things. It is a part of the privilege which belongs to the earthly ministration of your faith. What, then, is the privilege of the Christian? Christians are heirs of a wonderful inheritance, which is already so far dispensed, portions of which are ministered in advance, in such a way that, if they but knew it, they would be transcendently happy. 1. "Ye are come unto . . . the heavenly Jerusalem"—God's home. God takes us to His own home. We are surrounded by it. We touch it, or are touched by it. We are brought into such intimate relations, if we be true Christians, with Christ or with God, that, whether we know it

or not, the kingdom of God is within us or around us. 2. "To an innumerable company of angels." It is not that when we die we shall go where angels live, but that when we come into the new dispensation, by the true spirit of faith, we then come to the "general assembly." Angelic ministration is a part, not of the heavenly state, but of the universal condition of men. Moreover, we come into junction and relationship with everything that has been on earth worthy of remembrance, of enunciation, of celebration. All the great natures of the world are ours, if they have been saved. "The spirits," they are called, "of just men." But they are the spirits *made perfect* in their beatified condition. 3. "To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." This to the Jew meant nothing, but to the disciple meant everything. What are fitting applications of this passage?

I. **We are come by virtue of our Christian life, not to self-denial, and to pain, and to repentance, and to sorrow, and to limitation.**—A man who has been going in wrong courses must needs pass through the gate of repentance and the baptism of sorrow. But the popular impression, that to be a religious man is to enter upon a life of gloom, is a false impression. If a man becomes a Christian, he is simply a man that has been in an abnormal state, an out-of-joint state; and becoming a Christian, is merely getting back into joint with God, with his own spiritual being, with the universe. He comes *into nature* again—for a man that is living in a sinful way is out of nature—his higher and truer nature. Ye are not come to tears or to sorrow. Ye are come to triumph, to an illustrious company, to glorious heraldings. Ye are come to convoys and felicities, and radiant hopes and blessed fruitions. "May I not cry then?" Yes, just as the night does—and in the morning it is dew. True tears make men beautiful.

II. **It is a great comfort, in the light of this truth, that nothing on earth has ever been lost that was worth keeping.**—Everything has been gathered and garnered, and that for you and me. All the holy men that have lived in every age of the world are mine—every one of them. All the apostles, all the martyrs, all the confessors, all pure and true preachers of the word, all kings that deserved to be kings, all nobles that were nobles of heart as well as of name, all holy mothers and fathers, all great artists, all great benefactors, all the persecuted and despised, and crucified almost, all that have suffered for a principle, all that the dungeons had, and all that the hospitals had, and all that the sea has swallowed, and all that the earth has covered—all of them, though they have passed through so many and such various pains, although they are apparently destroyed, are no more destroyed than the seed that the farmer covers under the clod, that it may rise again in more glorious luxuriance. God has saved everything that was worth saving in this world.

III. **No Christian on earth need be lonely.**—If these truths are not poetical truths; if they are real truths; if the air is full of administering spirits; if time itself is but the Lord's chariot, and He rides with those who ride therein; if everywhere, above us, beneath us, and on every side, and all through the world, good men are substantially united, who has had to do more than lift himself up into the consciousness of this essential union of noble natures, to feel that he is not without company?

IV. They also who put themselves into the way of Christ, and who sow in tears, who perform obscure duties, and duties that to others are disagreeable, who will not be reduced by ease from tasks of usefulness, who feel in themselves called to follow Christ in *doing*, in labouring, who are considered singular and remarked—are they not by these very things joined to this exceeding great company?—*H. Ward Beecher.*

Ver. 23. *The General Assembly.*—When the florist gathers his seeds in the best way he can, and winnows them, giving them the best sifting he can, the poorest seeds are carried away by the wind with the chaff, and he loses them, unless he is a very acute seedsman, and goes after these poor seeds to bring them back again, that they may swell the bulk and quantity of his saleable material. But when the great Gardener shall save His seeds, the poorest seed of the whole, the most shrunken, if it only has a germ no bigger than a needle's point in it, shall not be lost. Not the great, beauteous, plump seeds alone, but the little infinitesimal seeds —all these God has saved, and He will save them all.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

Heaven a State of Perfection.—"And to the spirits of just men made perfect." The text expresses what the Christian Israelites were come, and were tending, to, the representation whereof hath a double reference: intermediate—to the state and constitution of the Christian Church; and final—to the heavenly state; the former being both a *resemblance*, and some *degree*, of the latter.

I. **The perfection the spirits of the just do finally arrive to in their future state.**—Being "made perfect" is an *agonistical* phrase. To it the idea of "running a race" plainly leads us. But it is a real, inward, subjective perfection, by which they all become most excellent creatures, that must be chiefly meant. Perfection, in a moral sense, doth contain a threefold gradation: 1. At the lowest, sincerity. The man is a resolved and thorough Christian. 2. An eminent improvement, greater maturity in Divine knowledge, and all other Christian virtues. 3. The consummate state of the Christian, when he is come "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The felicity of the future state depends upon such perfection of the subject of it. Concerning the object of felicity, we are agreed it can be no other than the blessed God Himself, the all-comprehending God, fully adequate to the highest and most enlarged reasonable desires. But the contemporation of our faculties to the holy, blissful object is so necessary to our satisfying fruition, that without that we are no more capable thereof, than a brute of the festivities of a quaint oration, or a stone of the relishes of the most pleasant meats and drinks. We are too apt to fill our minds with ideas of a heaven made up of external, outside glories, forgetting we must have the "kingdom of God within us," hereafter in its *perfect*, as well as here in its *initial*, state. The internal perfection of the spirits of just men is thus indicated—"We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"; it includes likeness to God, and the vision of Him. This likeness to God may be considered as preparative for the vision of Him; or the vision of Him may be considered as an argument for our seeking to grow like Him. Ultimate perfection is virtually contained and summed up in knowledge. 1. The true and proper object of knowledge must be whatever is requisite to their duty and felicity—all that lies within their compass, but especially the blessed God Himself. 2. The manner of knowing is not that slight, ineffectual, merely notional, insipid knowledge, which unregenerate minds are now wont to have of the most evident truths, but a knowledge, or vision, that is most deeply and inwardly penetrative, efficacious, and transforming; admits a light which spreads and transfuses itself through the whole soul. Accordingly, the whole, even of practical religion and godliness, is in the Holy Scripture expressed by the knowledge of God. Likeness to God certainly ensues upon suitable preceding knowledge of Him; for the kind and nature of that knowledge being, as it ought to be, powerful, vigorous, transforming of the whole soul, and the will ductile and compliant, agreeable impressions do most certainly take place. But this likeness to God must be under-

stood with exception to the Divine peculiarities.

II. **In what sense may sincere Christians be said to have already come to the spirits of the just made perfect?**—1. In a *relative* sense, as belonging to the "general assembly,' of which the spirits of the just form part. 2. In a *real* sense; by a gradual, but true participation of the *primordia*, the first and most constituent principles and perfections of the heavenly state.

The following reflections conclude the discourse: 1. It ought to be most remote from us to confine, in our narrow thoughts, sincere religion and godliness to a party, distinguished by little things, and most extra-essential thereto. 2. The spirits of the just on earth are in a great propinquity, and have a near alliance to heaven. 3. The just in this world are of the Church in heaven. 4. Angels must have kind propensions towards men, especially good men, in this world. 5. When we find any excellent persons in our world attain far and high towards the perfection of the heavenly state, it ought to be a great encouragement to us, and is an obligation, to aspire to some like pitch.—*John Howe.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—29.

The Voices of God.—God has always found voices for the communication of His will to men. They always carry responsibility to those who hear them—deepest responsibility to those who not only hear, but distinctly recognise the voice as the voice of God, and fully admit it to be His. And this is precisely the condition of the Christian Jews, to whom this epistle is addressed. They had received Jesus Christ as the voice of God, and doing so had brought them into the most serious responsibilities, which it was impossible for them to shirk. They admitted the Mosaic dispensation to be a voice of God; and so did the writer. But they admitted the voice that spoke in Jesus Christ to be a new and later voice—the last message that had come direct from God. It could not possibly honour God for them to refuse that later voice, and fall back upon their confidence in the earlier one. In order to reassure them, the writer contrasts the two voices, and argues for the deeper responsibilities attaching to the reception of the later one.

I. **The voice of God on earth.**—A voice that could be heard by human ears, that could be apprehended and written down, and that could put into rule and order all their human conduct, duty, and relations. They came under serious responsibility who received that voice for the guiding of their lives; for the voice was supported by severe and holy sanctions.

II. **The voice of God from heaven.**—A voice that no human ear could hear, but every human soul might hear if it would. That voice speaks the holy will to the man's love, and the man first hears with his soul, and then writes the laws upon his heart. In figures the writer says what a searching thing the new voice is. It shakes—tests—everything that is shakeable. It confirms everything that is unshakeable. And the spiritual sanctions that support *this voice* must be in every way more searching and more awful.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 25. *Refusing God's Voice.*—The writer has finished his great contrast of Judaism and Christianity as typified by the mounts Sinai and Zion. But the scene at the former still haunts his imagination, and shapes this solemn warning. The multitude gathered there had shrunk from the Divine voice, and "entreated that it might not be spoken to them any

more." So may we do, standing before the better mount of a better revelation.

I. The solemn possibility of refusal.—The exhortation is addressed to professing Christians, who have in so far exercised faith as that, by it, they *are* "come to Mount Zion." The true application is to Christian men. And it does not mean entire intellectual rejection of the gospel and its message. Then, again, it is to be noted that the refusal here spoken about, and against which we, professing Christians, are thus solemnly warned, is not necessarily entire intellectual rejection of the gospel and its message. For the Israelites, who made the original "refusal," to which that which we are warned against is paralleled, recognised the voice that they would not listen to as being God's voice, and just because it was His voice wanted to hear no more of it. And so, although we may permissibly extend the words before us to include more than is thereby originally meant, yet we must remember that the true and proper application of them is to the conduct of men who, recognising that God is speaking to them, do not want to hear anything more from Him. That is to say, this warning brings to us Christians the reminder that it is possible for us so to tamper with what we know to be the uttered will and expressed commandment of God as that our conduct is tantamount to saying, "Be silent, O Lord! and let me not hear Thee speak any more to me." The reason for that refusal, which thus, in its deepest criminality and darkest sin, can only be made by men that recognise the voice to be God's, lies just here, "they could not endure that which was commanded." So, then, the bottom of the whole thing is this—that it is possible for Christian people so to cherish wills and purposes which they know to be in diametrical and flagrant contradiction to the will and purpose of God, that obstinately they prefer to stick by their own desires, and, if it may be, to stifle the voice of God. Then remember, too, that this refusal, which at bottom is the rising up of the creature's will, tastes, inclinations, desires, against the manifest and recognised will of God, may, and as a matter of fact often does, go along with a great deal of lip-reverence and unconsciously hypocritical worship. These men from whom the writer is drawing his warning, in the wilderness said, "Don't let *Him* speak! We are willing to obey all that He has to command; only let it come to us through human lips, and not in these tremendous syllables that awe our spirits." They thought themselves to be perfectly willing to keep the commandments when they were given, and all that they wanted was some little accommodation to human weakness in the selection of the medium by which the word was brought. So we may be wrenching ourselves away from the voice of God, because we uncomfortably feel that it is against our resolves, and all the while may never know that we are unwilling to obey His commandments. The unconscious refusal is the formidable and the fatal one. It comes by reason, as I have said, at bottom, of the rising up of our own determinations and wishes against His commandments; but it is also due to other causes operating along with this. How can you hear God's voice if you are letting your own yelping dog-kennel of passions speak so loudly as they do? Will God's voice be heard in a heart that is all echoing with earthly wishes, loudly clamant for their gratification, with sensual desires passionately demanding their food to be flung to them? Will God's voice be heard in a heart where the janglings of contending wishes and earthly inclinations are perpetually loud in their brawling? Will it be heard in a heart which has turned itself into a sounding-board for all the noises of the world and the voices of men? The voice of God is heard in silence, and not amid the noises of our own hearts. And they who, unconscious, perhaps, of what they are doing, open their ears

wide to hear what they themselves, in the lower parts of their souls, prescribe for themselves in obedience to the precepts and maxims of men around them, are really refusing to hear the voice of God.

II. **The sleepless vigilance necessary to counteract the tendency to refusal.**—"See that ye refuse not." A warning finger is, as it were, lifted. Take heed against the tendencies that lie in yourself and the temptations around you. The consciousness of the possibility of the danger is half the battle. "Blessed is the man that feareth always," says the psalm. "The confident"—by which is meant the presumptuous, and not the trustful—"goeth on, and is punished." The timid—by which is meant the self-distrustful—clings to God, because He knows his danger, and is safe. If we think that we are on the verge of falling, we are nearer standing than we ever are besides. To lay to heart the reality and the imminence and the gravity of the possibility that is disclosed here is an essential part of the means for preventing its becoming a reality. They who would say, "I cannot turn away because I have come," have yet to learn the weakness of their own hearts, and the strength of the world that draws them away. There is no security for us except in the continual temper of rooted self-distrust, for there is no motive that will drive us to the continual confidence in which alone is security, but the persistent pressure of that sense that in ourselves we are nothing, and cannot but fall. I want no man to live in that selfish and anxious dread "which hath torment," but I am sure that the shortest road to the brave security which is certain of never being defeated is the clear and continual consciousness that

> "In ourselves we nothing can,
> Full soon were we down-ridden;
> But for us fights the proper Man,
> Whom God Himself hath bidden."

The dark underside of the triumphant confidence, which on its sunny side looks up to heaven and receives its light, is that self-distrust which says always to ourselves, "We have to take heed lest we refuse Him that speaketh." If there is any need to dwell on specific methods by which this vigilance and continual self-distrust may work out for us our security, one would say—By carefully trying to reverse all these conditions which, as we have seen, lead us surely to the refusal. Silence the passions, the wishes, the voices of your own wills and tastes and inclinations and purposes. Bring them all into close touch with Him. Let there be no voice in your hearts till you know God's will; and then with a leap let your hearts be eager to do it. Keep yourselves out of the babble of the world's voices, and be accustomed to go by yourselves and let God speak. Do promptly, precisely, perfectly, all that you know He *has* said. This is the way to sharpen your ears for the more delicate intonations of His voice, and the closer manifestations of His will. If you do not, the voice will hush itself into silence. Thus bringing your lives habitually into contact with God's word, and testing them all by it, you will not be in danger of "refusing Him that speaketh."

III. **The solemn motives by which this sleepless vigilance is enforced.**—"If they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth"—or, perhaps, "who on earth refused Him that spake"—"much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." The clearness of the voice is the measure of the penalty of non-attention to it. The voice that spoke on earth had earthly penalties as the consequence of disobedience. The voice that speaks from heaven, by reason of its loftier majesty, and of the clearer utterances which are granted to us thereby, necessarily involves more severe and fatal issues from negligence to it.—*Anon.*

Ver. 27. *Things Passing and Things*

Permanent.—Outside in the world and within our own souls there are stable realities. It is well for us to see them and to have them rising up and becoming stronger under the shock of every earthquake. I. *Illustrate this law of things.* II. *Show some of the benefits that result from it.*

I. **To illustrate this law.**—1. *The Jewish dispensation was shaken, but the great realities enclosed in it remain.*—The coming of Christ in the flesh was the signal for the overthrow of that venerable and magnificent system. The Jewish nation has ceased to be the peculiar people of God, but there is a spiritual Israel, all of them priests, to offer sacrifices continually, in lives holy and acceptable through Jesus Christ. 2. *The forms of human society are shaken, but the principles that regulate it remain.* Christianity intensifies social struggles by pouring new light upon human rights and duties, but great principles of right and freedom assert themselves amid all changes. 3. *Outward systems of religion are shaken, but the great truths of the Church of Christ remain.* Organisations with a particular human name, locality, and administration are shaken, but the spiritual children of God built on Jesus Christ, the great corner-stone, abide. 4. *The temporal circumstances of men are shaken, but the great possessions of the soul remain.* In disease, sickness, death, old age, faith in God abides. 5. *The material frame of man is shaken, but the immortal spirit remains.* There may be a growing life within corresponding to the growing death without. 6. *The whole system of nature is shaken, but the new creation remains.* When the curtain is gone, we may say: Isa. li. 6.

II. **Some of the benefits that result from this law.**—1. *Finite minds can only learn by such processes of birth, growth, death, revival.* 2. *Painful changes are the consequence of sin, yet an aid to its cure.* 3. *We learn to cleave to the permanent things as our portion.* Jesus is the abiding Friend. 4. *It is Christ who shakes all things, but He stands unshaken.* "To whom can we go," etc.—*J. Ker, D.D.*

Ver. 28. *Religion.*—What is religion? Sometimes we hear religion put in a kind of opposition to theology. "Let us have religion, but not theology." But theology is the indispensable basis on which religion rests. The word "religion" is not used in the Old Testament. It is found in three places in the New. 1. Gal. i. 13. In the original the word rendered "the Jews' religion" is Judaism. St. Paul says he had formerly lived and been forward "in Judaism." This word is like Christianity. And as we can say "the Christian religion" to mean the same thing as Christianity, so our translators used "the Jews' religion" to mean the same thing as Judaism. 2. Acts xxvi. 5: "Straitest sect of our religion." The religion here referred to means the whole creed and worship of the Jews. 3. Jas. i. 26, 27: "Seem to be religious . . . this man's religion. . . . Pure religion and undefiled." Here religion stands for devout habits of life. The religious man was one who had the form of godliness according to the fashion of his time. A man who assumes an exterior of religion, St. James says, professes that he desires to worship God devoutly. Let him know that the devout worship which is real, and which God approves, is best shown in charity and unworldliness. But the most original, simple, and universal sense of the word is *fear of God.* It denotes the awe which instinctively possesses the human mind in contemplating the supernatural. This awe or fear may be of any quality, ranging from the noblest and most exalting reverence down to the most superstitious cowardice. An irreligious mind is a mind without this awe. The religious sentiment is instinctive or natural. In no portion of humanity will you find it altogether wanting. It appears in various shapes. That which is most opposite to it is thoughtlessness or superficiality of mind. If

human beings can be kept in a perpetual whirl of trivial occupations and interests, the very instinct of religion may be almost starved. But wherever an atmosphere is created for it by reflection, there a feeling of awe is sure to be inspired by the mysteries of the unseen world. In the early stages of civilisation it has always been in a great measure through contemplating the incidents and processes of nature that the fear of the unseen powers has been developed. Some races have been more affected by the dangerous and destructive occurrences of nature; others by the orderly and beneficent aspects of nature. The fact that religion has often manifested itself in hateful and cruel superstitions is an undeniable and important one, and has made this name "religion" odious in the eyes of some. But we are really not bound or concerned in any way to clear the name "religion" from these imputations. It is far better that we should honestly admit their truth; it is profitable to remember them. In itself religion is not to be called either bad or good—that is, it may be the one as well as the other. It may be either a terrible curse, or an exalting and purifying and sustaining sentiment. A secondary sense in which the word "religion" is often used is that of customs and ordinances of worship. These are the forms in which religion clothes itself, and to these accordingly the name of religion is naturally given. If any one attempts to describe a religion, he will find it impossible to keep such modes and forms of worship separate from the account of the being or beings to whom the worship is paid. So when a religion is spoken of, the *creed* and the *worship* are generally combined in one. The creed represents what is believed concerning the unseen world—concerning God, and man's relation to God. The nature of the creed always affects the nature of the worship. People fear God in a manner corresponding to what they believe concerning Him. The creed, therefore, is sometimes what is chiefly meant when a religion is named. For example, when we speak of the Christian religion, we very generally mean the system of doctrines or the creed supposed to be held by Christians in common. But when it has come to mean a system of doctrines, the word "religion" has diverged considerably from its first and most proper sense. Religion is first the fear of God; secondly, by a natural extension, the mode of worship; thirdly, the belief on which the worship is founded. When we desire to be accurate, it is better not to use the word "religion" in this third sense. There are several words we may use instead, such as "creed," "faith," or "theology." Religion rests on creed or theology. It is idle to talk of having religion without a theology. If you urge a man to be religious, he will want to know whom or what he is to regard with awe, to whom or what he is to consecrate himself. Illustrate from a Christian teacher requiring the faith of a heathen people. He must teach what is to be believed. (See the work of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra.) By bringing men to believe in Jesus Christ and in the Father, the preachers of Christ undoubtedly nourished in them an ever-increasing fear of God. It is impossible to believe in God, to think of Him, and not to fear Him. But the fear of the just and gracious Father emancipates, and does not enslave. The fear of the true God is allied with faith and hope and love. It gives courage, instead of melting it away.—*J. Llewellyn Davies, M.A.*

Ver. 29. *The Christian's God is a Fire.*—Emphasis lies on the word "our." "*Our* God is a consuming fire." The God of the Jews *was*—that must be granted. The God of the Christians *is*—that should be apprehended. The mildness of Christianity has made it often to be misrepresented. There is the intensest severity behind love. There is nothing so searching as love. The sternest person in the world is the good mother. The passage in Deuteronomy shows what the precise idea of

the passage is—a *jealous* God. Jealousy is that feeling we have when one whom we have a right to think loves us turns from us to set his love on another. That human feeling represents the Divine feeling towards apostates. Fire is a fitting figure to represent the activity of the Christian's God, because fire consumes the consumable, and purifies the unconsumable. God works in the Christian to secure the end which is secured when fire acts on metals—He delivers the Christian from everything that would hinder his being and becoming his best possible.

God a Consuming Fire.—"Fire" as a symbol of the Divine nature is a most happy and expressive symbol. For if fire is the first thing we are taught to fear, do we not early learn to love it too? Do we not gladly gather round the hearth, and spread our hands to its fostering warmth? Is not "the hearth" a familiar synonym for "the home"? Is not "the home" the name for all that we hold most precious and dear? Fire destroys; but it destroys the dead wood to comfort the living man. It only burns *us* when we handle it wrongly or foolishly. Fire burns and destroys; nevertheless, it is so much our friend, human civilisation and comfort and progress depend so utterly upon it, that the wise Greeks had a fable of one who was man, and yet more than man, who, in the greatness of his love for the human race, stole fire from the gods, and was content to endure an immortal agony that he might draw down this sovereign good from heaven to earth. Fire is a destructive agent, but it is also a creative, vivifying, conservative agent. Through the broad reaches of geological times fire gave form to the very earth on which we dwell. Its daily task, its common work, is not destructive, but most serviceable and benignant. So when we find God compared to a fire, we have to remember (1) that though fire consumes, it consumes that which is dead in order to feed and nourish the living; (2) that though fire burns and destroys, it also gives life, conserves life, supports life; and (3) that while destruction is but the occasional and accidental effect of fire, its real and constant task is to quicken and cherish and bless. Thus interpreted, fire becomes a very welcome symbol of the character of God. But can we fairly welcome it, both as *consuming* and as *destroying* fire? The love of God is no weak, puling sentiment, but a masculine, nay, a Divine affection, which, for their good, can bear to inflict pain, and even the worst extremities of pain, on those whom it embraces. If when the fire of Divine love kindles upon our sins and sinful habits, in order that we may become pure, we will not let them go, what can happen but that *we* shall be burned, as well as our sins, until we can no longer retain them? On the other hand, if, when in His holy love God calls us to pass through fiery trials, we willingly cast away from us the besetting sins which He has devoted to destruction, from which we ourselves have often prayed to be redeemed, one like unto the Son of God will walk the furnace with us (for was not even *He* made perfect by the things which He suffered?), and we shall pass out of it, not only unharmed, but transformed into His likeness. We have before us the leading passages of Holy Writ in which God is compared to a devouring or consuming fire. Read in their connections, they do not convey harsh or repugnant suggestions. If we can say of fire, that it is not an implacable enemy, but a constant and benignant friend; that it never becomes our enemy till we abuse it; that we use it and love it far more than we fear it; that it consumes that which is dead to warm and serve the living; that it holds all things in being and in order; that, if it destroys, it also quickens, nourishes, and preserves; that to destroy is only its occasional and accidental work, while to vivify and preserve and nourish is its common task,—if we can say all this of fire, can we not also say it of

God, and of the love of God as revealed in Holy Scripture? Is not *He* our gracious Friend till we compel Him to become our enemy? Is not our love toward Him, should it not be, more than our fear? Does not He seek to consume our dead works and evil lusts only that He may feed and liberate and strengthen that in us which truly lives? If He sometimes destroys, does He not commonly quicken and nourish and conserve? Is not destruction only His strange occasional work, while His constant task from day to day is to vivify and cherish? Is not His anger but for a moment, while His mercy endureth for ever? What can be more full of comfort and hope for us than to learn that at the centre of the universe there burns a sacred fire of Divine love, to which all intolerable but unconquerable evils will be as stubble?—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Our God a Consuming Fire.—The emphasis in this sentence rests upon the word "our." There can be no doubt at all that the God of the Jews was a "consuming fire." There need be no question at all concerning the further fact, that the God of the Christians is also a "consuming fire." *Our* God, the God revealed and manifested in Jesus Christ. But this is not the familiar thought of the Christian's God. God is love. Fatherliness, mildness, pity, gentleness, are the familiar characteristics of the Christian's God. And there is some grave danger of the exaggeration of one-sidedness. That is not *all* our God. Behind it lie all the solemnities of Divine righteousness, august majesty, supreme claims, searching inspections, and the holiest jealousy. The Christian's God is to be served with thankful trust, loving obedience, and sunniest joy; but He is also to be served with reverence and godly fear; for He is still—nay, He is more truly than He ever was—"a consuming fire." That seems to be the point of impression of the text. The mildness of Christianity makes it liable to misunderstanding. And it needs to be made quite plain, that there is nothing so searching, so severe, so inexorable, as love. There is an awful strength in gentleness; there is a masterful persuasion in pity; there are inexorable demands in love. We may remember the times when our father beat us with the cane for our wicked ways, but we recall them with a smile, for well we know there was too much passion in them for them to have been effective vindications of righteousness. But among our very holiest memories are the times when we grieved our mother. She did not punish; she did not say much; but the distress of her wounded love smote us to the quick, humbled us into the dust; it was harder far to bear than those fatherly strokes; it was a "consuming fire" of love, and we have never lost the ministry of that "fire" of mother-love, though long years have passed since she joined the assembly of the saints. The writer of this epistle is still full of his contrasts of the two dispensations. In urging the Jewish Christians to maintain their loyalty and faithfulness to the Christian profession, he has endeavoured to touch Jewish sentiment, and inspire to noble things, by reading over the long roll of heroes, who, by faith, mastered a thousand difficulties, and held fast their integrity. He has carefully explained the deeper meanings of those afflictions, anxieties, and persecutions through which they were passing. They were the strengthening and corrective discipline of Divine chastisement. And in a most effective rhetorical contrast he has pictured for them the genius and tone of the two dispensations. The older having its locus in storm-encircled mountain-heights, from which the fires flashed, over which the darkness brooded, and around which the alarming thunder-voices rolled. The new having its locus in a spiritual sphere; in a mount that had no earth-foundations; in a city which was built by God, ministered by angels, and dwelt in by sainted souls. No fires flash in that spiritual

sphere; no thunder-voices waken terror in the soul. All is peace and love and service. But his contrast might leave a wrong impression. They might presume on the mildness of the new dispensation, and relax into indifference. He would check that possibility by this strong assertion, "Our God [too] is a consuming fire." His service too must be rendered "with reverence and godly fear." We can, however, see a little more precisely what was in his mind; for his words are a quotation from the book of Deuteronomy (chap. iv. 24), and an incomplete quotation. To complete it is to provide the explanation of the term "consuming fire." The older Scripture reads, "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The *jealousy* of God is expressed in this fire figure. We need search no further than this for its meaning. The text reads thus, "Our God, even the Christian's God, is a *jealous God.*" But that is a term which we do not like to use for God. With us it has associations which seem to make it quite unsuitable. And yet the Bible has frequent allusions to the Divine jealousy, and it may be possible to find primary meanings in the term, and to affix careful limitations to it, so that we may recognise its appropriateness as, even in these times, applied to the Christian's God. It does seem strange, but it may even be right, to apply the term to Christ, to "God manifest in the flesh"; for "*our* God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." He can burn with the indignation of slighted, wounded love; and that is holy jealousy. Jealousy is that feeling which we have when one whom we love, and who seemed to love us, turns away from us to set his love upon another. Then we are said to burn with jealousy. It is when we have a *right* to the love which is taken from us, and given to another, that our jealousy becomes so intense and is so righteous. In this way the word can be applied to our God. He is jealous of His honour and His rights when the love that belongs to Him is given to another. He could properly be jealous of His ancient people, who were bound to Him by every dearest tie, when they forsook Him, and set their love on idol-gods—"on every high hill, and under every green tree wandering, playing the harlot"; and against them His jealousy most righteously burned as doth an oven. It is important to notice this distinction—jealousy is natural and proper and right when we have exclusive property in another's love. The husband ought to be jealous if his wife is unfaithful; a wife ought to be jealous if her husband is unfaithful; a king ought to be jealous if his subjects are disloyal, and set their love on another. It is only when we really have no exclusive property in the love, but try to make out that we have, that our jealousy is wrong and unworthy. It is easy then to see how the term can be properly applied to God, seeing He has absolute, sovereign, and unquestionable rights in the love of His creatures. They ought to love Him with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And He ought to be jealous and indignant when they turn away from Him, and set their love on another. He may well be to them as a consuming fire. It was precisely in relation to idolatry that God was called jealous in the Old Testament. "Thou shalt have none other gods before Me . . . for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." And it is to idolatry in some of its later phases that the term is applied in the New Testament. Apostasy is modern idolatry; and towards it God is a consuming fire. But here is a somewhat strange thing, one which needs consideration, and suggests some searching applications. Those who were addressed in this epistle were not in danger of leaving Jehovah to worship and serve idols. They were in danger of leaving the Christian God to take up with the Jewish God, and we are to understand that this aroused the Divine jealousy, and towards this God

was a consuming fire. And yet it was the same God. Yes, it was. But it is the grief of love to be loved only for what we *were*, not for what we *are*—to be loved for what we were thought to be in the first hours of passionate affection, not for what we *are* in the full maturity and beauty wrought through the culture and experience of years. A simple illustration will make this quite clear. You had childish views and thoughts of God: there was as much fear as there was wonder in them; but they were most imperfect, and altogether unworthy. He was really no more than a magnified benevolent man. If you now persisted in giving up all those higher, worthier, more spiritual apprehensions of God, which the thousand-fold experiences of your life, and the spiritually enlightened teachings of God's word, have brought you; if you persisted in going back upon those old child-notions, would you not grieve Him, would you not make Him jealous of your loving that old God better than Himself? Must He not then be to you a consuming fire? But that is precisely what some of those Jewish Christians were doing. And that is precisely what some of you are doing. You are afraid of the God revealed to your manhood, and falling back upon the God of your babyhood. You are leaving the Father of Jesus for the *El*, the power-God of your childhood. You are wanting all those picture-teachings, simplicities, first principles, which properly belong to a child's God; and cannot rise into the higher, spiritual, divine apprehensions of God as He is in Christ, which are the holy satisfactions of cultured manhood. And God is jealous of His old self, because it thus takes your love away from Him as He is, and wants to be now to you. The idolatry of the Jewish Christians was not Baal or Moloch, or even Jupiter or Venus. It was an old image of Jehovah which was good enough in its day; but its day had long since passed. They wanted to worship *that*, to keep on worshipping *that*. And to them God was a consuming fire, even a jealous God. But we seldom think that we are trying God just as they did. He gives us fuller revelations of Himself. We prefer the old ones. He gives us larger apprehensions of truth. We prefer the little ones. He lifts us into the pure atmosphere of the spiritual. We get down again as soon as we can into the thick, murky atmosphere of the material. And so to-day we make Him jealous, we compel Him to become to us a consuming fire. For though our fullest love is due to Him *as He is*, we persist in taking it away from Him, and giving it to something that He *was*. We make an idol of our childhood's God, and worship Him rather than the Father of Jesus.

I. **God always has been a consuming fire, jealous of His supreme claims to love for what He is.**—Almost the first lesson humanity had to learn was God's jealousy of His outraged honour. His consuming fire was upon our first parents, who had given up the obedience of love for self-pleasing; and the fire found its symbol in the flaming sword of the cherubim, which guarded the lost Paradise. 1. The God of the patriarch was a consuming fire, even a jealous God; for the horror of great darkness which fell on Abraham, when the smoking furnace and lamp of fire passed between the severed victims, was meant to assure him how exclusive were the claims of the Covenant-maker. 2. The God of Moses was a "consuming fire, even a jealous God"; for the bush that burned, and was not consumed, was the sublime assertion of Jehovah's exclusive rights in the people of Israel—rights to burn them into national form in the fires of sternest discipline. 3. The God of the people of Israel was a consuming fire, even a jealous God; for His symbolic presence was a cloud which was silver-tinted in the light of day, but flashed and glowed as with the burning of an inner fire in the dark night-sky. And when the young priests forsook Jehovah for the idols of their own self-wills, forth flashed the fires of the Divine jealousy, for their sudden

and awful destruction. 4. And the God of the prophets was "a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The people had forsaken Jehovah, and in a spirit of time-serving had set their love on Phœnician Baal and Astarte. And the Divine jealousy burned. One day on Carmel the assembled nation on the sides of the hill watched in breathless suspense a solitary Jehovah altar, and a solitary prophet, who stood calm and strong beside it. And the fire of God fell, the jealousy of God burned, and that day four hundred men, who had taken from Jehovah the love that was His sole and sovereign right, were consumed in the fire of the Divine indignation, slain on Kishon's side, to be swept by the coming rain-floods out to the ocean's nameless grave. There, all down the story of the ages lie the ever-varying illustrations of the truth that God is a jealous God. His glory He will never give to another. The love which is His sole right He will never share with another. Against all phases and types of idolatry His indignation ever burns as does an oven.

II. **God is to-day a consuming fire, even a jealous God.**—Jealous of His sole and sovereign claims, in Christ Jesus, upon our love. *Our* God, the Christian's God, is "a consuming fire." If it be so, then there must be some forms of idolatry by which nowadays we can be enticed. The apostle John knew that there were such in his day, for he wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." If we are Christians, then our whole soul's love is given to God in Christ, the Father-God of the ever-acceptable Son, and that love carries to God the full consecration of ourselves, of our life. In that "setting of our love upon Him" God finds His holy satisfactions and delights. Then we know what grieves Him, wounds Him to the very heart, rouses the holy jealousy, and compels Him to be to us a consuming fire. It is our taking that love which is His, which is His sole and sovereign right, and giving it to some one else, to something else, to idol self. Can it be that we ever do this? Can it be that God knows we are really idolaters? Can it be that our heart is divided? Have we in actual fact our own private idols, and do they take our real heart-love and worship? The missionary Paton felt convinced that the apparent religion of the aborigines of Australia was not their real religion, and set himself to discover what it was. At last he found they had in secret smooth stones, kept hidden in bags, and in these their souls trusted. It may be so with us. We bow at the Christian altar, and keep idols of our own at home. Idols we make of persons; idols we make of opinions; idols we make of pleasures. But our text has suggested a kind of idol which we may never have thought of before. The Jewish Christians were in danger of making an idol of the old God they served before they became Christians. And God is represented as being jealous of their leaving His present self to worship and serve His old self. Can it be possible that we are grieving God thus? He has lifted us up, in Christ Jesus, to high, spiritual, noble thoughts and apprehensions of Himself, and to a high and holy circle of truths gathering round His spiritual Fatherhood. Alas! it seems too high for us, and we leave Him to go back upon the bare, poor idea of God which belonged to our childish immaturity, and to the unspiritual days before our regeneration. We make idols of the bald, picture settings of doctrinal truths which suited our religious childhood. It is as if the Christian Jews persisted in becoming formal Mosaic Jews again. It is one form of the idolatry into which Christians fall in our days; and God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1. *Laying Aside our Weights.*—It was on the confines of the desert, amid sterile and almost inaccessible rocks, that Ben Achmet, the Dervise, led a life of austerity and devotion. A cave in the rocks was his dwelling. Roots and fruits, the scanty product of the inhospitable region he inhabited, satisfied his hunger, and the fountain that bubbled up from the lower part of a neighbouring cliff slaked his thirst. He had formerly been a priest in a magnificent mosque, and scrupulously conducted the ceremonies of the Mohammedan faith; but disgusted with the hypocrisy and injustice of those around him, he abandoned the mosque and his authority as a priest, betaking himself to the desert, to spend his days as an anchorite, in sanctity, self-denial, and devotion. Years rolled over the head of Ben Achmet, and the fame of his sanctity spread abroad. In seasons of drought he supplied the traveller of the desert with water from his little well. In times of pestilence he left his solitary abode to attend the sick and comfort the dying in the villages that were scattered around, and often did he stanch the blood of the wounded Arab, and heal him of his wounds. His fame was spread abroad; his name inspired veneration; and the plundering Bedouin gave up his booty at the command of Ben Achmet, the Dervise. Akaba was an Arabian robber; he had a band of lawless men under his command ready to do his bidding, large numbers of slaves, and a treasure house well stored with his ill-gotten wealth. The sanctity of Ben Achmet arrested his attention; his conscience smote him on account of his guilt, and he longed to be as famed for his devotion as he had been for his crimes. He sought the abode of the Dervise, and told him his desires. "Ben Achmet," said he, "I have five hundred cimeters ready to obey me, numbers of slaves at my command, and a goodly treasure-house filled with riches; tell me how to add to these the hope of a happy immortality?" Ben Achmet led him to a neighbouring cliff that was steep, rugged, and high; and pointing to three large stones that lay near together, he told him to lift them from the ground, and to follow him up the cliff. Akaba, laden with the stones, could scarcely move; to ascend the cliff with them was impossible. "I cannot follow thee, Ben Achmet," said he, "with these burdens." "Then cast down one of them," replied the Dervise, "and hasten after me." Akaba dropped a stone, but still found himself too heavily encumbered to proceed. "I tell thee it is impossible," cried the robber chieftain; "thou thyself couldst not proceed a step with such a load." "Let go another stone, then," said Ben Achmet. Akaba readily dropped another stone, and, with great difficulty, clambered the cliff for a while, till, exhausted with the effort, he again cried out that he could come no farther. Ben Achmet directed him to drop the last stone; and, no sooner had he done this, than he mounted with ease, and soon stood with his conductor on the summit of the cliff. "Son," said Ben Achmet, "thou hast three burdens which hinder thee in thy way to a better world. Disband thy troop of lawless plunderers, set thy captive slaves at liberty, and restore thy ill-gotten wealth to its owners; it is easier for Akaba to ascend this cliff with the stones that lie at its foot, than for him to journey onward to a better world with power, pleasure, and riches in his possession."

The Ancient Grecian Games.—The great religious festivals of Judaism served to unite the nation, and to meet the longing for pleasurable excitement which we find in a greater or less degree in every nation. They help us also to realise the serious and religious character of the Jewish people. They had no public games; and only in the late degenerate days of Roman dominion were gymnasia and theatres established among them. The apostle Paul tarried some time in the city of Corinth, and founded there a large, prosperous, and influential Christian Church; while residing in that city, there can be no doubt the great games were held on the adjoining isthmus, which were known as the *Isthmian Games*, and celebrated every other year. We cannot imagine that Paul went to them, for they must have been scenes of wild rioting and vice, too much like those witnessed now on our race-courses; but he would know all about them; and they would be for a time quite the common excitement in Corinth. Certainly, in Paul's later writings, we find many allusions to these games; they seem to have seized on his imagination, and set him thinking how much there was *like them* in a Christian course. That also seemed to him a *race*, and he longed "so to run that he might attain." That also seemed to him a *battle*; and when he came to its close, he could say, "I have fought a good fight." The principal passages in which figures taken from the scenes of these games are found, are: 1 Cor. iv. 9, ix. 24-27; Phil. iii. 13, 14; 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20; 1 Tim. iv. 8, vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 5, iv. 7, 8; Heb. x. 32, 33, xii. 1, 2. 1. The *company of spectators* was exceedingly large, people attending from all the district round; the competitors were urged and excited by their shouts and praises. In the Roman amphitheatres the audiences decided whether a defeated

gladiator was to die by *turning down their thumbs.* 2. The competitors underwent previous and careful *training*, for at least ten months; keeping under the body, bringing it into subjection, and cultivating skill in the use of weapons, or the art of running. 3. Very stringent *laws* were fixed for conducting the contests, and they must be carried on in the prescribed way. A man would not be crowned unless he strove *lawfully.* 4. The contests were divided into two classes,—the *pancratium*, consisting of boxing and wrestling; and the *pentathlon*, consisting of leaping, running, quoiting, and hurling. In some games poetical and oratorical contests were introduced. 5. The actual *reward* was only a crown of pine or ivy leaves; but the victor was set in high honour, his name, and that of his father and country, were proclaimed by a herald to the vast assembly; and he was borne to his native city in triumph. Sometimes a pillar was erected on which the record of his victory was placed. From the rewards given at these games, the figures of Rev. iii. 12, etc., are taken.

Ver. 2. *Looking unto Jesus.*—That conveys the idea of rigid shutting out of other things in order that one supreme light may fill the eye and gladden the soul. If you do not carefully drop black curtains round the little chamber, and exclude all side lights as well as all other objects from the field of vision, there will be no clear impression of the beloved face made upon the sensitive plate. It must be in the darkness that the image is transferred to the heart.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Captain and Perfecter of Faith.—In some notes on New Testament passages, Principal David Brown, in the *Expositor*, gives a new turn of thought to the familiar phrase, "the Author and Finisher [Perfecter, R.V.] of our faith." He rejects the word "our," and would translate, "the Captain and Perfecter of 'faith.'" The passage, he maintains, teaches, not that Jesus is the Author and Completer of "our own" faith, but of the "life of faith." In other words, He is the model believer. It is claimed that the very next verse brings out this idea. The "joy" was conditioned on the triumph of faith in enduring suffering. So the entire course of Christ's temptation is a test and victory of faith. At the cross one said, "He trusted in God that He would deliver Him," etc. Thus Christ is the "Leader and Conductor" of the army of believers, for He is Himself the most shining example of faith. This is a fresh light upon an old text.

Joy of Christ in Redemption.—It was a sad and fearful sight which that noble-minded girl, Grace Darling, and her old father saw, when the grey light began to make things visible across that stormy sea. The wild, broken clouds, the rear-guard of the tempest, were moving slowly and as it were grudgingly away; the fierce winds were sweeping in gusts across the sky; and the waves, lashed into foam by the midnight storm that had been raging, were breaking in sheets of spray over the miserable remnant of the crew who still clung to the wreck. As each breaker poured its torrent over it, the girl and her father could see the numbers thinned, and one after another swept away, to struggle for a few moments in the boiling and whirling eddies, and then "sink like lead in the mighty waters." Will a boat live in such a sea? Can it be managed? They at all events will try. Their little boat is skilfully pushed off from the lighthouse, and, forced forward by the strength of love, it is soon under the wreck, and filled with those who have lowered themselves into it. A little while and the deeply laden boat has reached the lighthouse and deposited its rescued passengers in safety. Another effort and another, and they are *all* safe. Oh, how did their generous hearts glow with joy when they looked around on those who, but for their courage and skill and self-devotion, had been lifeless corpses in the ocean! How did their hearts burn within them as they saw the shivering sailors cowering over the fire and thawing their almost frozen limbs! What will be *His* joy who saw from His throne in the heavens a shipwrecked world with its millions who, but for Him, must have perished, who left His glory and with a strong hand spoiled the raging powers of darkness of their prey, and gathered from the wreck the mighty remnant!—*Canon Champneys.*

Ver. 6. *The Uses of Affliction.*—Note the difference between summer storms and winter ones, the latter rushing over the earth with all their violence; and if any poor remnants of foliage or flowers have lingered behind, these are swept along at one gust, leaving nothing but desolation; while the former make all things to rise as it were with renewed beauty,—the types of the difference between the storms of affliction as coming upon the Christian and the sinner.—*Guesses at Truth.*

Perfect through Suffering.—Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches are better for beating; grapes come not to the proof till they come to the press; spices smell best when bruised; young trees root faster for shaking; gold looks brighter for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; the palm tree proves the better for pressing. Such is the condition of God's people; they are most triumphant when

most tempted, most glorious when most afflicted.—*Bogatsky.*

Ver. 7. *God's Dealing with Us.*—Visiting a person who was in deep affliction and sorrow, Gotthold was told by the family that he was in the garden. Thither he followed, and found him employed in clearing a vine of its superfluous leaves. After a friendly salute, he inquired what he was doing. "I find," was the reply, "that, owing to the abundant rain, this vine is overgrown with wood and leaves, which prevent the sun from reaching and ripening the grapes; I am, therefore, pruning part of them away, that it may bring its fruit to maturity." Gotthold rejoined, "And do you find that in this operation the vine resists and opposes you? If not, why are you displeased that a gracious God should do to you what your vine must not be displeased that you do to it?"

The Estimate of Things lost.—

For so it falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth,
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lacked and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue, that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours.—*Shakespeare.*

Like birds, whose beauties languish, half concealed,
Till, mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes
Expanded, shine with azure, green, and gold;
How blessings brighten as they take their flight!—*Young.*

Farewell! I did not know thy worth,
But thou art gone, and now 'tis prized:
So angels walked unknown on earth,
But when they flew were recognised.
Thomas Hood.

'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you,
Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep;
And all at once they leave you, and you know them.—*Robert Browning.*

Not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.
Cowper.

Ver. 18. *Mount Sinai.*—Among the characteristics of Sinai one must not be omitted—the deep stillness, and consequent reverberation of the human voice. From the highest point of Rás Sufsâfeh to its lower peak, a distance of about sixty feet, the page of a book, distinctly but not loudly read, was perfectly audible; and every remark of the various groups of travellers, descending from the heights of the same point, rose clearly to those immediately above them. It was the belief of the Arabs who conducted Niebuhr, that they could make themselves heard across the gulf of Akaba—a belief, doubtless, exaggerated, yet probably originated or fostered by the great distance to which, in these regions, the voice can actually be carried, and it is, probably, from the same causes that so much attention has been excited by the mysterious noises which have, from time to time, been heard on the summit of Gebel Mousa, in the neighbourhood of Um-Shómer, and the mountains of Nâkús, or the Bell, so called from the legend that the sounds proceed from the bells of the convent enclosed within the mount. In this last instance the sound is supposed to originate in the rush of sand down the mountain-side, and here, as elsewhere, playing the same part as the waters or snows of the North. In the case of Gebel Mousa, where it is said that the monks had originally settled on the highest peak, but were, by these strange noises, driven down to their present seat in the valley, and in the case of Um-Shómer, where it was described to Burckhardt as like the sound of artillery, the precise cause has never been ascertained. But in all these instances the effect must have been heightened by the death-like silence of the region, where the fall of waters, even the trickling of brooks, is unknown.—*Dean Stanley.*

Roots Uncomely but Useful.—The root of a plant is often a rough and very unsightly part. Its colour is unpleasing, and its form ungainly, yet it plays an all-important part in the economy of the plant's life. You may pluck off the bright flowers and leaves one by one till all is stripped bare, and it will still survive; but the root is essential to its life: injure or remove it, and the plant perishes. Again, the oxygen, the life-sustaining element of the air, given off by the various members of the vegetable kingdom, comes entirely from the stem and leaves, the green parts of the plant, the more beautiful flowers and fruit only exhaling poisonous carbon. So it is with the body mystical of Christ, "the Church of the firstborn," and its members in particular. . . . Often God brings a rough, uncouth Luther to far more distinction than a refined Erasmus, and exalts Bunyan the tinker above the most polished of his pious contemporaries. The "uncomely parts" have more honour, for it is God's method of working to place more honour upon them, and make them of more use. It is very humbling to pride, especially

spiritual pride, but it is His way, who will have "no flesh to glory before Him."—*James Neil, M.A.*

Ver. 23. *The Church Triumphant.*—The πανήγυρις (*panēguris*) was a solemn assembly for purposes of festal rejoicing . . . the word having given us "panegyric," which is properly a set discourse pronounced at one of these great and festal gatherings. Business might grow out of the fact that such multitudes were assembled, since many, and for various reasons, would be glad to avail themselves of the circumstance; but only in the same way as a "fair" grew out of a "feria" or "holy-day." Strabo notices the business-like aspect which the πανήγυρεις commonly assumed, which was indeed to such an extent their prominent feature that the Romans translated πανήγυρις by the Latin *mercatus*, and this even when the Olympic games were intended. These, with the other solemn games, were eminently, though not exclusively, the πανήγυρεις of the Greek nation. If we keep this festal character of the πανήγυρις in mind, we shall find a peculiar fitness in the employment of this word at Heb. xii. 23, where only in the New Testament it occurs. The apostle is there setting forth the communion of the Church militant on earth with the Church triumphant in heaven—of the Church toiling and suffering here, with that Church from which all weariness and toil have for ever passed away (Rev. xxi. 4); and how could he better describe this last than as a πανήγυρις, than as the glad and festal assembly of heaven?—*Trench.*

Ver. 24. *Blood better than Abel's.*—Abel stands forth before us as the first in a cloud of witnesses, bearing brave testimony, and prepared to seal it with their lives. He died a martyr for the truth, the grandly God-like truth that God accepteth men according to their faith. All honour to the martyr's blood which speaks so effectually for precious truth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, being also a testifier and witness for the faith of God, spake better things than Abel, because He had more to speak, and spake from more intimate acquaintance with God. He was a fuller witness of Divine truth than Abel could be, for He brought life and immortality to light, and told His people clearly of the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been in the bosom of the Father, and knew the Divine secret; this secret He revealed to the sons of men in His ministry, and then He sealed it by His blood.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Blood crying for Vengeance.—To us it seems a slight, and therefore a strange, commendation of the blood of the great sacrifice to say it speaks better things than vengeance. But to Hebrews who had shed their brother's blood the case was widely different. Of the men who in the madness of their persecuting zeal had said concerning Jesus, "His blood be on us, and on our children," imagine some brought afterwards to feel what they had done; what more natural apprehension in their awakened conscience than that their brother's blood should cry for vengeance against them, as Abel's blood cried against his murderer? It has been so. The Hebrew nation is a living Cain. Their brother's blood crieth against them. . . . To the penitent believer, therefore, how needful, and how suitable, and how satisfactory, was the apostle's assurance! His death in their hands was indeed the murder, but by the hand of God it had been turned into a mercy.—*Hugh McNeile, D.D.*

Ver. 25. *Refusing Advice.*—I once happened to be on a visit to a great castle situate at the top of a hill. There was a steep cliff, at the bottom of which was a rapid river. Late one night there was a woman anxious to get home from that castle in the midst of a thunder-storm. The night was blackness itself; the woman was asked to stop till the storm was over, but she declined; next they begged her to take a lantern, that she might be able to keep upon the road from the castle to her home. She said she did not require a lantern, but could do very well without one. She went. Perhaps she was frightened by the storm—I know not the cause—but in the midst of the darkness she wandered from the path and fell over the cliff. The next day that swollen river washed to the shore the poor lifeless body of this foolish woman! How many foolish ones are there who, when the light is offered them, only say, "I am not afraid; I fear not my end!" and how many have perished because they have refused the light of God's truth, which would have guided them on the road to heaven!—*Bishop Villiers.*

Ver. 29. *Consuming Fire.*—A traveller writes, "I saw a flaming globe of fire, magnificent indeed, but too terrible for the eye to rest upon, if its beams had been naked and exposed; but it was suspended in a vase of crystal, so transparent, that while it softened the intensity of its rays, it shrouded nothing of its beauty. On the contrary, that which before would have been a mass of undistinguishable light, now emitted through the vase many beautiful and various coloured rays, which riveted the beholder with wonder and astonishment." Such is God manifested in Christ and out of Christ, He meets the affrighted sinner's eye as "a consuming fire." Like fiery flames breaking forth to consume the adversary,

He is too terrible for the apprehension: But now He reveals Himself in Christ; His terrible majesty no longer affrights us. His consuming fire, seen in Christ, is like the mild rays of the morning sun in spring, going forth to bless the earth with its cheerful and invigorating beams.—*H. G. Salter.*

Ver. 27. *Removing Shakeable Things.*—Let us be glad when "the things which can be shaken are removed," like mean huts built against the wall of some cathedral, masking and marring the completeness of its beauty; "that the things which cannot be shaken may remain," and all the clustered shafts, and deep-arched recesses, and sweet tracery, may stand forth freed from the excrescences which hid them.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Losing Anchor-hold.—I was looking out not long ago upon a very stormy sea. The winds howled, the troubled waves were dashing themselves into spray upon the rocks. Many vessels were in the bay; they could not move for the hurricane, but could only trust to some anchor in the sands, and were tossed wildly up and down. In the night the anchors of two of them slipped their hold, and they were hurled helplessly in total wreck upon the shore. There was no beauty or glory in those poor ships; it is the beauty and glory of a ship when her helm is firmly grasped, and the obedient wind swells her white sails, and the cleft wave bears her onwards towards her haven—"a plume and a power." And so it is with man.—*Farrar.*

CHAPTER XIII.

VIRTUES AND GRACES BEFITTING THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Brotherly love.**—φιλαδελφία, the mutual love of Christians as such.

Ver. 2. **Angels unawares.**—As Abraham (Gen. xviii. 2-22); Lot (Gen. xix. 1, 2); Manoah (Judg. xiii. 2-14); Gideon (Judg. vi. 11-20).

Ver. 3. **Also in the body.**—And therefore liable to similar treatment. "Remember those who are injuriously treated, as it becomes those who are themselves still in the body." "Lucian's tract dwells on the effusive kindness of Christians to their brethren who were imprisoned as confessors."

Ver. 8.—Read "Jesus Christ is the same." "The unchangeableness of Christ is a reason for not being swept about by winds of strange teaching. But a suggestion has been made that "Jesus Christ" is spoken of as the "end of the conversation" of those whose faith we are to follow. The order of the Greek is "yesterday and to-day the same, and to the ages."

Ver. 10.—This and the following verses form a little episode of argument in the midst of moral exhortations. Reference is made to the feasts which followed sacrifices, in which parts of the animal sacrificed were eaten. "When the writer says, that 'Christians have a sacrifice of which those who pay their service at the altar have no right to partake,' he means, that the benefits procured by the atoning sacrifice of Christ do not belong, or will not be granted, to such as rest their hopes of salvation on the ritual sacrifices of the Jewish law, *i.e.* to such as continue to be disciples of Judaism, or turn back from Christianity to Judaism, and thus renounce the blessings procured for believers by the death of Christ" (*Stuart*).

Ver. 11. **Burned without the camp.**—Lev. xvi. 11, 14-16, 27. Notice that the writer's figures are mostly taken from the times of the tabernacle, and of the wilderness life.

Ver. 13. **Without the camp.**—A figure of speech, meaning, "Let us leave the camp, *i.e.* the dwellings of the Jews, or the profession of Judaism, and go over to the place where Christians dwell, although it be without the city."

Ver. 20. **God of peace.**—Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20; Phil. iv. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 16. Translate the verse, "Who brought up from the dead Him, made through the blood of the everlasting covenant, great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord, even Jesus." Or as R.V. "Who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, with [by or in] the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus." See chap. ix. 15-18, and compare Acts xx. 28; Zech. ix. 11. The meaning appears to be, that the great Shepherd is provided with, or (so to speak) carries along with Him, **blood** sanctioning a covenant which is of perpetual force.

Farrar's note on ver. 13.—Let us go forth out of the city and camp of Judaism (Rev. xi. 8) to

the true and eternal tabernacle (Exod. xxxiii. 7, 8) where He now is (chap. xii. 2). **Bearing his reproach.**—"If ye be reproached," says St. Peter, "for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (compare chap. xi. 26). As He was excommunicated and insulted and made to bear His cross of shame, so will you be, and you must follow Him out of the doomed city (Matt. xxiv. 2). It must be remembered that the cross, an object of execration and disgust even to Gentiles, was viewed by the Jews *with religious horror*, since they regarded every crucified person as "accursed of God" (Deut. xxi. 22, 23; Gal. iii. 13). Christians shared this reproach to the fullest extent. The most polished heathen writers, men like Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, spoke of their faith as an "execrable," "deadly," and "malefic" superstition; Lucian alluded to Christ as the "impaled sophist"; and to many Greeks and Romans no language of scorn seemed too intense, no calumny too infamous, to describe them, and their mode of worship. The Jews spoke of them as "Nazarenes," "Epicureans," "heretics," "followers of the thing," and especially as "apostates," "traitors," and "renegades."

Moulton's note on ver. 20.—Two passages of the prophets have contributed to the language of this remarkable verse. 1. Isa. lxiii. 11: "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?" Here the shepherds are no doubt Moses and Aaron (Ps. lxxvii. 20); the Greek translation, however, has, "Where is He that raised up out of the sea the shepherd of the sheep?" Moses, who led Israel through the sea, was brought up therefrom in safety to be the "shepherd" of his people Israel; by the same almighty hand the great Shepherd of the sheep has been brought up from among the dead. 2. Zech. ix. 11; in other words, "because of the blood which ratified thy covenant (Exod. xxiv. 8) I have released thy prisoners." In (*i.e.* in virtue of) the blood of an eternal covenant God has raised up the Lord Jesus.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

The Spiritual Man's Earthly Sphere.—Christianity is a spiritual life that can live and thrive in earthly scenes and relations. Two things concerning it need to be constantly presented. It is a spiritual religion. It is a religion of every-day, commonplace, human life. And on each of these sides Christianity is placed in some peril when frail human nature has to deal with it. Overpress that Christianity is the religion of common life, and men will exaggerate the place and importance of good works. Overpress that Christianity is a spiritual religion, and men will soon take up with the idea that evil lies in matter itself, and then will try to separate themselves from every-day interests, responsibilities, and duties, and think that spiritual religion is best represented by hermits, monks, and nuns. This mistake is in no sense supported by the Scriptures. Our Divine Lord is precisely the example of a spiritual man who brought His spiritual life into relation with every-day, earthly scenes. And the first Christian teachers insist, most emphatically, that faith must be shown in the life, and they who believe must be careful to maintain good works. With great variety of treatment, with much persistency, this writer has argued that Christianity is a spiritual religion. He will not close his letter without making it quite clear that the spiritual is the practical. It is the sanctifying of the earth. It puts the tone into the commonplace. The best man of the world is the man of God. Of our Divine Lord it can be said, "The highest, holiest, manhood Thou." And after Him, and in the human measures, that should be true of all who bear His name. The plea of the writer in the closing verses of the previous chapter is this—Because we are spiritual members of a spiritual kingdom, therefore let us seek grace whereby, in meeting our human obligations, and fitting to our earthly places, we may serve God acceptably. And in this chapter he indicates some of the earthly spheres in which our spiritual life ought to find constant, free, and beautiful expression.

I. **The spiritual man's brotherly love.**—The new life which we have in Christ Jesus is essentially a sonship. The quickened soul, "born again," finds itself born into a family life, with relations and duties to Father, and to brothers. And even the anxiety with which we try to meet our obligations to our Father must not lift us away from our holy concern for our brothers. "If we do not

love our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" But the duty of brotherly love may be approached from a lower standpoint than this. It may, however, be more persuasive on us if we have not ourselves reached the higher spiritual levels. In times of persecution and temptation, such as the Jewish Christian Churches were passing through, there were constant calls to brotherly helpfulness. Some were deprived of their means of living, on account of their profession of faith in Christ. Brotherly love could help them over times of strain and stress. Some were weak in faith, and in grave peril of yielding to enticement and persuasion. Brotherly love could steady the feet that were sliding, and restore the fallen in the spirit of meekness. In family life the brothers are considerate and helpful one toward another. There is no jealousy. Each rejoices in the other's success; each shadows the other when he is imperilled; and each lifts the other when he falls. And within the brotherhood of the spiritual there should be the mutual bearing of burdens, which is the sure sign of brotherly love. The chief peril of brotherly love in a Christian community is the sectarian spirit, the dogmatism, and masterfulness, of exclusive and sectarian opinion. Brotherly love needs an atmosphere of mutual trustfulness, freedom to think, and freedom to let one another think.

II. **The spiritual man's hospitality.**—This is a virtue which takes various forms in adaptation to the social conditions of different ages and countries. Essentially it is cheerful willingness to give of our food and our shelter to those who may be journeying. Hospitality is temporary help, and help given in the form of a supply of passing bodily needs. It is seen in its simplest form in tribal life. The stranger is cheerfully entertained, and pays for all he receives by the news he brings or the pleasure of his conversation. So long as life is in its simpler forms hospitality to passers-by can be freely and safely given, as indeed it is in many parts of the world to-day. Civilisation changes the forms in which hospitality can be offered. Welcome of anybody and everybody to our homes becomes impossible; and there is danger of losing the spirit of hospitality, or of keeping it within such limitations as allow it to bear no impress of charity. The hospitality which had come to be only entertaining in order to be entertained our Lord severely condemned. The generous giving of our food and shelter to those who are temporarily brought within our range—as in times of convention, congress, etc.—is a distinctly Christian duty, an expression of the life of the "spiritual man." The importance of the duty to the Jewish Christian Churches, in their times of persecution, will readily be understood. Men were often driven away from their town, and in wandering to find work would be placed in grave difficulties. They could not expect to receive hospitality from the bigoted Jews; among them these wandering Christians would only be scorned. Their hope of food and shelter lay only in the hospitality of those who, with them, named the Christ-name, those who shared with them the spiritual life. And some of these wanderers proved to be "angels unawares;" in their brief visits ministering such spiritual blessings that they who offered the hospitalities were more richly blessed than those who received them.

III. **The spiritual man's sympathy with the persecuted.**—Whenever disabilities, afflictions, or persecutions come upon the Church, they directly affect certain individuals. *They* vicariously bear the burden for the whole Church, and therefore have special claim upon the sympathy of their fellow-members. What is said of the suffering "servant of the Lord" in Isaiah is continuously true—sublimely true of the Son of God, but in measures true of all the sons. We are too ready to say of the suffering ones, They are "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." We do not see or feel as we should that they are bearing

our burdens, and that therefore we should keep ourselves close knit with them in brotherly sympathy. There were some in bonds for Christ: the others should feel bound with them. There were some evil entreated for Christ's sake: the others should have a fellow-feeling, and realise how hard to bear bodily suffering may be. Persecution may be a thing of the past; the vicarious suffering of some for the many is not. And the few sufferers still claim the sympathy of the many.

IV. **The spiritual man's sanctifying of human relationships.**—The most prominent of these, and the typical ones, are connected with the sexes, and consequently the Scriptures illustrate the general relationships of human life by them. But it must also be added that Christianity, as a spiritual religion, distinctly raises the tone of the marriage relation, dignifies womanhood, and makes the natural relations spiritual friendships. The wrong is best conquered by the inspiration of the right. Find the full spiritual satisfaction in marriage friendships, and moral temptations altogether lose their power upon us. There is nothing active in us to which they can appeal.

V. **The spiritual man's culture of the spirit of contentment.**—The most enslaving thing to man is the love of money. It wakens a restlessness and a dissatisfaction with everything; it excites a pushing to get which is too often not only a pushing before others, but also a pushing aside of others. That love of money is altogether out of place in the spiritual man. This does not say a spiritual man may not find fitting spheres for his energy, his activity, his enterprise, his ambitions. It does say that the restlessness and undue worry should be kept down by a cherished spirit of contentment; a restful satisfaction in the assurance that God provides, and never leaves His people desolate; and when He does not permit worldly success to be attained, even by earnest and persistent endeavours, works some higher benediction through the discipline of disappointment. Take what sphere of the earthly life and relation we may, there is room for illustrating the tone and character which the spiritual man can put upon it all. "Let us seek grace, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God"—the God of the spiritual Christian—"is a consuming fire."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Brotherly Love.*—As the spokes of a carriage-wheel approach their centre they approach each other; so, also, when men are brought to Jesus Christ, the centre of life and hope, they are drawn towards each other in brotherly relationship, and stand side by side journeying to their heavenly home.—*J. F. Serjeant.*

Sonship involves Brotherhood.—The counsel of the writer was especially necessary, because times of peril and persecution tend to nourish self-interest, and to separate men from each other in order to secure *themselves* and *their own*. Brotherly love is the first result of Christian faith The sense of sonship to God carries with it the sense of brotherhood with those who are also sons of God. Brotherly love is—

I. **Based on a common birth.**—This is true of the human brotherhood. Nothing can create the sentiment but the idea of a common parentage. A gentleman of Marseilles, named Remonsat, shortly before his death, desired that his numerous family might be assembled about his bed. He acknowledged the delight which his children had afforded him by their affection and attachment, and especially for the tender love which they bore to one another. "But," continued he, "I have a secret to disclose, which will remove one of you from

this circle. So long as I had any hopes of living I kept it from you, but I dare not violate your rights in the division of the property which I leave you. One of you is only an adopted child—the child of the nurse at whose breast my own child died. Shall I name that child?" "No, no," said they with one accord, "let us all continue to be brothers and sisters." They who are *born of God, born from above, born of the Spirit,* are brothers by virtue of their very birth—spiritual birth.

II. **Sustained by a common fellowship.**—If brotherly love is to continue, the family must keep together. If members are separated by distance, they must be kept in touch by letters and by gifts. Brotherly love in Christ's Church is only maintained on the same condition. Those members always fail in this who are careless about keeping up constant relations.

III. **Expressed in a common service.**—It will always be found that the most loving members of a family are those who are most watchful of opportunities, and most ready to do kindnesses to the other members. And this is at least equally true of the brethren in the spiritual family of God.

Ver. 2. *On Behaviour towards Strangers.*—A dislike of strangers is one of the earliest developed, most permanent, and most widely diffused passions of mankind. Thus arises the feeling of dislike between nations. The antipathies that are summed up in the one word *race* constitute the chief part of the history of mankind. The secret dislike of strangers clings to humanity even after civilisation has conquered its grosser antipathies. It appears even under its religious transformations. Let us set down a few of the arguments which might impel Christians of differing name to cultivate, and earnestly seek for, the company of "strangers." 1. Communion with devout minds of ideas and habits foreign to our own is favourable to the vigorous development of all alike. The human race thrives on intermixture and intermarriage. Religious bodies which act on the non-intercourse principle soon lose their vigour, and sink from arrogant dogmatism into indifference. 2. Every Christian is a member of Christ, to whom all good men are assuredly dear, and we should strive to bring our sympathies into accord with those which burn in the bosom of the good Shepherd. To him *unity*—a real, social unity of heart and life—is the grand object of aspiration and prayer. 3. Every Christian has the prospect of being introduced sooner or later to every other Christian in existence, on the ground of the most intimate and eternal friendship—a friendship based on a common relation to redeeming Love. How vain, then, the shyness which shrinks in this world from intercourse with those who must be our companions for ever! It is the work of the Holy Spirit not only to reveal Christ to each of His members, but all the members of His body to each other.—*Edward White.*

Ver. 3. *Interest in Those under Disability.*—The writer bases an argument, by which to urge the duty of Christian consideration and sympathy, on the fact that we are all sharers in a common experience. That experience, however, comes with special heaviness on certain individuals, who should therefore be treated as burden-bearers for the rest.

Ver. 4. *Marriage.*—Society is generally in a sound and peaceful state, and its individual members virtuous and happy, in proportion as the nature of marriage is understood, and its obligations respected. The first efforts of wisdom in ancient lawgivers and poets were to render sacred the rights and duties of wedlock. But in almost every age, and especially in more matured states of society, there have not been wanting persons to maintain, in one form or another, that passion

ought rather to be destroyed than controlled; and that instead of aiming to ingraft refined and spiritual feelings on the animal instincts of our nature, these should be wholly eradicated. Marriage, to many of this class, has seemed but an unworthy compromise between the flesh and the Spirit. An equal contempt for marriage appears to exist in some who disgrace our age. Marriage is not below, but above, them; it is too pure, not too gross, for their taste. Proud of what they call liberty, they laugh at the restraints of marriage, while it can be avoided, and submit to it at length as to a catastrophe. With the discretion of a wise man, and the authority of an inspired man, the writer draws a firm line between the extremes of sensuality and spiritual asceticism; he denounces lust, but extols holy and wedded love. The sentiment of the text appears to be at variance with 1 Cor. vii., but the sentiments, though different, are not contradictory. The advice given in Corinthians applied to circumstances of present distress, in which a man might wisely limit his obligations.

I. **What things belonging to the marriage state render it honourable, and enable it, as we may say, to put honour on those who enter it.**—1. Its institution. The *time* when, the *place* where, the *manner* in which, the *Being* by whom, marriage was instituted, all increase the honour with which its institution invests it. 2. Its nature. It is a union of two, and only two, human beings; a union not only of hands but of hearts, of soul as well as body. There is in marriage, when its true nature is realised, a union of souls, whose affections intermingle until two spirits become one, and, by a mutual consciousness, understand each other's thoughts and share each other's feelings. It is this which meets the wants of our intellectual and moral natures. Marriage is a permanent union. We need not think that, although marriage terminates in death, the union which it involves must then also necessarily close for ever. We may cheerfully expect its renewal. 3. Its purposes. (1) The development of mind, formation of character, promotion of happiness, in all who are married. (2) The preservation and increase of the human species. (3) The education of the young in successive generations. (4) Its typical import also renders it honourable.

II. **What must be the course of those who would enter on and pass through it, so as to do honour to the state.**—1. Every step towards it must be taken in the fear of God. 2. If we would do honour to marriage, it must be solemnised with decency, according to the form prescribed by the laws of our country. 3. When marriage has been thus entered on, its duties must be steadily and cheerfully discharged. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Love, displaying itself in cheerful submission on the part of the wife, in gentleness of authority on the part of the husband, in soft words, kind actions, and delicate attentions on the part of both; love which takes the love of Christ to the Church, and the Church to Christ for its pattern; and becomes respectively, in turn, the image of each.—*Jonathan Glyde.*

The Honourableness of Marriage.—Probably this is an exhortation. "Let marriage be held honourable in all respects." Scripture never gives even the most incidental sanction to the exaltation of celibacy as a superior virtue, or to the disparagement of marriage as an inferior state. Celibacy and marriage stand on an exactly equal level of honour according as God has called us to the one or to the other state. The mediæval glorification of monachism sprang partly from a religion of exaggerated gloom and terror, and partly from a complete misunderstanding of the sense applied by Jewish writers to the word "virgins."—*Farrar.*

Ver. 5. *The Lawful and Unlawful Love of Money.*—A strict adherence to

the original gives us a very simple and beautiful form of this precept. "Let the turn (τρόπος) be unsilver-loving, and be contented with what comes to hand, for He Himself has said, I will never leave thee; no, never, no never forsake thee." There are some of the commands of the New Testament which, taken without the salt of wisdom, seem to be poisonous, and to strike not merely at the welfare but at the existence of society. Such are the precepts against the love of money. Everybody loves money. Without it no man can *live*. It is a natural and necessary instinct which makes us love possession. The love of getting is the basis of the love of giving. But the "love of money" in Scripture means love in a bad sense, in the sense of covetousness. It may become greed and avarice. 1. Do not seek after money in this world as if it were God, the chief good. 2. Do not fix upon any amount of property which you must obtain, or else set yourself down as in a state of destitution. 3. Steadily adhere to God's laws in the gaining, and in the expenditure, of property. In nothing is character more shown than in money matters. A man who is right here is usually right everywhere; a man who fails in money matters is probably corrupt to the core. We have just as much of the love of God as we have of the desire to submit to His rule in our personal affairs; and this is a test which will exclude multitudes from heaven. They banish God from their expenditure.—*Edward White.*

God with Us all the Days.—We can be sure of this, that God will be with us in all the days that lie before us. What may be round the next headland we know not; but this we know, that the same sunshine will make a broadening path across the waters right to where we rock on the unknown sea, and the same unmoving nightly star will burn for our guidance. So we may let the waves and currents roll as they list; or rather, as He lists, and be little concerned about the incidents or the companions of our voyage, since He is with us.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

No Leaving, No Forsaking.—This is God's own word of promise to his people. In giving it He has, as it were, sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater, pledging Himself to His faithfulness.

This promise is—

I. **Emphatic.**—"He hath *said*."
II. **Ancient**—"He *hath* said."
III. **Divine**—"*He* hath said."
IV. **Personal**—Not "us," nor "them," but "thee."
V. **Unconditional.**
VI. **Unalterable**—"Never."
VII. **Comprehensive**—"Never leave, never forsake."
VIII. **Unique.**
IX. **Has been tested.**

We have then—1. The promise of Divine presence. He will ever be with us as the Witness of our lives—the Comforter of our hearts—our sovereign Lord. 2. Divine assistance for every time of need.—*A. Griffin.*

Vers. 5, 6. *What is Characteristically Christian.*—It was usual for the Christian teachers to close their epistles with direct practical applications. Here doing so is especially appropriate, because it was necessary to show that morals and piety were substantially the same in both dispensations. We may, however, properly expect these things to be more refined in the new. Absolute trust in Jehovah was the attitude of the older Jews; and this was met by the bestowment of material and temporal rewards. In trying to lift them into the spiritual region, it might seem to the Jewish Christians that their teacher was unduly negligent of the material and temporal. Practical Christian obligations and duties had to be dealt with by our Divine Lord—as in the "Sermon on the Mount"; and by His apostles—as in the close of their epistles. In this chapter the

following practical things are dealt with. The duty of each Christian to his brother-Christian. The practice of hospitality. The expression of personal sympathy. The gaining of personal purity. Then there is summed up in the text the characteristic Christian tone. Three things are characteristically Christian.

I. **A manner of life that is characteristically Christian.**—Recall the New Testament use of the word "conversation." Our Christian "turning about" in all the thousand-fold relations of life is to be "without covetousness"—that is, without a trace of grasping or getting for self. Covetousness was the great Jewish sin. This Christ corrects, by becoming the supreme aim of the soul. When the *end* of conversation is Jesus Christ, it cannot be getting for self. For us covetousness is self-centredness; and the remedy is Christ-centredness. To be "without covetousness" is quite consistent with enterprise and ambition in life. We may win the noblest things if we mean to win in a Christly way, and hold for Christ's honour.

II. **A cherished spirit that is characteristically Christian.**—"Be content." Advice easily misunderstood. Contentment is very difficult to a master or a father, but not at all difficult for a servant or a son; and these represent the Christian relations. Contentment is not indifference, or listlessness, though the confusion between these very differing things is often made. 1. Contentment means cheerfully accepting our place and duty, whatever it may involve. 2. Contentment involves fully doing the duty, when it is placed before us. 3. Contentment is consistent with prayer for change. True prayer is contentment.

III. **A restful assurance that is characteristically Christian.**—"The Lord is my Helper." 1. We need covet nothing, since He gives all good. 2. We need be anxious about nothing, since He provides. 3. We need never be discontented, since what He gives must be best.

We know then three things that are characteristically Christian: 1. Making Christ our life-aim. 2. Accepting what He provides. 3. Resting our hearts in the sense of His presence with us.

Never Forsaken.—No need to name the Speaker—that majestic "He." Two speakers and their two sayings.

I. **God's speech from heaven to earth.**—"I will never leave thee." These words nowhere occur literally. In Old Testament. 1. *Jacob at Bethel* (Gen. xxviii. 15). The lonely pilgrim, with dim, dark future before him; we all face it sometimes. God speaks; the ladder descends, and bright in the blue star-depths the angels; "surely God is in this place." One man, with that Companion, always in the majority. 2. *Moses' dying words to Joshua* (Deut. xxxi. 7, 8). God ratifies it to Joshua afterwards (Josh. i. 5). The promise to a warrior on the eve of sore battle. "Count the cost, reckon the enemy's strength, but count not your resources and forget Me." Brennus' sword in the Capitol; Christ's sword flung in for us. 3. *David's dying words to Solomon* (1 Chron. xxviii. 20). Blessed are the parents who can so pass the covenant promise to their children. Pilgrim, warrior, builder—these sum up all our needs and all the promises. Its highest beauty in Christ's word (Matt. xxviii. 20).

II. **Man's answer from earth to heaven.**—"The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear" (Ps. cxviii.). The Revised Version says, "So that we *do*" (not may) "boldly say." We say we believe the promises: do we answer with perfect confidence—That promise I take for mine (Gal. ii. 20), "He is my Helper, so I shall not fear?" No use to say to a man, "Do not be afraid." World too strong for any man in it; life and death have tremendous powers to make cowards of the bravest. We would not be wise, if we were not, except on one condition: "*Believe*, and fear not." You can resolve, "I will trust"; then

surely comes the triumph and the shelter of the Divine companionship.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

The Joy of Memory.—The past struggles are joyful in memory, as the mountain-ranges—which were all black rock and white snow while we toiled up their inhospitable steeps—lie purple in the mellowing distance, and burn like fire as the sunset strikes their peaks.—*Ibid.*

Contentment based on Security.—The Revised Version makes important changes in these verses. "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we may say, The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?" The one thing that makes restlessness and anxiety in life is uncertainty. When we are quite sure about anything, we either quietly submit, or we brace ourselves up to deal with it, for its mitigation or its removal. If everything is uncertain, contentment is impossible. If there is anything absolutely certain and wholly reliable—whether it be so to our faith, or whether it be so in what we call "actual fact"—upon it contentment can be based. The writer of this epistle reminds his readers that, for them, there *is* something absolutely certain: there is the unqualified Divine assurance—the word of the ever-living God—"I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." In that unquestionable fact there was full ground on which to build a life of sweet content. What we have is secure to us, for He has given it. What we have not we are better without, for He has not thought fit to give it. What we wish for we may fully submit to His consideration who is always with us, and is our Helper to everything that is really good. The writer is evidently dealing with that kind of restlessness men feel when they want some more money. It is so easy to be caught and carried away by the love of money; so easy to think that every difficulty and anxiety of life would be mastered if only we had more money; and then it is so easy to fret and worry, and lose all contentment of heart, because of the limitations under which we are placed. The passage therefore has very pointed application to many of us in these days. We shall find our own applications of the counsels of this writer, if we consider—I. The spirit of Christian contentment; II. Something which makes Christian contentment impossible; and III. Something which provides a secure foundation for it.

I. The spirit of Christian contentment.—The apostle Paul tells us, that "godliness with contentment is great gain"; and it must be borne in mind that we are dealing, not with a commonplace virtue, which can be urged on purely moral grounds, and grounds of expediency, but with that virtue as it is purified, ennobled, and inspired by Christian principle and the Christian spirit. We deal with *that* contentment which has "godliness" at the heart of it. The counsel of the text is precisely addressed to Christian disciples, and to them as, by their Christian faith, put into limitations, and even brought under persecutions and sufferings. It is assumed that their anxious conditions are out of their own control; and it is altogether unbecoming for the Christian to fret at what cannot be helped. He ought to have power—through his life in Christ—to bring his mind to his circumstances; to cheerfully accept his lot; to make the best of it, and to do the best with it; to "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible." It is not an easy thing to speak wisely about "contentment," because it seems to oppose the restlessness of ambition, which is the inspiration of endeavour, and the secret of all progress. Man is a restless, discontented being, by virtue of his very endowment as a moral being. He is always wanting what he has not, always reaching out his hand for something, always pushing into some dark

place. And if he had not been thus, he could never have "replenished the earth and subdued it," never have developed his civilisation, and never have looked on this life as the training-school of the eternal life. It may even be said, that man's discontent is essential to his highest good, and that the individual and the nation are ruined when they become contented. A simple illustration will suffice to show this. The first inhabitants of the world massed themselves in the plains of Asia; and if they had been *content* there, the whole earth would never have been peopled and won. God filled them with restlessness and discontent, and they pushed out this way and that, streamed forth over hills and plains and rivers, and so the whole earth was won. Contentment is not the highest virtue for man, and it is not even for the Christian man. It may be the right thing at a particular time, and under particular circumstances, but we must be careful not to talk about it in an exaggerated way. Discontent may quite as truly honour God as content; but, given the condition of these Jewish Christians, and it may properly be urged that, for them, contentment was the duty of the hour. In pressing upon attention the claims of any one virtue, we are apt to forget that it must be developed in harmony with the development of other virtues. Christian enterprise, Christian hope, Christian ambition, must grow harmoniously with Christian contentment. A man who wants nothing is a poor, weak specimen of humanity, one who brings no honour to Christ. It is the man who wants desperately, and yet brings his want into obedience to Christ, and cheerfully accepts His will, who has the true contentment, and who honours Christ. In the "perfect man" in Christ there is this virtue of contentment; but it is proportionate with other virtues, and it is harmonious with a noble restlessness of discontent, which keeps the man "pressing toward the mark for the prize." And it may further be shown, that contentment can never be the same thing in every man, because it must always be relative to disposition, and our response to different circumstances. There really is not much credit in some persons being contented. The truth is, that they have everything which heart can wish for; or else the truth is, that they have not spirit enough to be discontented. Some are naturally of a contented disposition, and there is no more credit in their being contented than in their being bodily sound. The only contentment worth having is that which is *won* in the sore conflict of life against natural disposition and hindering circumstance. Think of the "Mark Tapley" of fiction, who considered it was no "credit to be jolly," unless circumstances were overwhelmingly distressing. A great many people are simply contented because they have no reason in the world to be anything else; and there is no Christian principle, no Christian triumph, in that. Contentment is put in the text in relation to "covetousness." It is the opposite of a wrong state of mind and heart. It is not opposed to the getting of money, which may be perfectly legitimate, and indeed, for us, the duty of the hour. It is opposed to the fretfulness which always comes with the *love* of money, the passion for money, the craving merely to possess. That is wrong, bad, from every point of view, ethical, religious, and Christian. That *love* of money for its own sake is the root of all evil. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." What we need to see is, that Christian contentment is a *soul-mood*, which properly belongs to the new life in Christ, and that necessarily attends upon that daily trust, dependence, and obedience which the Christian is ever seeking to nourish into strength. The life of faith on the Son of God is necessarily a life of soul-content that is quite consistent with active service. As a soul-mood it enables us rightly to appraise what we have; helps us to submit when we cannot have what

we would; and above all permits of our recognising Divine, wise love in the provision that is made *for us*, which our relations with God in Christ assure us are arranged in precise and particular adaptation to us. The right spirit is seen in a striking example, taken from the life of our Divine Master. In the hour of His arrest there was the soul-mood of content with what was so evidently the will of God concerning Him just then, that He could rebuke hasty Peter, saying, "Thinkest thou that I could not even now pray to the Father, and He would immediately send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Contentment is close kin with submission. To the open, trusting soul God's will is revealed, and then the fitting response is a quiet acceptance of what must be, and a cheerful falling back to enjoy what we have. Lest any of you should be discouraged, because in you are high hopes and ambitions, and you feel that it is hard to be told to let all go, and rest content with your poor, limited present, let me remind you that, like unselfishness, contentment begins with a "day of small things." It is but a germ in the character and life of the young, who very properly aim at high things, and mean to attain them. But the germ grows as life unfolds, and strain-times and cares and limitations nourish it. It comes to be the secret of peace—and of true power also—in the cultured Christian's life.

II. **There is something that can make Christian contentment impossible.**—"Be ye free from the love of money." Can we see the immediate application of these words? They were addressed to Jews; and grasping for money, scheming to get money, has been the Jewish characteristic through the long ages. It is the Rebekah-taint in the blood of the Abrahamic race. The Jews addressed in this epistle were trade-folk, busy getting money in the various towns where they dwelt. But becoming Christian proved a serious and often unexpected hindrance to their money-getting. It acted in two ways. Men cut off their dealings with them because of their faith in Christ. And they found that the Christ-conscience would not let them do the tricky things which they had done. So their incomes were failing, and they were tempted to apostatise, and fall back upon the old condition, which gave them free scope for their money-getting. The writer of the epistle appeals to them to master this money-loving, covetous spirit; to cheerfully accept their disabilities for Christ's name sake; to see what gracious provisions their Divine Lord was making for all their *real* need; and to be content with such things as they had. It was a time of temporary limitations, such as does come in the histories of families, and towns, and Churches. Such times come and pass, and we are called to be heroic while they pass over us. Do not fret about being unable to *get* money; be thankful for what you have got. Remember *He* is yours, and with you, who could say, "The silver and the gold are Mine." "Be content with such things as ye have: for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." Think how the cherished love of money may, in a time of strain, badly influence us, spoil our Christian spirit. It may put us on schemes; and schemes so inspired are sure to be grasping, inconsiderate schemes, that mean the ensuring of our success at the cost of our yet more suffering fellows—schemes with the strong self-seeking taint in them. The poor motive, the covetous feeling, will master good motives, and close our hearts to all sweet charities and generosities. And even more spiritually serious is the way in which the love of money nourishes *soul-trust* in money, and *that* effectually puts God out of our thoughts, and makes all beautiful, satisfying, happy reliance on Him well-nigh impossible. Indeed, when our thoughts are so fully occupied with this getting of money, and we find ourselves put into limitations here, and limitations there, it is not easy to keep

ourselves from complaining of God, as if, in some sort of wilfulness and forgetfulness of due consideration, He were dealing with us. Nothing He does seems to us to be right, for the love of money always spoils spiritual vision. Swell money-loving out into the spirit of the *miser*, and then ask, What sort of a God is the miser's God? Can he see God aright? Can he know Him as He is? Would you care to be known as the servants of the miser's God? Then let us beware lest any circumstances of life, or any negligences of our soul-culture, allow that love of money, that anxiety about money, to begin its fatal work in our souls" "Mammon" soon gets to be our god; and "ye cannot serve God and mammon."

III. **Something that makes contentment quite possible.**—Here again it must be kept in mind that the writer addresses Christians, and endeavours to meet *their* particular case and condition. It is assumed that there is in them a due sense of God, and of the importance of having God in gracious relations. Those in whose hearts and lives God is enthroned alone will appreciate His promise, "I will in no wise fail thee." Such a man has gained a right idea of his several possessions, and can put them in the right order of their value. What does he possess? *God.* That stands first. Then come, ranged in order, wealth, learning, family, and other self-things. The Christian possesses *God*, and in Him possesses all things. And our text does but help him to feel what all-satisfying possessions he has in having God. The Christian having God, God dominates him, makes his ends, as well as provides for his needs. He is no longer his own, and so no longer worries to secure the attainment of his own ends. But money-getting is a man's own end. It is never God's end for any man. It may be God's *means* of disciplining a man, or of giving him the material for some useful service; but it is well to have it clearly stated, that getting money never was, and never will be, the *end* which God sets before any man. God with us becomes the all-sufficient basis of the true Christian contentment. This is plain enough if we see what it involves. "I will in no wise fail thee." Can He fulfil so unqualified a word of promise? May we fill out that "in no wise," to the very uttermost of our ever-changing circumstances and needs? Is God so present that He has the actual control of our life? Is it true that not even a farthing sparrow falls to the ground without our Father? Is power adapted to us there? and wisdom, precise to meet our need, there? Is love, working in all ways of gentleness, there? And may we be sure that everywhere in our life God is; always working; never failing; never failing to carry out His purpose, and secure our highest good? "I will in no wise forsake thee." That is, I will not be absent at any time when I may be pressingly needed. The help is always efficient, and the help is always at command. On what safer basis could Christian contentment rest? But it is Divine help making its appeal to *faith*, not to sense or sight. It is the contentment of a living faith.

A Song of Contentment.—John Bunyan pictures his pilgrim in a time of sore strain comforted by hearing a little lad singing a song of peaceful, submissive content: "He that is down need fear no fall," etc. It is such a song for the soul which our text provides—a song that can be crooned over day and night, sung over and over again when the stress of life is great. Peace, quietness, content—soul-content, may keep up this music, and get it echoed back from the experience of the saints of all the ages —"The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Here is one echo that comes from a long-by past: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Here is another echo from times somewhat nearer to our own: "I am persuaded that neither

death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the sure ground of Christian contentment: "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7, 8.

The Example of Christian Leaders.—There is evident reference here to some well-known persons—well-known then, but wholly unknown to us—who had, in a remarkable way, borne their testimony to Christ, and endured a great fight of afflictions for His name's sake. It would perhaps be helpful to us if we did know something of them, but the story of Stephen will help us; the missionary life of St. Paul will help us; the martyrology of the early Church will help us. We need not unduly force meaning into the expression, "them that had the rule over you." Order in Christian communities is secured as order is secured in other communities—by the appointment of officers, and the voluntary submission to authority voluntarily entrusted to individuals. St. Paul says, "Not that we have dominion over your faith." The dominion was entirely in the range of outward order. The writer refers to some elder, or bishop, or apostle, or teacher—perhaps to more than one—who had gained the love and confidence of the Jewish Churches, and had recently been taken from them, probably to gain the martyr's crown. He makes but a passing allusion to the obedience which such leaders may claim; he fixes attention on the character—the spiritual character which they had borne; upon their faith, and upon the inspiration which Jesus Christ was to them. The "issue of their life," their supreme aim, had been the glory of Jesus Christ; yes, of Jesus Christ, who is worth glorying in, and whom we also should be glorying in, and glorifying, seeing that He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The subject suggested is the regard in which we should hold the Christian teachers, who, having nobly served us, have passed to their reward. The A.V. has, "whose faith follow." The R.V. has, "imitate their faith."

I. **We should regard our teachers for their work's sake.**—This may be difficult while the work is being done. It is not often that a man's work can be fairly estimated until all personal elements are withdrawn, and it can be calmly and dispassionately judged, fitted into its surroundings, and seen in its adaptations. But just such estimates we ought to form in order to the correction and improvement of our own service to Christ and our generation. What others have done is guidance and suggestion for us; it need not be the crushing of our individuality; it should be a direction of our individuality. The (1) method, and (2) sphere, of their work may be imitable; (3) the spirit of their work certainly is. In what an earnest worker has done, and the way in which he has done it, "he, being dead, yet speaketh."

II. **We should regard our teachers for their life's sake.**—"Imitate their faith." It was the motive-power of their lives, and it ennobled those lives. We say that what Christ *was*—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"—was even more important to His redemptive work than what He formally did. And the same is true of our Christian leaders. What they were, in gracious character, in spiritual power, in holy life, does more for us than any things they actually accomplished. If we endeavour to realise who the persons are that have most influenced us, we shall soon find that the list is composed almost entirely of saintly charactered men and women. We are reminded that we too are gaining our best power on our fellows, not by what we *do*, but by what we *are* in the spirit of the doing.

III. **We should regard our teachers for their aim's sake.**—"Considering the issue of their life"—"the end of their conversation; Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." You can never read a Christian teacher or leader's work aright, save as you estimate the measure in which Christ was the inspiration of it. Did Christ lead to noble endeavour? Did Christ guide to wise methods? Did Christ help to endure? Did Christ touch all doing and all relation with heavenly, Divine charity? Was it that one aim—the honour of Christ—that ennobled their lives? Then we know what can also ennoble ours.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 7. *Christian Fasts and Festivals.*—The Church contemplates the observance of a number of special days, not Sundays. The weekly festival does indeed stand out from among all the others as the most important and most imperative upon the Church. It is the Divine institution of the Mosaic law carried into Christianity, and changed from the seventh day of the week to the first by apostolic usage. But it does not follow that our meeting together to worship God should be confined and limited to this weekly festival. Taking our stand on the recognised principle of commemorating the Resurrection, and therein the blessings and the glories of the gospel promises, does it not seem, at the first glance, reasonable, that if we can, with due judgment, light upon any other great leading events connected with the life of our Redeemer, or with those holy men whom He associated with Himself, and with each other, to be the pillars upon which His Church was to rest, we should appoint subsidiary days for their commemoration also? The Church has appointed thirty-six especial days throughout the year. Three sorts of days are mentioned by the Church as holy days. 1. Those which relate to some leading events connected with the life of our blessed Lord Himself. 2. The commemoration of the apostles and other saints of the Church. 3. The days of fasting and humiliation. Doddridge paraphrases the text thus: "Remember those dear and venerable persons who, having formerly presided over you in holy things, have spoken unto you the word of God, whose course is now finished. Though all your intercourse with them is for the present cut off, do not, however, forget their instructions and their examples, but be mindful of that faith which they taught and exercised, and let it be your great care to imitate them, considering the end of their conversation: reflect on the happy manner in which they quitted life, on that support which they found in their latest moments, from the truths which they had taught you, and on that heroic resolution with which some of them were animated to meet even martyrdom itself in that sacred cause; and let the remembrance of these things engage you steadfastly to retain their faith, and courageously to follow their steps." This is just the spirit of the apostle's meaning. He refers more particularly to his predecessors, James the apostle, and probably James the bishop of Jerusalem, both of whom had suffered martyrdom shortly before; and he exhorts them, and through them the Christian community for ever, to be mindful of those benefactors under God, who had laboured in the teaching of the word, and had sealed their labours with their blood. He bids them, though their intercourse in the flesh had been cut off, still to remember their instruction and example in "the communion of saints." Old divines are not backward in their opinions on this duty of the Church. Jeremy Taylor says: "The memories of the saints are precious to God, and therefore they ought also to be to us; and such persons who serve God by holy living, industrious preach-

ing, and religious dying, ought to have their names preserved in honour, and God be glorified in them, and their holy lives and doctrines published and imitated; and we by so doing give testimony to the article of the communion of saints." The learned Hooker says: "Touching those festival days, which we now observe, their number being noway felt discommodious to the commonwealth, and their grounds such as hitherto have been showed, what remaineth but to keep them throughout all generations holy, severed by manifest notes of difference from other times, and adorned with that which most may betoken true, virtuous, and celestial joy?" "They are the splendour and outward dignity of our religion, forcible witnesses of ancient truth, provocations to the exercises of all piety, shadows of our endless felicity in heaven, on earth everlasting records and memorials, wherein they which cannot be drawn to hearken unto that we teach, may only by looking on that we do, in a manner read whatsoever we believe."—*William J. E. Bennett, M.A.*

Preachers and Hearers.—Here are given three tests of a spiritual leader: 1. He speaks God's message; 2. He lives for heaven; 3. He has faith in a personal Saviour. And there are three duties of the hearer: 1. To remember the messenger for his message's sake; 2. To observe the testimony of his holy life; and—3. To imitate his personal faith. God's heaven-sent leaders deliver a heaven-given message. It is according to the written word (Isa. viii. 20; Jer. xxiii. 28). Again, they speak the language of positive conviction, not negations, but affirmations (2 Cor. i. 17-20); and, again, they are attended by spiritual power (1 Cor. ii. 1-4). The word is God's, the conviction of a believer is behind it, and the Spirit's demonstration attends it. Moreover, it is with solemn earnestness, not frivolity (see Jer. xxiii. 32). The declaration of the message is *experimental*, for it is backed by a personal faith in a personal Saviour. No unconverted man is fit to preach or teach the gospel. The master of Israel must know these things heart-wise. The centre of his message is Christ, and He must be the centre of his heart's faith and love and hope. If the truth is the ball, and the mouth the cannon, the explosive force behind the ball is the heart's passion for Jesus. Such faith will be further *confirmed and exhibited* in a life which is under the power of eternal realities and whose end is Christ, heaven, and the glory of God. The thought is progressive. God's leader speaks the word for God; convinced of its truth, he is led by it to a personal Saviour whom that word enshrines, and that faith remoulds and remodels his life.—*Anon.*

Considering their End.—"Attentively considering the end of their manner of life, imitate their faith." That is, calling to mind the peaceful and happy, possibly even the triumphant, death of those religious teachers among you, who gave you instruction respecting the word of life, imitate their faith, persevere in your Christian profession, as they did, to the very end of life. There may be a glance at the martyr-death of St. Stephen.

The Duty of imitating Departed Worth.

I. **The exhortation itself.**—"Whose faith follow." 1. Holding fast as they had done, to the end of life, the word of the Divine testimony. 2. Cleaving with the same steadfastness of faith to the Divine promises. 3. Imitating their faith in all its practical effects.

II. **The motive by which compliance with it is recommended.**—"Considering the end of their conversation." 1. Contemplating their state in dying. 2. Considering their death as the final close of their earthly service. 3. Looking on their departure from this life as the commencement of a better.—*R. Wardlaw, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *The Unchanging Christ.*—The writer of this epistle has been speaking of change. The old covenant was no more. The "many priests" had not continued by reason of death. The eleventh chapter is the record of the multitudes who had gone without seeing that for which they waited. This perpetual change was continuing itself in the Church. The Jewish Christians had seen their leaders taken away. It is as with a sigh of weariness that the writer closes his admonition to remember these, to call to mind their fidelity in death. Then the ejaculation is uttered by him, broken and fragmentary, but the breathing of a name: "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever." All is not changeful; He abides. The teachers go; Jesus Christ remains. You have other leaders, we have other fellow-labourers; but not another Lord. So He rests, so they may rest; Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. 1. A change in our own lives makes all things seem unstable. Change, ceaseless, wearisome change, seems to be written on everything. When this is specially brought home to us, we feel the comfort of this text. 2. There comes on men sometimes a terrible fear of change. Those who know how terrible the changes of life can be are startled by little things, *e.g.* the unknown handwriting on a letter. There is no cure for such a terror of changes, there is no security, no hope, for man, save in Him who is unchanging. The longing for rest, the desire for what is stable and unchanging—this is our deepest want; it grows and strengthens in us as we grow older, wiser, better men. Is life to be all weary and changing? Till we enter on our final rest, is there no continuance? The text speaks of One who is even now unchanging. All is not fleeting; Christ is the same. Before we go to Him, He has come to us, and with us He remains, the longed-for changeless One. The words of the text are intended to give us just this assurance. The secret of our confidence in a changing world is the unchangeable Christ. Let time bring with it what it may, we are assured of His fidelity. "Yesterday" we found Him precious; He is the same "to-day," solacing our newest grief. "Yesterday" we heard His voice; His name was on the lips of those who spoke to us the word of God. The teachers are gone, or we have outgrown them. But He is still the same; the Truth is with us. The deep reality of life abides the same. The words "for ever" fall strangely on our ears; the solemn future is unknown and unimaginable. We often fall back baffled in our endeavours to grasp the mystery of the world to come. But again the thought of the immutable One bears us up out of the confusion of changing things. There will be more familiarity than strangeness there, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He will not be unknown; He will be recognised who quickened, guided, sustained us, who was the steadfastness and identity of our passing earthly life. To those Christians who would read the words translated "for ever" in their original form, "unto the ages," they would have a further suggestion. They were accustomed to look on God's purpose in the universe as unfolding itself in a series of æons or dispensations. In the world to come there may be further dispensations, each fulfilling a thought, and all illustrating the mighty being of God. Here are changes, grand, stupendous, unimaginable. But in the midst of all is seen one unchanging Christ. Let dispensation follow dispensation, and the æons of the æons still open up, and broaden out, and deepen on, and lengthen themselves, immeasurable, inconceivable; Jesus Christ is "the same unto the ages." The text does not speak of a *thing* that is the same, or even of a *truth* conceived to be the same, but of a *Person* who is the same. It is in our personal relations that we feel the identity or the changes of life. It

is a Person, abiding ever, unchanging ever. He who is most of all to us, the life of our soul, whose love awoke us to life's true value, whose care gave us first to know how deep and real friendship may be. Amidst the flux of things, the flow of events, the heart rests on one unchanging Friend.—*A. Mackennal, B.A., D.D.*

Christ ever the Same.—It is difficult to trace the connection of this verse. It seems to be inserted abruptly. The expression in ver. 7, "the end of their conversation," is suggestive of the persecutions and martyrdoms of God's saints; and then we may regard the text as a comforting assurance of the all-sufficiency of the living Christ, and we may recall how the sight of Him strengthened Stephen, the first Christian martyr. This view is quite in harmony with the spirit and the general subject of this epistle. The text is not so much suggestive of the doctrine of the person of Christ, as comforting to those who were almost overborne by temptation and trial. What a present, personal God was to David, that the present, personal God, in Christ, was to the apostles. If the element of the "ever-living Christ" were subtracted from the gospel, we should have only a dead mass of doctrines which could but corrupt as all earthly things corrupt. The text involves three things, and puts Christ in two contrasts.

I. **It involves the Deity of Christ.**—For it is the assertion of His immutability, His unchangeableness. The Deity of Christ is the key-stone of the gospel-arch. We say "Deity" because the term "Divinity" is used by some to indicate subordination and inferiority. (Illustrate by Socrates' *daimon*.) The proof of the Deity of Christ which comes from the more incidental references is found by the devout reader to be more satisfying and impressive than the proof from formal texts. This we cannot but *feel* as readers of the New Testament. The attributes which exclusively belong to Deity are applied to Him. Eternal: "I am the first and the last . . . am alive for evermore." Omniscient: "And Jesus knowing their thoughts"; "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." Omnipotent: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." The meaning of the sublime name of God, the "I am," is given to us in this text.

II. It involves the sufficiency of Christ's work for us. Unchangeable involves **sufficiency and completeness.** If the work of Christ were *imperfect*, it would need the change of alteration and completion. But it is declared that "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them who are sanctified." There never can be another way of salvation. You make Christ to be a changeable one if you indulge the hope that He will save in any other than the gospel-way.

III. **It involves Christ's living and saving relations with us.**—As our "Prophet, Priest, and King." The unchangeableness of Christ is our title-deed to all the preciousness that the saints of all ages have found in Christ. What He was to them yesterday, He is to us to-day, and He will be to our children to-morrow. Then what has Christ been to the early Church, to the persecuted, to the martyr, to the sufferer? Nay, what has He been to *us*, in the experience of our own past?

IV. **The text puts Christ in contrast with our associations.**—It sets over against each other the changing world and the unchanging Christ. Moore's verse, "I never sought a wild gazelle," etc., expresses the feeling of men in every human pursuit. The changeableness comes out of the presence of sin, the consciousness of sin, and the struggling for immortality. The hold on anything earthly must be a shifting and uncertain hold. They only hold firm, and find what they hold to be firm, who hold Christ.

V. **The text puts Christ in even stronger contrast with ourselves.**—

If He is ever the same, certainly we are not, either in circumstance or in feeling. "Though we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." Man can no more be satisfied with *himself* than with the *world*. The unchangeable One offers Himself as the ground of confidence to the changeable: "Let him stay upon his God."

Conclusion.—Let meditation take form that may prepare hearts for partaking of the Holy Sacrament. Fill up thoughts with the preciousness of Christ. Try the claimants to our love by this test—Will they keep ever the same? *Ours will.* The same, ever the same, even through the last water-floods.

The Sameness of Jesus Christ through all Ages.—In every sense of the word Jesus was and is *the same*, both in the sense that His character was the same all through, and that it is unchanged and unchangeable. His aim was one; His character was always the same. The character of Jesus stands up unabashed under that inconceivably great trial of the question, Is it suitable to the idea of God manifest in the flesh? It is. There is no break where weakness appears—no pride, no vanity, no rashness, no violence, no sentimental weakness, no levity, no presumption, though "thinking it not robbery to be equal with God." By an easy transition we rise from *this* sameness of Jesus to the sameness of His unchangeableness in glory. Other men change in the different periods of their life, and often within short spaces of time. But Jesus is the same everywhere and always. And this same Jesus was taken up from us into heaven unchanged and unchangeable. It is the same Jesus who is "within the veil." And He is there, what He was below, the soul of comfort.—*Edward White.*

The Everlasting Name.—Ages are to roll by; nations are to die, and nations are to rise and to take their places; laws are to grow old, and from new germs laws are to unfold; old civilisations are to crumble, and new eras are to dawn with higher culture; but to the end of time it will be seen that this Figure stands high above every other in the history of man! "A name which is above every name" was given to Him—not for the sake of fame, but in a wholly different sense; a name of power; a name of moral influence; a name that shall teach men how to live, and what it is to be men in Christ Jesus.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

The Ground of our Confidence.—A sublime contrast with *things*, with *others*, and with *ourselves*. Two things man yearns for—unity and constancy. This unity is the inspiration of knowledge, which is trying to find *the One*. This constancy is the secret of man's interest in the *reign of law*. Can man ever get unity save in God, or constancy save outside his own sphere? Text an illustration of the abrupt construction, the bursting in of an exclamation in the course of an argument, which is characteristic of St. Paul; or rather, of all composition rhetorically constructed. "Jesus is the same," etc.; therefore you who are followers of these "witnesses" may have abundant consolation and strength, in the assurance of the living presence of Christ. He is the same (1) in His *work* yesterday; (2) in His *grace* today; (3) in His *glory* for ever. The same essential purpose has moved Him, and moves Him ever. How this central truth comes to us: 1. Freshening the story of our fathers. See what Christ was to them. 2. Lifting the load of the present. See what Christ is, and can be, to us. 3. Filling us with peace in view of the future. See what that future must have in it. No loneliness for us anywhere in that mysterious future; for the Christ whom we love, and now have in dear fellowship, is ever *the same.*

Ever the Same.—Such a proclamation of the personality, uniqueness,

eternity, immutability, of the great object of faith, appropriately follows the mention of "faith," and precedes the exhortation to simplicity and stability of belief and profession.

I. **The essential attributes of the Saviour's person, as the eternal and unchangeable Son of God.**

II. **The Lord Jesus, as unalterably the same in the office He sustains as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of believers.**

III. **The Lord Jesus is ever the same in His kind and compassionate dispositions towards His people.**

IV. **The Lord Jesus is unchangeably the same in His adherence to the declarations and requirements of His word.**

Learn—1. To anticipate the progressive advancement and final triumph of the Christian cause. 2. To rely on the fixed terms and settled arrangements of the gospel. 3. How great the encouragement which believers may draw from the grace of their Redeemer, amid all the trials and difficulties of the Christian course. 4. Whence come the strongest consolations and supports amid all the losses and vicissitudes of this mortal state. —*Prof. Crawfurd.*

The Unchanging Friend.—Two views have been taken of this passage. In our English Version "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is the end or aim of the conversation of those teachers and martyrs whose example of constancy and sacrifice is so earnestly commended. They toiled and suffered, inspired by the hope that thus they should honour Christ. Many, however, think that our text is better treated as a separate sentence—the words "end of their conversation" completing the writer's reference to the martyrs, and poetically indicating the heroic deaths by which they sealed their faith. Then our text is seen to be an instance of abruptness, of thrusting in a sudden thought which comes to him, which we know was characteristic of the apostle Paul, and which is freely illustrated in the writings admitted as written by him. We will take the verse as standing alone, and specially suitable as a motto. It is the utterance of a thought flashing suddenly through the writer's mind, and breaking in on the subject with which he is dealing. Turning for a moment from the example of the teachers whose faith we are to follow, this writer reminds us that Jesus Christ is all to us that He has ever been to others, nor need we fear the future, for He will be to us all that we have ever found He is. In this way the sentence stands fully out before us, distinct and clear, as a motto on which to base the sacramental meditations for a new year. Jesus Christ is ever the same; therefore all you who are followers of the holy witnesses may have their consolation. No one has any need to envy the apostles their fellowship with a Redeemer in the flesh, since to him that Redeemer both is and will be all that He ever was. He ever liveth. His offices as Prophet, Priest, and King are continuous, reaching right up to the *for ever* of our necessity. I am very often speaking to you on the subject which is, of all others, of intensest interest to me, about which I am always wanting to learn something more, and which I want to see from every possible point of view—the veritable humanity of our Lord, the mystery of the "Man Christ Jesus." This much we can plainly see—that taking upon Himself our nature makes the Divine redemption to be a moral force on moral beings. It operates in sublimer degrees, but in the same ways as those in which men influence their fellow-men. Jesus Christ became a man that He might exert a man's power on men. That is one side of truth; but we must see the other side. The full redemption—including both the justification and the sanctification—of fallen, sinful, morally helpless man must be an immediate and continuous operation of Divine power. This is true—He

who saves the moral being man must be man. But this also is true—He who saves the morally ruined moral being man must be God; and therefore the essential attributes of Deity are shown to belong to Jesus Christ, who "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." That which this sentence asserts concerning Christ is the familiar Bible declaration concerning God. "His years have no end." The very striking expression in the ninetieth Psalm comes at once to mind: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." But this unchangeableness is an assertion which we dare not make concerning any *things*. "The fashion of this world is ever passing away." "The moth or the rust" are corrupting everything; and the constant change of form and place has become so familiar to us that something of its exceeding painfulness has gone, and we only feel it oppressively when the changes take unusual or severer forms. The whirl of time brings ever-changing day and night, wintry bareness, spring buddings, summer fulness, and autumn droppings. Grand cities fall to ruins; abbey and cathedral and castle stand roofless, all covered over with the creeping ivy. Nations pass away. The mighty, gallant warships presently rot idly away in the harbours. All round the circle of life our thought goes, and it can find nothing of which it may say, "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "Dew, like liquid crystal, often bespangles the garment in which the young day presents himself rejoicing before us. But what so transient, so visionary, as the dew of the morning? It is the very type of instability. It greets us silently, with soft glances from its myriad of myriads of eyes. We hail it, admire it—we feel young in its presence; but it is gone, exhaled in an hour." It is an assertion that we dare not make concerning *other persons*. Of all the unutterably painful things of human life, one stands out as supreme. It is the changeableness of the friends in whom we have trusted, thinking them to be true, and constant, and faithful. The psalmist finds words which many of us have wanted in the bitter hours of life: "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it . . . but it was thou, a man mine equal, my companion, and my familiar friend." Who among us has failed to learn, in life's stern hours, that it is hopeless work putting our trust in princes or in the sons of men? Who does not feel that he must lift his eyes away from his fellow-men, since of none of them can it ever be said they are the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? We cannot even use such expressions concerning *ourselves*. We are not what we were yesterday. Probably not one particle of our body of to-day, from head to foot, inside or out, is the same as our body of twenty years ago. We do not think to-day as we thought twenty years ago. Our experiences are as changing as the varieties of the daily atmosphere in our most changeable climate. Sunny days of glowing pass to wintry days of chill. Spring breathings that waken life give place to wild winds that bruise the flowers and strip the branches, and to biting frosts that nip off the budding life, and drive the sap back again to the shelter of the roots. We may find the image of the world, of men, and of ourselves as we lie on the smiling river-bank and watch the ships go by. They are ever passing, passing, some to their "harbour under the hill," some out to the ocean sailing. A line against the sky as we watch them coming. Beautiful with their "bellied sails" as we watch them go by. A line on the far horizon as they reach away out to the open west. On, on! the voice sounds day by day. Here is no rest, is no rest. "We've no abiding city here." Nothing stays the same. For earthly things there is no enduring. And yet the writer

of this epistle, fearless of contradiction, claims this unchangeableness for the Lord Jesus Christ. The text is almost the closing word of an epistle which has presented with unusual fulness and vigour the Divine claims of Christ, who is declared to be greater than man, higher than angels, "brightness [outshining] of the Father's glory, and express image of His person." Our text is really an efficient summary of the teaching of the epistle concerning our Lord. In no more vigorous language could he set our Lord forth as distinct from things, distinct from men, crowned with the attributes and bright with the glories that belong alone unto God. "Yesterday, to-day, and for ever" is a Hebrew form of expression; and the addition of "the same" to it makes it denote immortality, and proclaim the personality, uniqueness, eternity, Divinity, of the sole Object of our faith. The doctrine of the person of Christ is the prominent doctrine of our times. About it all the battle rages. Think for a moment how that doctrine gradually unfolded in the first century. At first Jesus was evidently a man, and apprehended by everybody as a man. He was the Nazareth carpenter's son; and what Joseph and His mother knew about the mystery of His birth nobody else knew. He grew up at Nazareth a man among men. Not until He was thirty years of age was there any open ground for suspecting the deep mystery that surrounded Him. Even when He stood forth as a teacher most people could see only a man. Even when He did mighty works as a physician most people could only see an endowed man. All through His life the highest view the majority could take of Him was that He was a gifted prophet. If we realise the kind of thought which the people had of their anticipated Messiah, conceiving that He would prove a grander Judas Maccabæus, a second and more glorious soldier-hero for the nation, we shall feel that nothing more than a Divinely endowed man was expected by them. Moreover, the Jews were possessed with a profound passion for the conservation of one truth—the truth of the *unity* of God. They were not in the least likely to entertain the idea that Jesus was God. They would not believe that the Divine rights could be shared with any one. They were offended, and accused him of blasphemy, when our Lord claimed the Divine authority to pronounce forgiveness of sins. At the present day our Christian setting of the Trinity, and our claim of Deity for Christ, are the grave stumbling-blocks in the way of the conversion of the Jews, who denounce us Christians as worshippers of many gods (polytheists), on account of these doctrines. It does not appear that it was a part of our Lord's mission to state in so many words what He claimed to be. It was His duty to *live*, and to *be*. The due impression of these would certainly be made. Privately and incidentally He did say who He was; but even in these instances He used ambiguous terms. He left our world, having started mighty wonderings and questionings in the minds of His disciples. They had a general impression of His life and relations which, at the time, they could not translate. They were prepared for the apprehension of the higher truth in the illumination of the Holy Ghost. The impression produced by Christ's completed life, death and resurrection, and ascension may be put into a single word. All who had to do with Him felt that there was about Him a "beyondness," an inexplicable something, a strange separateness. He was with them, but He was above them, beyond them, otherwise than they. It is a question whether any of those who knew Christ in the flesh ever put it to themselves while He lived—"Why, this is God." The impression was on their hearts, but it had not gained shape or words. Olivet, Pentecost, and after Pentecost, were the revealers of the meaning which they had failed to find. Two men more particularly formulated this truth for the disciples. Just as the spirit,

the truth, the principles of the Reformation, were in the deep heart of Germany long before Luther arose, and he only found for that Reformation a voice, so the unuttered feeling of the Deity of Christ was in the deep heart of the early Church, and the apostles Paul and John did but find for it a voice. The truth itself was the impression left by our Lord's life: the shaping of the truth was given by the inspired genius of two apostles. Paul's representation differs from John's, because Paul had to deal with idolatry and superstition, the belief in inferior and attendant divinities, and it was necessary for him to assert the absolute uniqueness and sole authority over all things which Christ claimed. John had to deal with a specious philosophy, which said that Jesus the man received a Divine Spirit at His baptism, and this Spirit left Him a mere man again before His crucifixion. It was necessary therefore for him to defend the reality of the Incarnation. Evangelical Christianity then has one distinct foundation-truth on which it rests. And it is an everlasting rock. They are other truths which we hold to be essential to the faith. But the one characteristic foundation of evangelic Christianity is the proper Deity of the Lord Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh." First recognised as Jewish Messiah, then declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead; at last, the fullest and deepest in Him is discerned, and we ascribe the Divine attribute of unchangeableness to Him who "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is a fact, but it should be much more; it should be an experience, something which we find out and feel for ourselves, something which we can only get by the study of the historical Christ, and the communion of the living Christ.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—17.

The Reproach of the Spiritual.—Though anxious about many things appertaining to life and godliness, the mind of the writer readily returns upon his one great anxiety. He cannot close his letter without one more earnest appeal on behalf of that spiritual dispensation which was entered on accepting Jesus as Messiah and Saviour. Recalling other old figures with which the Jewish Christians were familiar, he pleads again with them, not to be "carried away by strange doctrines"; not to be distressed because they were excommunicated and reproached; but to enter so fully into their spiritual privileges and duties, that, having their interest wholly engaged, they might cease to trouble over the loss of old relationships. This is the general idea of the passage, but it needs a more careful and detailed attention. It is a difficult passage if its language be treated apart from its connections, and from the purpose of the writer. The difficulties readily pass when we understand the anxiety of the writer, and the conditions of those who were directly addressed. It appears that the epistle was not sent to the Jewish Church *in Jerusalem—that* was under apostolic guidance—but to the Churches of Jewish Christians in other parts; away from Jerusalem, perhaps through persecutions, perhaps through business exigencies. Then, and through all the ages since then, the Jews had an intense, passionate love for their holy city, a love which we can but very imperfectly estimate. It was a great strain on patriotic and religious feeling to live away, so that access to Jerusalem for the feast-times was practically impossible. This feeling for the city was matched by the Jewish feeling for the Mosaic ceremonial, which was still, at least partly, represented by the Temple worship. They lived indeed in the past rather than the present; and this writer meets the cherished feeling of the more pious Jews

by referring so entirely to the times of the tabernacle, when the ceremonials were observed strictly according to the Mosaic pattern. Jews, in becoming Christians, in no sense lost their patriotic love for Jerusalem, or for that old system of rites and sacrifices which had been the religion of their fathers, and their own religion until they had been called into the spiritual religion of the Son of God. We must understand their feelings in order to realise how they were affected by the persecutions under which they were brought, and how severely they felt the threatenings and enticements of their old Judaic friends. In naming the name of Christ they had been virtually, perhaps actually, put out of the synagogues, excommunicated, and no longer allowed to take part in sacrifice and feast. The Christian teachers never required them to break with their old Temple associations. Both our Lord Himself and His apostles, throughout their lives, preserved their Jewish relations, and observed their Mosaic customs. It was not the policy of early Christianity to break with Judaism. In good time, in the providence of God, the Jewish ceremonial would fall away; the system was decaying; almost all the life was already gone out of it; and soon the Romans would put the final stroke to it and bury it for ever. But the Jews—the intense, bigoted Jews—forced the separation, and compelled the Jewish Christians to take a definite attitude, and satisfy themselves, if they could, with the spiritual religion which they had chosen. Those Jewish Christians had to endure the enticements of friends, who would use all kinds of arguments to induce them to return back to the old formal religious system of their fathers. And, among other things, we may be quite sure they would sneer at the spirituality of the Christian religion, and say: "See, you have no tabernacle, no altar, no sacrifice, no feast, no day of atonement, no priest. You have nothing but a sentimental notion that Jesus of Nazareth is alive; and all that you and we really know is that He was crucified. How ridiculous such a vague and unsubstantial religion looks beside such a formal and stately system as Mosaism, which has the imprint of Divine authority, and the testimony of efficiency from saintly souls through the long ages!" The allurements and persuasions were seriously affecting the Christians, and filling the hearts of the Christian teachers with grave anxiety. This epistle throughout bears on this perilous condition of the Jewish Christian Churches. And the argument is this —the spiritual alone is the real. We do not want to spiritualise those old ceremonials. We want to bring to light the spiritual things that were in—pictured in—those old ceremonies. The time has come when men can have the spiritual realities, and may be willing to let the pictures fade away. Do not be unduly moved when they say that, because the religion of Christ is spiritual, it can have no tabernacle, no altar, no sacrifice, no priest. It has the spiritual reality of all these things that was at the heart of all the old formality. Christianity has a spiritual tabernacle, a spiritual sacrifice, a spiritual Priest. If you would enter fully into the spiritual, you would be wholly satisfied, you would find that you were lifted up to a higher plane, and could not possibly go back to the "weak and beggarly elements," as St. Paul calls them. Danger always lies in half-heartedness. When professing Christians did not enter fully into the spiritual truth and spiritual privilege, they were exposed to the full force of temptations, which had no force at all on whole-hearted men and women. In the midst of a series of practical counsels concerning the Christian life and relationships, the writer is reminded again of the one great message he had been trying so variously to present to them. Ere he closes his letter he will state his point once again, and then end with some kindly greetings. His message all through has been, "Be not carried away by divers and strange teachings." His plea all through is—Enter fully into the spiritual apprehension of that religion whose tabernacle is not made with hands, whose sacrifice is the

surrender of an obedient will, and whose Priest is the risen, ascended, glorified Son of God.

I. **The inefficiency of the merely material in religion.**—Because forms and ceremonies are found useful, men easily get to say that they are essential. The truth is that, like fire and water, they are good servants, but bad masters. The old Mosaic system had for a long time been a mere automaton, a machine that kept up a routine working. There was no ark, and no mercy-seat, and no Shekinah glory in the Holy Place. That is the difficulty of all ritual religion. It is good while the life is in it, but it is always in peril of losing its life, and then becoming worse than worthless. The writer has already urged that formal ceremony could "not make the comers thereunto perfect," as pertaining to the conscience. No sacrificial or sacramental system can ever touch the conscience. He reminds of all the former teachings when he says of the "meats" and drinks and divers washings of Judaism, that they did "not profit those who were occupied therewith." Those who stood up so valiantly for the old Mosaic system had no real ground for their over-confidence. The real value of the material system was the spiritual truth which was in it, and found temporary expression by means of it. If it be said that there must be a material element in the religion that is adapted to man, still it must be anxiously and persistently urged—Keep the material element in its place, and in strictest limitations. It has a strange power of encroaching; it can cover over, hide, and even stifle the spiritual. The material form of doctrine has often stifled spiritual truth; and the material form of services and sacraments has often stifled spiritual life. It cannot be too constantly urged that religion becomes inefficient in proportion as it becomes formal and outward, a matter of postures, and garments, and rites, and services, and self-restraints. On Christianity this sign is fixed: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

II. **The exclusiveness of spiritual religion.**—To use a colloquialism, we may say that the writer "turns the tables upon" the mischievous Judaising teachers. They had pleaded that the Jewish Christians, even if they kept up association with Judaism, could have no real part or lot in it. Its altar was not for them. Its sacrifices could be of no avail for them. This writer says—Tell them that we have an altar, of which they, who serve the tabernacle, have no right to eat. They will not let you share their privileges, which lie on but a low level. You take high ground with them, and say—You *cannot* share our spiritual privileges. Your material-mindedness makes it impossible. The exclusiveness of spiritual religion is something which belongs to the very nature of things. The carnally, materially-minded cannot know them; they are spiritually discerned. No judicial act is necessary; he simply *cannot*. The spiritual man can, on all fitting occasions, and in all wise ways, use ceremonials, but the ceremonial man can do nothing with the spiritual. He is necessarily shut out, excluded. He cannot eat at this altar. Becoming spiritual-minded creates no stand-offness of the Pharisee, who says, "I am holier than thou." But the spiritual-minded become exclusive, in the very nature of the case. They breathe another atmosphere, and move in another sphere. They are exclusive, as Christ was when He moved to and fro among men.

III. Then the writer recalls to mind a feature of the old ceremony of atonement, and, after the Rabbinical method of treating Scripture, makes it illustrate his point. Instead of being troubled by their excommunication from material Jewish privileges, they might remember something **very suggestive in old covenant ceremony.** Cast out were they? 1. So were the bodies of the animals who had given their life-blood as atonement for the redemption of Israel; and 2. So was Christ, who gave His blood—His life—a ransom for many, but was

turned out of Jerusalem, and crucified outside the city. Cast out were they? Let them take place with the burnt bodies outside the camp. They had given their life for men. They were turned out because of the work they had done; and there was high honour in their burning. Let them take place outside Jerusalem—if they were in any sense. turned out of Jerusalem—with Jesus, whose body hung on the cross, outside the city wall. He had given His life for men. He was turned out because of the work He had done. And there was sublime honour resting on Him who died "without the camp." The point of the illustration lies in the bodies of the beasts being those beasts whose blood had been taken for the sin-offering of atonement, and in the body of Jesus being the body in which He had offered to God the sacrifice of the obedient will as the spiritual atonement. The plea is full of most gracious persuasiveness: "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." It is as if he had said: In Christ you are giving yourselves to the salvation of men; your life is the spiritual life of men. Do not hesitate then, if it comes to this; you are burned like the bodies of the beasts; you are crucified like the body of your Lord. "Go forth to Him without the camp." Be excommunicated, if you must be. "Bear His reproach." You are after Him, and for Him, the saviours of the world. Your spiritual life is the light and hope of men. "Bear His reproach," the earth-strain of Him who gave His life for us, and is the Life and Light of men.

IV. **The persuasion to enter fully into spiritual religion.**—This teacher saw clearly enough that the mistake of the Jewish Christians, and the thing which put their Christian faith in peril, was their temporising. They were trying to keep in with Judaism, and at the same time to keep in with Christianity. Their heart was divided. Their attitude was represented by the proverbial "two stools." And in pressing them to go forth with Christ, outside the camp, bearing His reproach, he is really pressing them to give up Judaism altogether. Let go those old ties to a formal religion; enter fully into the spiritual standing in Christ Jesus; realise fully your spiritual privileges in Christ Jesus; use freely all the spiritual agencies—tabernacle, altar, sacrifice, priest—provided in Christ Jesus. Breathe the spiritual atmosphere; feed on the spiritual food; live out the spiritual life; enjoy the spiritual fellowships. You will find them so soul-satisfying, that the reproach which may come to you will seem no more to you than it seemed to Christ, who, "for the spiritual joy, that was set before Him, endured the cross"—the highest form of reproach—"despising the shame." Let us go forth outside all formal religion, as Christ went forth out of formal, material, continuing Jerusalem. Let us go forth into the city to come—the spiritual city, the new Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is above—to the age which has been so long anticipated, the spiritual age. Say it out once for all, "We've no abiding city here"—no abiding material city, no formal ceremonial religion, centred in a tabernacle or in a city made with hands. We seek the city to come, the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God—the city that is always coming to souls spiritually quickened. An altar do we want? Christ is our altar. A priest do we want? Christ is our priest. A sacrifice do we want? Christ is our sacrifice. Do you ask, How shall we respond to the spiritual sphere into which, with the quickened and regenerate life, we enter? The answer is given us at once, "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise"—that is, a spiritual sacrifice—"to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, which make confession to His name." Can he be misunderstood in pleading so earnestly that they would enter into spiritual religion? Would they think that he urged them to go away from the world, and form communities like the Essenes of those times, and the hermits and monks of later times? He would correct the mistake at once by showing them—

V. **The satisfying sphere of earthly activities, relations, and services which spiritual religion provides.**—"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Never let us make the mistake of thinking that spiritual religion is *unearthly.* Our Divine Lord taught us better than this when, interceding with God for His disciples, He said, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." What we have to affirm persistently is, that man is not man until he is *spiritual* man; and when he is spiritual man, he is the most truly human being, and the best fitted to sustain all earthly responsibilities. "I knew a man in Christ." That man was most truly and most worthily a "man in the world." The spiritual man is the Christly man, who is ever going about doing good, and prepared to do it up to measures of self-sacrifice. "Bearing His reproach." Can we put in a word what the reproach of Christ is,—what it was in those early times; what it has been in every age since then; what it is, in appropriate forms, for us to-day? It is the reproach cast on the *spiritual* by the *carnal.* It always will be cast. 1. It is the reproach always cast on those who persist in seeking spiritual truth. (Heretics, Mystics, Quakers.) 2. It is the reproach always cast on those who persist in doing spiritual service to humanity. Jesus, the miraculous Healer and Provider, everybody wants. Jesus, the Life and Light of men, only the few "babe-souls" ever seem to want. 3. It is the reproach always cast on those who persist that life, at its best, is the culture of spiritual character. They follow Christ, who was in Himself, in His character, the Saviour of the world. Reproach of the spiritual! We do but bear it with Christ.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 10, 15. *Our Altar*—"We *have* an altar." There is a certain militant emphasis on the words in the original, as if they were an assertion of something that had been denied. Who the deniers are is plain enough. They were the adherents of Judaism, who naturally found Christianity a strange contrast to their worship, of which altar and sacrifice were prominent features. Just as to heathen nations the ritual of Judaism, its empty shrine, and Temple without a God, were a puzzle and a scoff, so to heathen and Jew the bare, starved worship of the Church, without temple, priest, sacrifice, or altar, was a mystery and a puzzle. The writer of this letter in these words, then, in accordance with the central theme of his whole epistle, insists that Christianity has more truly than heathenism or Judaism altar and sacrifice. And he is not content with alleging its possession of the reality of the altar, but he goes further, and insists upon the superiority even in that respect of the Christian system. He points to the fact that the great sin-offering of the Jewish ritual was not partaken of by the offerers, but consumed by fire without the camp, and he implies, in the earlier words of my text, that the Christian sacrifice differs from, and is superior to, the Jewish in this particular—that on it the worshippers feasted and fed. Then, in the last words of my text, he touches upon another point of superiority, viz. that all Christian men are priests of this altar, and have to offer upon it sacrifices of thanksgiving. And so he lifts up the purely spiritual worship of Christianity as not only possessed of all which the gorgeous rituals round about it presented, but as being high above them even in regard to that which seemed their special prerogative.

I. **Our Christian altar.**—Two explanations are open to us. One is that the cross is the altar. But that seems to me too gross and material, and

savouring too much of the very error which this whole epistle is written to destroy, viz. that the material is of moment, as measured against the spiritual. The other explanation is much to be preferred, according to which, if the altar has any special significance, it means the Divine-human personality of Jesus Christ, on and in which the sacrifice is offered. But the main thing to be laid hold of here is, as I take it, that the central fact of Christianity is an altar, on which lies a sacrifice. If we are to accept the significance that I have suggested as possible for the emblem of my text, then the altar expresses the great mystery and gospel of the Incarnation, and the sacrifice expresses the great mystery and gospel of the passion of Christ's life and death, which is the atonement for our sins. But that possibly is too much of a refinement, and so I confine myself here to the general ideas suggested—that the very living heart of the gospel is an altar and a sacrifice. That idea saturates the whole New Testament, from the page where John the forerunner's proclamation is, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," to the last triumphant visions in which the apocalyptic seer "beheld a Lamb as it had been slain," the eternal Co-regnant of the universe, and the Mediator through whom the whole surrounding Church for ever worships the Father.

II. **Our feast on the Sacrifice.**—From this altar, says the writer, the adherents of the ancient system have no right to partake. That implies that those who have left the ancient system have the right to partake, and do partake. Now the writer is drawing a contrast, which he proceeds to elaborate, between the great sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The former was not, as many other sacrifices were, partaken of by priests and worshippers, but simply the blood was brought within the Holy Place, and the whole of the rest of the sacrifice consumed in a waste spot without the camp. And this contrast is in the writer's mind. We have a Sacrifice on which we feast. That is to say, the Christ who died for my sins is not only my means of reconciliation with God, but His sacrifice and death are the sustenance of my spiritual life. We live upon the Christ that died for us. That this is no mere metaphor, but goes penetratingly and deep down to the very basis of the spiritual life, is attested sufficiently by many a word of Scripture on which I cannot now dwell. The life of the Christian is the indwelling Christ. For he whose heart hath not received that Christ within him is dead while he lives, and has no possession of the one true life for a human spirit, viz. the life of union with God. Christ in us is the consequence of Christ for us; and that Christianity is all imperfect which does not grasp with equal emphasis the thought of the sacrifice on the cross and of the feast on the Sacrifice.

III. **Our Christian offerings on the altar.**—"By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." What are these offerings? Christ's death stands alone, incapable of repetition, needing no repetition, the eternal, sole, "sufficient obligation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." But there be other kinds of sacrifice. There are sacrifices of thanksgiving as well as of propitiation. And we, on the footing of that great Sacrifice to which we can add nothing, and on which alone we must rest, may bring the offerings of our thankful hearts. These offerings are of a twofold sort, says the writer. There are words of praise; there are works of beneficence. The service of man is sacrifice to God. That is a deep saying and reaches far. Such praise and such beneficence are only possible on the footing of Christ's sacrifice, for only on that footing is our praise acceptable; and only when moved by that infinite mercy and love

shall we yield ourselves thank-offerings to God. And thus, brethren, the whole extent of the Christian life, in its inmost springs, and in its outward manifestations, is covered by these two thoughts—the feast on the Sacrifice once offered, and the sacrifices which we in our turn offer on the altar. There is one Christ that can thus hallow and make acceptable our living and our dying, and that is the Christ that has died for us, and lives that in Him we may be priests to God. There is only one Christianity that will do for us what we all need, and that is the Christianity whose centre is an altar on which the Son of God, our Passover, is slain for us.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 14. *No Continuing City.*—The truth presented in the text is one to which we at once give our consent, taught by many a sad experience.

I. **The uncertainty of all earthly things.**—Most persons experience a feeling of melancholy when the principle of the text is forced on their attention. There are times when, amid the changing scenes of earth, we cast about for something solid and enduring; but the more we search the more deeply we become convinced of the uncertainty of all human relationships. In vain we seek for something that knows no change, and will abide. The earth itself teaches its inhabitants this unsatisfying truth. As it gradually took form, passing through its various eras, change, unceasing change, was its abiding characteristic. In all its history; in its seasons, and soil, and scenery, and climate; and in the story of man upon it, is the same constant change. A mother fondles you as an infant; then through a long season of anxiety and care she watches from childhood into youth, and from youth to manhood; and by-and-by, in turn, you watch her gliding down the slope of life, and presently follow in her steps. A few years pass, and it becomes evident that this very body of ours has been changing, and in manhood every element of the bodily constitution has been renewed. The same change marks the advance of the soul from the first dawn of intelligence to the full development of mental vigour. The mind never can stay long unchanged, either in the condition of its mental powers or its spiritual faculties. The history of men and the history of nations repeats for us the same fact. Simple and natural was the mode of life pursued by the patriarchs of old. The grass sprang up fresh around them, and they fed their flocks. Then pastures were bared and the wells dried up, and they struck their tents and wandered forth. They had no "continuing city." When the nomadic life was over, they built settled habitations, and raised their families, only to see them scattered far and wide over the earth. Man lays the foundations of empires; slowly and through many conflicts the kingdom rises toward perfection in constitution and order and developed civilisation, at last to find the fires of discontent imperilling it, and leaving it a prey to some strong and aggressive neighbour. For even the empire has "no continuing city." The language of a people is always changing forms and meanings. The wants of a nation may keep the same, but the modes of supplying them are ever changing. The earth must be tilled and her fruits gathered in; the ocean must be swept of her treasures, and land knit to land across her; but the agencies for effecting these ends are ever varying. The vesture that adorns the human figure was once slowly produced by the human hand, and now it is rushed into existence on the wings of steam. The journey, once accomplished with difficulty and exertion, is now the simple act of rest. The message once communicated at the quickest by swift runners now flashes from mind to mind as does the lightning. Here we have "no continuing city"; and when we have passed away, the marvellous discoveries of our age will excite the smile of new generations that shall

have tamed yet new and mightier nature-forces to do their bidding. There is, perhaps, no truth with which we are more familiar. All around us everything is speaking of decay and change; the story is written on the wasting rock and crumbling peak, on the old tower and the ivied wall. The flowing river and the gurgling stream, the tints of autumn, and the falling leaves, all tell it out, with no uncertain sound.

II. **The permanence of all Divine and heavenly things.**—The previous verses give admonitions concerning a true, spiritual life, and direct us from the change, dissatisfaction, and sorrow of our earthly life to Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." By the exercise of Christian love, by charity and a heart open to the sufferings of those around us, by a happy contentment and a simple trust in God, and above all by having our heart ever reposing on Christ in every circumstance of joy or sorrow, we are taught to live in this world as though we were not of it. If we are cherishing *this* life, our hearts will be gradually lifted up above this earth, and we shall be able *so* to fix our affections on things here as not to rely on them for our happiness. Even before we have left our earthly abode the foundations of our future habitation may be laid. Our lives should be pilgrimages. Footsore and weary the traveller plods homeward; the clear sky, the rich sunset, the fruits by the wayside, the cool leafy shades, tempt him to stay, but his soul is full of the thought of home, and onward, still onward, he must go. What is that city which we seek? Its walls rise high; its mansions are secure; no aching heart dwells there; no tearful eye, no bent and drooping form, no withered or suffering frame, is seeking it. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things have passed away." It is that spiritual and eternal city, "whose builder and maker is God." We are pilgrims and strangers here, as indeed all our fathers were. But we do not unduly heed the changes of earth, or unrestrainedly weep over its uncertainties. We are travelling through; what matters a little discomfort on the way! We are going home—home to God. He is our "city yet to come." And He changeth never.—*A. Thomson, B.A.*

Remindings of our Mortality.—If any one has visited Rome, he will remember—for none who have travelled thither can forget the scene—the long street of tombs which forms one of the approaches to the Eternal City. For miles on the road these monuments erected over the departed stand on either side of the way, at brief but uncertain intervals, until the traveller reaches the gate. Exactly thus it is with us on our pilgrimage to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; on every hand we are reminded of our mortality, until we in our turn fall by the wayside, and swell the number of the dead.—*Archbishop Trench.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18—23.

Requests for Prayer.—"Pray for us" is the frequent and natural request in Christian correspondence. See Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 18; Col. iv. 3; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1. This request for the people's prayers is characteristically Pauline, and must be taken into due account in any discussion of the authorship of the epistle. The desire to stand well with his converts, and delight in their approbation, affection, and trust, were marked features in St. Paul's character.

I. **The interest of Christian teachers in their people's prayers.**—An interest felt and sustained partly—1. For the people's sake, because nothing opens the

heart to the teacher's influence, and keeps it sensitive and receptive to gracious influences, as prayer does. And it should be both (1) private and personal, and (2) collective, united, and public. The proper bond between ministers and people is only maintained by mutual prayer on each other's behalf. And partly—2. For the teacher's own sake. Because he needs the kind of inspiration to do the highest and holiest work which only comes to a man when he knows that others are praying for him. There is a tone on Christian ministry which can only come as the response to intercessory prayer.

II. **The sense of integrity may make a claim for prayer.**—"We have a good conscience." Whoever the writer was, one thing is evident—he was misunderstood and misrepresented and mistrusted, just as we know St. Paul was, by the Jewish, and even to some extent by the Jewish Christian, party. Some separation from him had been caused. This letter was in some sense written to remove wrong impressions, and make the standpoint of his teaching quite clear. It was fitting that he should assure them of his full loyalty to Christ and to them, of his genuineness, simplicity, and integrity. He meant nothing but their true spiritual good, and therefore he might honestly ask their prayers. Often we may be puzzled and disturbed by the teachings of the Christian teacher, but we can keep relations so long as we are fully confident of his integrity. What he *is* may keep us from offence at what he *says*.

III. **The prayers of God's people may influence God's providence** (ver. 19).—That has been the conviction of God-fearing men in all the ages. It is the absolute conviction of loyal and loving souls to-day. It never strikes them as for one moment unreasonable that God, who ever acts upon wise considerations, takes into account all facts, and forms good judgments, should let His people's prayers influence His decisions and His arrangements. To think prayer could not affect God's plans would be to assume that He could be apprehended through no rational or moral being that we ever heard of; it would be to refuse to recognise any reality in His Divine Fatherhood. A God who hears prayer, but takes no heed of it, and responds in no way to it, is inconceivable.

IV. **The highest plea for prayer lies in the prayerfulness of him who makes the plea.**—Vers. 20, 21, declare the prayerfulness of this writer, and indicate what he asks on the people's behalf. It is summed up in the word "perfect." He wants advance, growth, development, in the Christian life; for that he works, for that he prays. He can say, Pray for me, for I am always praying for you.

V. **The prayer of him who asks for prayer may be a model for those whom he asks to pray for him.**—The tone and substance of the prayer given in vers. 20, 21, may be taken as a model of prayer. Impress that the act of prayer tends to put men in right relations with responsibility and with privilege. Prayer strengthens to bear responsibility and sanctifies the enjoyment of privilege.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 18. *Conscience.*—Now, as conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself, and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives, 'tis plain, you will say, from the very terms of the proposition, whenever this inward testimony goes against a man, and he stands self-accused, that he must necessarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his side, and his heart condemns him not, that it is not a matter of *trust*, as the apostle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the conscience is good, and that the *man*

must be *good* also. At first sight this may seem to be a true state of the case; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impressed upon the mind of man that, did no such thing ever happen as that the conscience of a man, by long habits of sin, might (as the Scripture assures us it may) insensibly become hard, and, like some tender parts of his body, by much stress and continual hard usage, lose by degrees that nice sense and perception with which God and nature endowed it—did this never happen—or was it certain that self-love could never hang the least bias upon the judgment—or that the little interests below could rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompass them about with clouds and thick darkness—could no such thing as favour and affection enter this sacred court—did Wit disdain to take a bribe in it, or was ashamed to show its face as an advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment—or, lastly, were we assured that Interest stood always unconcerned whilst the cause was hearing, and that Passion never got into the judgment-seat, and pronounced sentence in the stead of Reason, which is supposed always to preside and determine upon the case—was this truly so, no doubt, then, the religious and moral state of a man would be exactly what he himself esteemed it, and the guilt or innocence of a man's life could be known, in general, by no better measure than the degrees of his own approbation or censure.—*Laurence Sterne.*

Vers. 20, 21. *The Blood of the Everlasting Covenant.*—This everlasting covenant is the covenant of grace, or the gospel, made with Christ, as the Head and Representative of all His believing people. It is called "everlasting" in contradistinction to some transient outward forms of it that had already vanished, or were vanishing away. God had made legal, ceremonial, national covenants, which were temporary—which had not the elements of permanency. But this covenant touches, embraces everything, reaches up to God's highest attributes, and down to man's deepest needs—over all the breadth of law, and along all the line of existence. We do not rest on the mere word "everlasting," which sometimes in the Scriptures has evidently a limited signification. No great doctrine or belief should rest on a mere term, unless the *thing* is taught clearly, by argument or precept or implication. But in this case we have the idea all through the Scriptures of absolute and unlimited duration. The "*blood* of the everlasting covenant." That is the virtue of the death of Christ. It is that grand act of atonement and self-sacrifice by which He bore the penalty of sin for us, and secured the gospel as God's method in this world for ever.

I. **God is the God of peace.**—The God who makes peace where it has been broken, and gives it where it is lost—the God who makes peace between heaven and earth, between law and conscience, between Himself and sinful men.

II. **"He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus."**—He wrought that mightiest work that has ever been wrought in this world—the resurrection of Christ. Again, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The death is the germinating spring of the after-life—the humiliation is antecedent to and causal of the exaltation.

III. It is through the same act of self-sacrifice in death that He becomes **"the great Shepherd of the sheep."** "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." That was the mark and criterion which He Himself gave by which men might know Him, and until this life was given the world could not have assurance that the good Shepherd has come. Now we come to the human side of the passage, and we have this blood of the covenant full of efficiencies on this side also. 1. The term "perfect"; giving us at

once this high idea, the idea of perfection as a thing attainable now, by means of the blood and death of the Son of God. This perfection is not merely a thing ideal and distant, not only a thing to be hoped for beyond earth and time, in heaven and glory. It is a thing to be striven for and realised in measures in daily life and service—"perfect in *every good work.*" Nothing could be more practical, nothing further removed from a barren idealism and a visionary spirit. "In every good work," in everything that benefits man, adorns the Christian profession, glorifies God in the fulfilment of His will.

IV. In this illustration of the power of the cross we have the **inworking of the Spirit of God in the heart of the man who is thus seeking perfection**—"working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight." This secures simplicity and spirituality—God working within by the Spirit. Then all is right and good. The water is cleansed at the fountain, thought is touched as it springs, feeling purified as it begins to flow, affection lifted to its object, will bent to the will of God; the image of the heavenly beginning to shine, the likeness of the Resurrection dawning in the risen soul.

Then (1) let us come to this blood of the covenant, or to the death or to the cross of Christ, for *cleansing*; (2) for *motive*; (3) for *speech.*—*A. Raleigh, D.D.*

Ver. 21. *The Believer God's Agent.*—We often speak of ourselves as only "*instruments* in God's hands." It is our privilege to think of ourselves, if we are truly His servants, as *agents.* An instrument is a dumb, senseless, lifeless thing, which has no active, intelligent power even to co-operate with him who handles and uses it; but an agent (*ago*) is one who *acts*; in behalf of, and under control of, another, and yet acting intelligently and individually, as Aaron spoke under Moses' dictation. Even the ox and ass yield a voluntary, intelligent obedience, and are far above the plough they drag, or the goad by which they are urged on. We are God's agents, and He worketh not only *by* us, but *in* us, both to will and to work. (See Greek of Phil. ii. 13.)

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS is known as one of the general or catholic epistles. There are seven of them. They appear to be so called because not addressed to particular Churches. But Eusebius seems to indicate by the term simply that they were in general use. The difficulty of identifying this James is an interesting subject of study, but is not suitable for pulpit-treatment. All Bible commentaries and introductions deal with it. It need only be said that James the Martyr is hardly in the field of possibility. James the Less, the son of Alphæus, has good claims, but they scarcely stand severe criticism. Modern opinion is distinctly tending in favour of an identification with "James the Lord's brother" (Gal. i. 19), who was not in the apostolic band. It is thought that the special appearance of the risen Christ to him (1 Cor. xv. 7) secured his personal discipleship, and that his strong character soon brought to him confidence and office, the apostles putting him in charge of the Church at Jerusalem. "For this position he was recommended by his relation to the Lord, and by his character and principles. He conformed to the law, sharing no doubt the feeling of the other members of that Church, that the ordinances of the old dispensation had not been done away for them, but were filled out with new life and meaning in Christ."

No doubt the letter was written from Jerusalem, and there is much to favour the view that it was the *first* Christian epistle. If it was written before St. Paul's epistles, the notion of antagonism between St. James and St. Paul falls at once to the ground. St. James only addresses those who were Jews by birth; and the epistle cannot be rightly understood unless its precise adaptation to the ideas and feelings of the Jews, under the particular circumstances of that time, is fully recognised.

There is no reference whatever to the Gentiles in the epistle. The tone is practical, almost stern. There is little or nothing in it that we can recognise as *doctrine*. There are allusions to our Lord's person—His example, authority, glory, power, and coming to judgment. And the word of truth is spoken of as

the instrument of the new birth. The rule of life is the law; but in the faith of Christ the man gains a new power to keep the law.

The language is a very pure specimen of Hellenistic Greek. The contents are not laid out on any evident plan. St. James writes freely out of the fulness of his heart, touching subjects as they are freshly suggested to his mind, and returning upon them when some new thought strikes him. In common with the apostles, St. James had the expectation of the immediate return to earth of his Divine Lord. He seeks, by practical counsels and urgent persuasions, to help the Judæo Christians to see the frailties, evils, and temptations that were imperilling their Christian profession, and presses again and again upon them that faith as a sentiment is of no real value. The faith that saves is that faith which is a power unto righteousness, and finds expression in multiplied forms of service and charity.

"The first section treats of sincerity and patience under afflictions (chap. i. 1-15). The second declaims against hypocrisy and self-deceit (chap. i. 16-27). The third against adulation of the rich and contempt of the poor, against false charity and spurious faith (chap. ii. 1-26). The next treats of the duty of ruling the tongue and cultivating peace (chap. iii.). To this succeed warnings against strife and evil-speaking; against the corruption of the world, pride, luxury, oppression; against the attempt to serve both God and mammon (chap. iv.). Then follow warnings against covetousness (chap. v. 1-11); profane and rash oaths (ver. 12); exhortations to prayer, especially in sickness (vers. 13-18); and a declaration of the blessedness of converting a sinner from the error of his ways (vers. 19, 20)."

The dominant thought toning the epistle is the masterfulness and quarrelsomeness of the Hebrew Christian communities. They were always wrangling. St. James writes in the hope of correcting this *evil*, and of checking the various *evils* which naturally followed in its train.

James, the Apostle of the Christian Israelitish Church.

The place which James the brother of the Lord occupies in the apostolic Church is as peculiar as it is important. The Scriptures contribute very little to the biography of James, but what they do contain is of the utmost importance to the comprehension of his person and calling. He was, in a literal sense, the "brother of the Lord." There is no ground at all for identifying him with James the son of Alphæus, one of the twelve apostles. His early familiarity with Jesus was, for him and for his brothers, a stumbling-block in the way of believing in Him, which others did not experience who only saw Jesus in His public capacity, as a prophet mighty in words and works. Take away the lowly form in which the glory of the Christ is concealed, and there is removed from the face of James the veil which prevented him from recognising in his brother Jesus the Christ for whom he longed. This the Lord knew, and as soon as He had risen in His power and glory He sought out His erring brother, and revealed Himself to him as the Christ of glory. James saw and believed.

He attached himself immediately to the circle of the apostles, and after the twelve had left Jerusalem he took charge of the mother-congregation there.

To understand his office in the Church at Jerusalem, it is necessary to inquire what sort of relation there was between James and the people of Israel. In his view the congregations of the faithful Israelites formed one whole with the rest of Israel, and that because every Israelite was destined through belief in Christ to become an Israelite indeed. They were all children of the covenant and of the prophets, to whom all the promises—especially the promise of the Holy Ghost—belonged. It was, from the nature of the case, those who believed in Jesus as the Christ who drew closer together, and distinguished themselves from their countrymen by various customs, such as baptism and the love-feast, which was brought to an end by the Lord's Supper. But they did not cease to be Israelites. They did not separate themselves from the rest of Israel. They walked, as did the others, according to the law of Moses; took part in Temple services; allowed their children to be circumcised; prayed at the appointed hours of the day; and, like the other Israelites, had their synagogues, which seem to have been also attended by their countrymen. James, as the head of the Christian Israelitish community at Jerusalem, knew no contrast between the Christian community in Israel and the Israelitish people, except that in this community Israel had reached its destiny, had become truly Israel. The Christian Israelitish community was the kernel of the Israelitish people; what he had to say to it held good for the whole race. It is thus that the otherwise inexplicable fact is explained, that James did not address his epistle exclusively to the faithful Israelites, but to "the twelve tribes of the dispersion," and that in his epistle he has in view both local and national conditions.

The relation in which James stood to Israel necessarily coincided with his duty towards the law. He is himself conscious of no other contrast between his Christian belief and the Israelitish law, except that by faith in Christ the law found its full significance for the first time in his inward and outward life. Jesus Christ had not released him from the law and the prophets. What before had been to him an unreachable ideal was through faith in Jesus Christ fulfilled to overflowing. He was no more hampered by the stern demand of the law; it was for him the law of liberty. Josephus calls James "the Just," and ascribes the destruction of Jerusalem to God's vengeance upon his martyrdom. The exaggerated reports in Eusebius, borrowed from Hegesippus, testify to the exactness with which James fulfilled the law, and to the high esteem in which, on that account, he was held by the whole people.

The question naturally arises, If this was the attitude of James toward the law, what then was the gospel that he proclaimed to Israel? James had no less right than Paul to speak of his gospel. If the gospel of Paul is called the "gospel of grace," that of James may be called the "gospel of fulfilment." James did not experience Paul's change from law to grace, from works to faith. The only contrast which he came to know through faith in the Christ was the contrast between promise and fulfilment, between beginning and completion.

James may be named the last prophet of Israel. He directed his epistle to the twelve tribes as a prophet sent to them by Christ. As he chastises and warns them, and threatens them with the approaching judgment, the well-known tone of Israel's prophets is re-echoed in his words. The apostleship of James forms the counterpart of the apostleship of Paul, who likewise was not one of the twelve. It is to be ascribed not less to James than to Paul that the efforts of the Jewish fanatics to subject the Gentile Christian Church to the law of Moses miscarried.

The whole epistle testifies that the Christian Israelitish character reached its apostolic completeness in James. He had apparently, as a son of Mary, as a branch of the royal stem, an excellent natural disposition. There is no doubt that his natural gifts contributed to his rise in the esteem of those even who did not believe in Jesus. Unlike Paul, he sustained no shocks in his spiritual life. His inward life moved with a quiet and firm step. He was, even before he found the Messiah in Jesus, an exemplary Israelite. Afterwards he was, in his measure, like Jesus, a living copy of the law, which is righteous, holy, and good. There is also a striking resemblance between the epistle of James, and the Sermon on the Mount, and the last prophetic words of Jesus. James has involuntarily sketched his own image in his epistle, as of a man whom God had raised up above others to show to Israel what the Israelite becomes who enters into complete fellowship with the glorified Christ. In him is realised the ideal which God has set before the Israelite: he is, according to God's will, through the word of truth, reborn, in order to belong to the firstfruits of God's creatures. The epistle of James, as well by its style as by its contents, bears witness to the moral elevation and the spiritual power which were peculiar to him in a pre-eminent degree as the apostle of the Christian Israelitish Church (*Prof. N. I. Hofmeyer*).

Wherever Christianity did not effect a complete change in the heart, the old Jewish spirit naturally magnified itself in the professed converts.

The Narrative of the Death of James given by Hegesippus, and quoted by Eusebius.

James the brother of the Lord receives the Church from the apostles, he who was called the Just from the Lord's time even to our own; for many bore the name of James. This man was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat anything that lives. No razor came upon his head, nor did he anoint himself with oil, nor use the bath. He only was allowed to enter into the Holy Place, for he wore no woollen, but linen garments only. And he was wont to go alone into the sanctuary, and used to be found prostrate on his knees, and asking forgiveness of the people, so that his knees grew hard and worn, like a camel's, because he was ever kneeling and worshipping God, and asking forgiveness of the people. And on account of his exceeding righteousness he was called the Righteous (or the Just), and Oblias, which means in Greek "the bulwark of the people" and "righteousness," as the

prophets show of him. Some then of the seven sects of the people, of those whom I have described in my *Memoirs*, were wont to ask him, Who is the door of Jesus? And he was wont to say that this was the Saviour. And of these some believed that Jesus is the Christ. But the sects of which I have spoken did not believe either in the Resurrection, or in Him who cometh to give to every man according to his works. As many then as believed did so on account of James. And when many of the rulers also believed, there was a stir of the Jews, and scribes and Pharisees, saying that the whole people were in danger of looking for Jesus the Christ. They came together, and said to James: "We entreat thee restrain the people, for they have gone astray to Jesus, as though He were indeed the Christ. We beseech thee to persuade all that come to the Day of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all hearken to thee. For all of us bear thee witness, and all the people also, that thou art righteous, and art no respecter of persons. Do thou therefore persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus; for we and all the people hearken unto thee. Stand therefore on the pinnacle of the Temple, that thou mayest be conspicuous aloft, and that thy words may easily be heard by all the people, for by reason of the Passover all the tribes have come together, and with them the Gentiles." So the scribes and Pharisees before mentioned placed James on the pinnacle of the Temple, and they cried out to him, and said, "O thou righteous one, to whom we are all bound to hearken, since the people are all gone astray after Jesus that was crucified, tell us what is the door of Jesus." And he answered with a loud voice, "Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of man? He hath sat down in heaven on the right hand of the great Power, and is about to come in the clouds of heaven." And when many were fully persuaded, and were glorifying God for the testimony of James, and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" then again the same scribes and Pharisees said one to another, "We did ill in giving scope for such a testimony to Jesus, but let us go up and cast him down, that they may fear and not believe him." And they cried out, saying, "Ho, ho, even the Righteous is gone astray!" And they fulfilled the scripture that is written in Isaiah, "Let us make away with the Righteous, for he is displeasing to us; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their works." And they went and cast the righteous one down; and they said one to another, "Let us stone James the Righteous." And they began to stone him; for when he was cast down he did not die at once, but turned and fell on his knees, saying, "O Lord God our Father, forgive them, I beseech Thee, for they know not what they do." And while they were thus stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, of whom the prophet Jeremiah bears record, cried out and said, "Cease ye; what is that ye are doing? The righteous one is praying for you." And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club wherewith he was wont to beat his clothes, and smote the head of the righteous one with it. And so he bore his witness. And they buried him at the place beside the sanctuary, and his tombstone remaineth by the sanctuary. He was, and is, a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ.—*After Dean Plumptre.*

NOTES ON SOME DIFFICULT PASSAGES IN THE EPISTLE.

Chap. i. 10: *And the rich, in that he is made low.*—This humiliation is not that of Christian submission. The rich unbeliever is meant. The passage is one of severe irony. "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; and the rich man—what is he to glory in?—let him glory in the only thing upon which he can count with certainty, viz. his being brought low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away."

Chap. iv. 5, 6.—These two verses are very difficult. Three questions arise: (1) Are two scriptures quoted, or only one? (2) Who is it that "longeth" or "lusteth"? Is it God, or the Holy Spirit, or our own human spirit? (3) What is it that is longed for by God or the Spirit? In reply to (1) it is held that here is a condensation of several utterances in the Old Testament. In respect to (2) it is maintained that the good sense of the verb, *i.e.* "longeth," is more in harmony with New Testament usage. The most satisfactory rendering then makes the Holy Spirit the subject—"Even unto jealousy doth the Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearn." And as to (3), that for which the Spirit yearns is "ourselves." "God is a jealous God, and the Divine love is a jealous love; it brooks no rival. And when His Spirit takes up its abode in us, it cannot rest until it possesses us wholly, to the exclusion of all alien affections."

Chap. v. 14, 15: *Anointing him with oil*, etc.—In respect to this debated passage, the writer thinks that it is most probable that the purpose intended for the oil to serve was either to be the channel or instrument of a supernatural cure, or an aid to the sick person's faith. And the reason why oil was selected was that it was believed to have healing properties. It is obvious, on the one hand, that James does not recommend this oil merely as medicine, for he does not say that the oil shall cure, nor yet that the oil with prayer shall do so, and, more than that, the anointing is to be done by the elders, which would not be necessary if it were merely medicinal. "On the other hand, it seems to be too much to say that the anointing had nothing to do with bodily healing at all, and was simply a means of grace for the sick."

Chap. v. 19, 20: *Shall cover a multitude of sins.*—Whose sins? Not the sins of him who converts the erring brother. Against this are two reasons: (1) Nowhere else in Scripture do we find such a doctrine as that a man may cover his own sins by inducing another sinner to repent. The opposite is not obscurely intimated, *e.g.* in 1 Cor. ix. 27. (2) James could not have contemplated the possibility of a Christian undertaking the task of converting others while his own conscience was burdened with a multitude of sins. It is the sins of the converted sinner that are covered. The phrase "cover sins" reminds one of Ps. xxxii. 1, and it seems to have been common among the Jews—*From Dr. A. Plummer.*

CHAPTER I.

COUNSELS FOR THE TEMPTED AND TRIED.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. Salutation. **James.**—Greek Ἰάκωβος, a familiar Jewish name. Two so named were in the apostolic company. James the son of Zebedee, and James the son of Alphæus. This is thought to be a third James, known as the "brother of the Lord," and identified as James the Just, who in ecclesiastical history is stated to have been the first bishop of the Jewish Christian Church at Jerusalem. **Servant.**—δοῦλος. Strictly, "bond-servant." The term is similarly used at the beginning of their letters by St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Jude (Rom. i. 1; Tit. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1; Jude 1). **And of the Lord.**—Some would render, "even the Lord Jesus Christ"; but this puts the Deity of Christ into a more dogmatic form than was at that time attained. **Twelve tribes.**—The nation was still conceived and addressed as a whole. The idea of the "lost ten tribes" is evidently not apostolic. **Scattered abroad.**—ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ; "in the dispersion." Moved by commercial instincts, the Jews had found entrance into every part of the then civilised world. It is of importance to notice that James addresses only Jewish Christians, and Jews who were not Christians. He takes no notice whatever of *Gentile* Christians. This suggests an early date for James's epistle.

Ver. 2. **Temptations.**—As so often in the New Testament, trials which take the form of suffering, and serve the purposes of Divine discipline.

Ver. 3. **Trying.**—Testing, proving. "The proof to which your faith is put works out endurance." **Patience.**—ὑπομονήν; the perseverance which does not falter under suffering. Christian patience is much more than passive submission.

Ver. 4. **Entire.**—Lacking no part essential to full and healthy spiritual life. The figure is taken from the animals, some of whose organs may be undeveloped, or may be mutilated.

Ver. 5. **Wisdom.**—Here, the wisdom of the book of Proverbs; practical skill in the ordering and management of life (Prov. xix. 20). **Liberally.**—With single heart, frankly, freely; without searchingly taking account of our dulness, or slowness, or limited anxiety concerning it. God wants us to have the wisdom more than we ever want to have it. **Upbraideth not.**—In Ecclus. xx. 15 the "gift of a fool" is thus described: "He giveth little, and upbraideth much."

Ver. 6. **Wavering.**—Doubting (see Matt. xxi. 21). The term indicates that debating with oneself which implies doubt. **Wind and tossed.**—Better, "winds and blasts," the latter term suggesting the effect of sudden squalls. There is no play on the Greek words, as in the English text—"wavering," "wave."

Ver. 8. **Double-minded.**—Connect with ver. 7, "being a double-minded man." Compare the "double heart" (Heb. "a heart and a heart") of Ps. xii. 2. "A man unsteady in his opinions is inconstant in all his actions."

Ver. 9. **He is exalted.**—Or, "in his exaltation"; "in his high estate." **Low degree** does not suggest *caste*, but *poverty* involving humiliation.

Ver. 10. **Made low.**—Or, "in his humiliation." These experiences being especially adapted to each, can be rejoiced in as disciplinary.

Ver. 11.—The verbs are in the past tense; therefore translate, "The sun arose with the burning heat, and dried up the grass; and the flower thereof fell away, and the grace of its fashion perished" (Isa. xl. 6-8).

Ver. 12. **Is tried.**—Better, "hath been approved." δόκιμος is properly spoken of money as having been tried and refined. **Crown of life.**—See figure in Isa. xxviii. 5; and compare 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. v. 4. "Crown of life" is peculiar to St. James.

Ver. 13. **Tempted.**—Here meaning, "enticed to evil." Distinguish between trials used as moral discipline, and temptations used to degrade and destroy souls. With the latter the thought of God must never be associated as originator. Confusion arises from the dual meaning of the term "evil." It is sometimes "sin" and sometimes "calamity." **Cannot**

be tempted.—Better, "is not a tempter in the way of evil." *Tyndale*, "God tempteth not unto evyll."

Ver. 14. **Drawn away.**—This is a better form, "is tempted by his own lust, being drawn away by it." Lust, or unregulated desire, includes passion for safety, riches, ease, as well as sensual pleasure. *Plumptre* says, "Adversity and persecution expose men to the solicitations of their lower nature, to love of ease and safety, no less than luxury and prosperity. In both 'desire' tempts the will to depart from what it knows to be the will of God."

Ver. 15. **Bringeth forth.**—The second Greek word so translated differs from the first, and is a stronger term. It suggests the production of a monstrosity. It may be rendered "engendereth."

Ver. 17. **Father of lights.**—The luminaries of heaven; as symbols of all kinds of lights, natural, intellectual, spiritual. **Shadow of turning.**—Or shadow that is cast by turning. The terms "variableness" and "shadow of turning" distinctly refer to the movements of the heavenly bodies, and decide the idea of James in speaking of God as "Father of lights."

Ver. 18. **Begat.**—More lit. "brought He us forth." **Word of truth.**—Not here the personal Logos, but the revealed word, the medium of the Divine sanctifying. **Firstfruits.**—See Lev. xxiii. 10; Deut. xxvi. 2.

Ver. 19. **Wrath.**—ὀργήν; an abiding, settled habit of mind with the purpose of revenge.

Ver. 21. **Filthiness.**—Not limited to sensualities, but including everything that defiles the soul. **Superfluity of naughtiness.**—"Overflow of mental wickedness," or of malice. Or, "the remains of your perversity." See 1 Pet. iii. 21. *Plumptre* renders, "excess characterised by malice." "The Greek word had come to be associated mainly with the sins that have their root in wrath and anger, rather than with those that originate in love of pleasure." **Engrafted word.**—Implanted. See above the reference to the "word of truth" as the instrument by which the new and better life was engendered.

Ver. 23. **Natural face.**—Lit. "face of his birth"; "the face he has by corporeal birth." γενέσεως is used in distinction from the notion which follows of spiritual features. The tenses of the verbs (aorist) imply, "looks at himself once for all"; "has taken his departure and is gone"; "forgets and thinks of it no more."

Ver. 25. **Looketh.**—παρακύψας; to lean aside, to stoop to look, at something which attracts attention; hence to look particularly, to scrutinise; implying close inquiry after truth. **Perfect.**—Because regarded as the consummation of Judaism; the law of Moses was incomplete in respect of pardon of sin and holiness. **Law of liberty.**—Its characteristic is its freeing men from the bonds which prevent their being righteous. "The gospel is in a proper sense the law of liberty, because those who receive it render a free, loving obedience from an inward, vital principle." *Dean Alford* says, "Not in contrast with a former law of bondage, but as viewed on the side of its being the law of the new life and birth, with all its spontaneous and free development of obedience."

Ver. 26. **Seem to be.**—Imagine himself to be *religious*; a difficult term, because its meanings have been subject to change. "The Greek adjective is one which expresses the outward, ritual side of religion, answering to 'godliness' as the inward." Seem to be a professor, a worshipper. **Bridleth not.**—Does not restrain, and wisely rule and direct. It is singular to find this chosen as a test of sincerity in religious profession. But compare Matt. xii. 37. "If a man think himself a true worshipper because he conforms to outward services, while he lets his tongue loose in untruth or unkindness, or other unseemliness, he deceives himself" (*Bishop Moberly*).

Ver. 27. **Pure religion.**—Better, "Pure worship"; "the outward aspect of the devout life." **Undefiled.**—Genuine, sincere. See the scrupulous care of the Pharisee to avoid anything that caused ceremonial defilement (John xviii. 28). **Visit.**—The Greek word implies more than "go and see"; it means "look after," "care for." Compare the teaching of our Lord in Matt. xv. 20; Mark vii. 5-8.

Synonyms of the Word θρῆσκος.

θεοσεβής, only in John ix. 31; necessarily implies piety towards gods, or the God. εὐσεβής may mean this, but may also mean piety in the fulfilment of human relations; it implies worship or worthship, and reverence well directed. εὐλαβής, passed from caution and carefulness in human things to the same in Divine things. Devout, or the special Jewish Old Testament phase of piety. In the mingled fear and love which constituted together the piety of man toward God, the Old Testament emphasises *fear*, the New Testament *love*. εὐλαβής therefore suits the Old Testament piety. It represents the scrupulous worshipper making conscience of omitting anything. In θρήσκος, Lat. *religiosus*, we have the zealous and diligent performer of the Divine offices of the outward service of God. θρησκεία, cultures exterior, predominantly ceremonial, external service. The external form or body of which εὐσέβεια is the informing soul.—*After Trench.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verse* 1.

The Gospel according to James.—In what we now know as the truths of Christianity, there is the essential and invariable, and there is the non-essential and variable. And we may make grave mistake by unduly contending for the merely human shaping and setting of truth which, not being essential and invariable, has not taken precise revelational form. An essay was read at a ministers' meeting with this suggestive title, *The Minimum of the Evangelical Faith.* The writer dealt with the limit of faith that suffices to ensure salvation. He should have dealt with the limits of the evangelical creed behind which we must entrench ourselves, as Wellington did at Torres Vedras. In these days, when everything is searchingly criticised, we are in danger of coming to feel that everything is uncertain; and we need to fix for ourselves some things which are unquestionable, axiomatic, beyond criticism. But there is an opposite evil into which we may fall. We may fit the evangelical truth into a creed, and then persist that every point and item of our creed-form must be contended for unto the death. "The faith once delivered unto the saints" should never be confused with the creed formulated and adopted by any particular Church. The New Testament gives us the Christian truth in very sharp, crisp, suggestive sentences. Of one such we may be reminded. "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 5, R.V.). According to that verse the Christian truth contains five truths: 1. The unity of God. 2. The mediatorship of Christ. 3. The true humanity of Christ. 4. The self-sacrifice of Christ. 5. The vicariousness of Christ's sacrifice. But the essential truth—the very gospel—is *the place and power of the person Christ.* This is the very heart of the gospel. Sincere *belief* in Christ brings a man into the *power* of Christ. St. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And that was the gospel. This comes clearly into view when the gospel was first preached to the *Jews*, as it was on the Day of Pentecost. Doctrinal truths about Christ had not at that time been formulated. There could be only the faith in Christ which received Him as Messiah the Saviour. But that faith sufficed to altogether change a man's life, and make him a new creature, living and breathing in a new atmosphere. When this is clear, we may be reminded—1. That preaching Christ must have the individuality of the preacher stamped upon it. The two first gospel preachers were St. Peter and St. Stephen; but how different were their settings and points of view! And—2. That the individuality of the preacher is always tempered by his efforts to adapt himself to his circumstances, and to his audiences. St. Paul adapts his settings of the one gospel to meet the case of ignorant heathen, cultivated Pagan, and covenant Jew. But will the essential, the saving, gospel truth bear these human settings and adjustments without injury? The answer is that it has done so through the long ages. Translations of the New Testament into the languages of mankind have been imperfect translations, constantly needing revisions; but the imperfect word has always been, and is to-day, God's power unto salvation. The human caskets have sufficed for carrying to men the Divine jewel of saving truth. Moreover, the gospel did get a variety of settings from the great Teacher Himself. The Sermon on the Mount differs in a remarkable manner from the discourses on the good Shepherd and the living Bread. Suppose then that a Christian teacher should keep entirely in the line of the Sermon on the Mount, would he preach the gospel? There is one writer in the New Testament who has done this. The epistle of St. James has no formulated Christian doctrine in it. It deals with life, conduct, relations, duties, temptations; it is given by a "servant

of Jesus Christ," who wants to do his duty, to other servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, who want to know and do their duty. But is that the gospel? The one gospel of Christ's life has gained four different settings. The four gospels are not alike. St. Peter, St. James, St. Paul, and St. John give us four epistles, bearing relation to Christian truth, but they are not alike. The gospel was first preached to Jews by St. James. Then the Gentiles were permitted to share with Jews in gospel privileges under the lead of St. Peter. And then the gospel was differentiated for Gentiles by St. Paul. St. James sees Christianity as completed Judaism, as providing for it just the element it lacked, and failed to meet man's need because it lacked. St. Peter sees Christianity as a reformed, enlarged, and comprehensive Judaism, and never breaks away from his Jewish associations. St. Paul sees Christianity as the universal human religion, of which Judaism was the inspired and Divinely guided preparation. He therefore aroused the jealousy of the exclusive Jews, and was compelled to break with them. Look carefully at the gospel according to St. James, or at his setting of Christianity. His epistle seems strange to Christian readers because of what it does *not* contain. There is no doctrine of redemption in it. He was possibly the Lord's brother (1 Cor. xv. 7; Gal. i. 19), certainly he was a strict Jew, who kept his Jewish ideas along with his belief in Jesus as Messiah, and along with his personal loyalty and devotion to Him. But that must have been the first idea of a Christian. The Jews were divided into those to whom Jesus was an impostor, and those to whom Jesus was the Messiah; and St. James was the leader of these latter Jews. He wrote for men who knew themselves as the people of God, and whose one question was, What is righteousness? and how is it obtained? The Jew was familiar with the answer—Righteousness is keeping the law; then keep the law, and be righteous. But the Jew felt that he had no *power* to perform. St. James tells him that personal faith in Christ will bring the law *in* to him. It will give him power unto righteousness. That is the gospel according to St. James. It is precisely the setting of the gospel that we want who *have believed.* We want help toward working our belief out into our life. St. James had not to deal with the Jews' standing before God. St. Paul had to deal with the Gentiles' standing. St. James, as a Jew, neither questioned his own standing, nor theirs to whom he wrote. So St. Paul's "justification by faith" did not come into his thoughts. St. James inculcates the gospel of right conduct to men who had accepted a new Master. He puts the Master's principles and the Master's spirit alongside their characteristic Jewish frailties. To him the gospel is a holy leaven. It is the person Christ, offered to faith as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Put that faith into a man's life, what will it do? St. James helps us to this answer. It will give a man mastery over his evils. It will make all things new. It will help him to win righteousness. It will sanctify. And we need *that* setting of the gospel.

Service dignified as the Life-service of the Lord Jesus.—Sometimes the writers of epistles speak of themselves as "apostles," but apostles are only "sent servants." St. James calls himself—1. *A servant.* The word means a "bond-servant"; but not one who is bound by force, against his will, but one who has bound himself, and made a loving surrender of his will, and finds service to be the truest liberty. Bond-service has always to be estimated in view of him to whom we are bound. If it be bond-service to Christ, that service is perfect freedom. 2. A servant of *two Masters.* "Of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." The addition "of God" is made because St. James must make it quite clear that, in asking service for Christ, he did not take Jews away from their allegiance to the God of their fathers. 3. A servant of two Masters who

are really one. For the deeper we get into the mystery of the Divine Being, the more satisfyingly we see that Jesus is but "God manifest in the flesh," and that serving Him *is* serving God. 4. A servant to serve *other servants* of the same Master. "Twelve tribes which are of the dispersion." Jews, who were servants of God. Jewish Christians, who were servants of God, and of the Lord Jesus. The servant may serve by direct attentions paid to the Master Himself. But he equally serves when he carries out the Master's ministries among the other servants. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." 5. A servant who serves both the Master and the other servants cheerfully. "Greeting"; margin, "wishing joy." Sending greeting means that the sender cherishes happy, kindly, hopeful feeling, and is really glad to do some kindly service for those to whom he writes. It honours Christ for His servants to work at His work with uplifted heads and glad hearts.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Relation of Epistle to the Sermon on the Mount.*—No student of the epistle has failed to notice the sturdy common sense of the writer, and his emphasis on practical Christianity. Yet it has not always been observed how fully he represents in this respect the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Even his language is strikingly similar to our Lord's. Compare Jas. i. 22 with Matt. vii. 24. In each case the thought is clinched by a picture or parable. The use of parables and proverbs by St. James suggests that, with all his common sense, he had a fine poetical vein in his nature. His imagination lends liveliness to his maxims. *Dr. S. Cox* says, "He is a born poet, though he writes no poetry." As there is nothing more difficult than to cast stale or familiar maxims into fresh and attractive forms, St. James must have been a man of rare and high natural gifts. On the human side, the poetical trait in the Lord Jesus and in St. James (regarded as the Lord's natural brother) may go back to the mother whose hymn of praise St. Luke has preserved for us.

Scattered Abroad.—1. They were dispersed in mercy. For the diffusing of the light of revelation, which they had received. 2. They began now to be scattered in wrath. The Jewish nation was crumbling into parties and factions, and many were forced to leave their own country, as having now grown too hot for them.—*Matthew Henry.*

The Disappearance of the Ten Tribes.—The legend as to the disappearance of the ten tribes, which has given rise to so many insane dreams as to their identification with the Red Indians of America, or our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, appears for the first time in the apocryphal Second Esdras (xiii. 39-47), a book probably of about the same date as the Revelation of St. John.—*Plumptre.*

The Ten Tribes not Lost.—The ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel, though they had been carried into a more distant exile than Judah and Benjamin, were thought of, not as lost and out of sight, but as still sharing the faith and hope of their fathers. See also Matt. xix. 28; Acts xxvi. 7; Rev. vii. 5-8.—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2—4.

The Ministry of Trial to Christian Character.—It is necessary to keep in mind the persons who were directly addressed in this epistle. They were Jewish Christians who were placed in difficult circumstances, and called to bear

various persecutions, on account of their faith in Christ. Their troubles were special to their religion. They were such as Hindoos still have to endure when they are baptised in the name of Christ. The trials were not merely the commonplace afflictions that come into every life; and so they were not merely disciplinary and educative. They were distinctly influences acting upon them as temptations to apostasy from Christ; and therefore they are properly called "temptations": there was in them something of the element of incitement to evil. Distinguish afflictions from temptations; or rather, see under what conditions afflictions may become temptations. Many of the forms in which earthly trials come prove to be tempting forms. They may be testings; they may be temptings.

I. **Right feeling concerning trials.**—The feeling commended here certainly seems strange. "Count it all joy," nought but joy. There cannot be joy in them; there can be joy in seeing into them. Is there any real ground for such joy? There is, if we can give due weight to these considerations. 1. No trial that ever comes to us is either an accident or the work of an enemy. If Satan brought calamity to Job, he was, for the time at least, God's angel, doing a painful bit of Divine work. 2. The Christian has learned never to connect his trials with personal sin. It is the conscience of connection between personal sin and personal suffering that makes the bitterness of suffering. That bitterness the Christian should never know. 3. Trials assure us of God's gracious interest in our higher, spiritual welfare. A purpose of grace is in them. A ministry of grace is in them. And it is far better for us to have the grace than to escape the trials that bring it to us. 4. Trial cultures all the finer elements of character, and in that issue of trial the Christian may, and should, unfeignedly rejoice. Could a Christian rightly apprehend what human life is, and leads towards, and rejoice in having been freed from trials? That question may be asked concerning both outward and inward trials. But if we "joy in tribulation," it can only be with the joy of faith, with that faith-vision which can see within things, and discern meanings and issues.

II. **Right thoughts concerning trials.**—"Worketh patience." They are not to be thought of as mere things, accidents, calamities. They work. And their work may be humbling, separating, arresting, proving, and culturing by proving. They work; but never self-willedly; always under the immediate presidency and direction of our Father-God. And they never get beyond His control. His mission is in every event that happens. The trials work out "peaceable fruits of righteousness."

III. **Right issues of the work of trials.**—"Patience." This we may see as (1) self-mastery; (2) endurance; or (3) the waiting of expectancy; for in Christian patience there is always active faith. The energy that can do the work of the hour, while we patiently wait. Patience is not listlessness and indifference. It is a sign that patience, under trial, is Christianly-toned when a man keeps bravely on, carrying his burden while he fulfils his duties.

IV. **Right anxieties concerning the issues of trial.**—"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire." This is the proper anxiety, that the trial should fully do all that it was sent to do. Every plant that grows wants to reach its maturity, wants to flower and seed. So does every grace in us; and therefore we want every influence that bears on the maturing to get its perfect work, and help towards the perfect flowering. Because men cannot hope to become "perfect and entire," lacking nothing, in Christian character, without the ministry upon them of earthly sufferings, therefore they may even respond to St. James, and "glory in tribulations also."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 2-12. *The Christian in Times of Suffering.*

I. **The suffering state of Christians** in this world is represented. 1. Implied that troubles and afflictions may be the lot of the best Christians. 2. These outward afflictions and troubles are temptations to them. 3. These temptations may be numerous and various. 4. They are not created by the good man, nor sinfully drawn upon himself.

II. **The graces and duties of a state of trial** and affliction are here pointed out to us. 1. Joy. 2. Faith. 3. Patience. 4. Prayer. (1) What to pray for; (2) how to obtain it; (3) encouragement to seeking; (4) condition of success; (5) steadiness of mind.

III. **The holy, humble temper** of a Christian, both in advancement and debasement, is described.—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 2. *Temptation and Sin.*—Temptation is not sin. An old German divine says, "You cannot prevent the birds flying over your head; but you can prevent them from making nests in your hair." An old English Divine says, "I cannot help it if the devil comes up to my door. I cannot help it if he lifts the latch and walks in. I can help it if I offer him a chair."

The Manifoldness of Human Trials.—Diverse, manifold temptations. They touch on all its sides human character, and affect every form of human relation, because the approach to men is by such different avenues; the needs of men and society take such a variety of forms. Very striking is the versatility of human trial; the surprise of the forms it can take; and the adaptation of forms to occasions which can sooner or later be recognised. The angel of affliction is marvellously skilful in his adjustments. The expression "fall into" suggests an unlooked-for concurrence of adverse circumstances. Every possible trial to the child of God is a masterpiece of strategy of the Captain of his salvation for his good.

Vers. 2-8. *Christian Joy in Times of Trial.*—The epistle was written to correct abuses which had already shown themselves in certain portions of the Church. Some of these arose from the influence of persecution, and from the peculiar trials and temptations which it brought along with it. Temptation never means affliction simply, but in every case conveys the idea of a moral trial, or a test of character. Had not popular usage lowered the meaning of our own word "trial," as applied to providential changes, so that it now expresses little more than pain or privation, it would correspond exactly to the Greek term here used, and applied to sufferings or afflictions, not as such, or as mere chastisement or means of grace, but as tests or touchstones of the sufferer's dispositions and affections, of his faith and patience and obedience. The difficulty of complying with the general injunction of the text may appear to be enhanced by the variety of outward forms and circumstances under which the work of providential trial may be carried on. Though it may be rational and right to rejoice in one variety of such temptations, it does not follow necessarily that it is possible or right in all. But the text has the term "divers," manifold, multiform, diversified; so it must be meant that in the full sense we are to count our various providential trials "all joy." As, however, "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous," it is not unreasonable to suppose that the joy required is not a joy to be experienced in the very article or stress of the temptation, but a joy to be engendered by a believing, grateful retrospection of the trial after it is past, or at least after the first

shock is over, and the soul is able to reflect upon it. This distinction helps to explain the paradoxical aspect of the exhortation to rejoice in that which necessarily involves pain and suffering. Christians may reasonably have joy in thinking that they have suffered, and so have had occasions of attesting their fidelity, and patience, and submission to God's will. But the joy is not merely retrospective; it is prospective also. It is founded on knowledge of the consequences which may be expected from a certain course of action or suffering. The trials or temptations of the Christian are the test or touchstone of his faith, both in the strict and comprehensive sense. They put to the proof his trust in God, his belief in what God says, of what God promises. But in so doing they afford the surest test of his religion, of his whole religious character. And providential trial or temptation produces a permanent effect upon the character. It generates a habit—that of patient endurance, that of steadfast perseverance in the way of God's commandments. For of patience, as of faith, it may be said that it cannot stand alone, it cannot exist independently of other virtues, other graces, other traits of Christian character. He who will not do God's will cannot endure it in a Christian spirit. Evangelical patience presupposes, includes, or carries with it evangelical obedience or activity. To say that it is fostered or matured by trial is to say that trial is an important means of grace, and to be thankfully submitted to, and even rejoiced in, as a gracious agency for securing spiritual health. The trial of our faith "worketh out," elaborates, and as it were laboriously cultivates, a habit of persistent and unwavering obedience and submission to the will of God, both in the way of doing and suffering. It is implied that this Divine ὑπομονή, this principle and habit of patient continuance in doing and suffering the will of God, is not a mere superfluous embellishment of Christian character, a work of supererogation added to its necessary elements by way of doing more than man needs or God requires, but itself an element that cannot be dispensed with, and without which neither sufferers nor actors in God's service can be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And all this affords abundant room for wise discrimination and a sound discretion.—*J. Addison Alexander, D.D.*

Temptation, its Meaning and Uses.—The subject of temptation, as treated in the Bible, is more than a little perplexing, from the appearance of inconsistency or contradiction in the several statements. In this chapter, within the space of ten or twelve verses, we have these four apparently irreconcilable statements: that it is to be counted all joy when we fall into temptations; that the man who endures temptation is blessed; that temptations do not come from God; and that they do come from our lusts and passions. Now, how can that be joy and blessedness which does not come from God, but from the lowest part of our nature, left in a basely ungoverned condition? The difficulty is somewhat illumined by reflecting on one broad feature of human life and action. Everything that falls within human activity may be said to have two sides to it. On the one side there *is* a Divine providence in the course a frail thing takes; on the other, there *may be* the outrage of all good sense and propriety. It is universally impossible in a single instance to escape from this complex position. Take, then, any temptation that arises from our bodily senses; there is a Divine side even to these when they are obeying the holy will of God. And then they help, not mislead, the soul. But in man's exercise of them there comes waywardness, folly. If men would only admit this double aspect of human things, to the fulness of its existence and influence, it would lessen, if it did not remove, many difficulties. It would be seen

that temptation must necessarily fill human life, and can arise at any and every point from the action of man's folly and error. With this explanation, can we say in any sense that it is the will of God, and justifiably so, that we, being what we are, should thus find temptations, with the risk of being betrayed by them? To answer this, we must consider a little more what man is, and what his position and calling in this life, possessed of these evil tendencies. Were he innocent and pure, and had he no knowledge of evil, there were then no evil tendencies. Were man either the creature of destiny, or a thing completely pliable to all surrounding influences, temptation would seem a very needless hardship. It is when we reflect that the thought of man most nearly adequate is of a being of great grandeur of nature, yet afflicted with evil tendencies—a being of unlimited though undeveloped capacities in all directions. The great meaning and use of temptation is to reveal the secret and unknown depths of the human soul, which may take three directions: 1. Very many things in human life, from the most startlingly terrible down even to the quite trivial, tell us how very little any one knows of the extent to which evil has invaded the nature of man. Who has not often observed in life a display of perversion that no one could have anticipated? No man knows himself, and no other man knows him, as to evil, until he is tried. 2. A more beautiful aspect of temptation is its power to develop the fortitude of virtue, the resolute moral earnestness of the man. To a being like man, knowing good and evil, and mysteriously allied to both, there would appear to be no other method of spiritual discipline. 3. The full force of these truths comes out to view as our perception becomes quite clear of the extreme opposite qualities—holiness and sin. Three truths are necessary to our search for the meaning of the difficult problems of life: 1. The paternal care of God. 2. The interpreting light of the future. 3. And the stupendous interests of morality. To him who sees in life no vast meaning to be unfolded, all these temptations may present only a tangled web. But when life emerges from this obscurity, as a God-given thing, with an infinitude of purpose, with a moral intensity that can be measured only by a heaven of ineffable bliss and a hell of unutterable gloom, then temptations are full of a sacred intent, come with the benediction of the all-wise and all-loving Father, it may be with sacred tears, to cast us on His everlasting arms of compassion and strength, and to fill our hearts with His pure joy.—*Samuel Edger, B.A.* (*Auckland, N.Z.*).

Ver. 3. *The Trial of Waiting Work.*—Human trouble never takes on a more serious form, and never becomes a severer test, than when it makes effort and enterprise impossible, and compels us to do nothing, and wait. Estimate (1) the pain of a condition of indecision; (2) the restlessness of watching; (3) the fear that the waiting will be in vain. It is a supreme difficulty to keep the heart rightly toned at such times, and to keep the life filled with right occupations. Difficult to be duly, but not unduly, anxious. Difficult to keep trust joined with prayer. "Watch and pray." But it is precisely in dealing with these difficulties that our characters get their culture through temptations.

Patience Something to be Won.—"Worketh patience." Do not think that the grace will come to its full beauty in an hour. It is a matter of culture through tending and discipline. A child is naturally impatient. A worldly man is naturally impatient. A Christian man is a man *cultured* unto letting "patience have her perfect work." The agencies more especially employed in the cultivation of patience are: 1. The disappointments of life, which become temptations to

heartlessness and hopelessness. 2. The delays of life, when hope deferred makes the heart sick, and men feel the temptation to force their own way, and hurry through their own schemes. 3. The afflictions of life which involve severe pain, or the nervous restlessness which seems to make patience impossible. 4. Daily contact with persons whose temper and disposition are specially trying to us, and with whom it is almost impossible to bear. 5. The little incidents of life, which are too small to make demand of any great effort to master ourselves, and consequently are done without self-restraint, and often very impatiently. Patience is the one virtue that is especially cultivated by the sanctifying of the *common* events and relations of life.

The Praise of Patience.—Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride; she bridles the tongue, restrains the hand, tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, consummates martyrdom. Patience produces unity in the Church, loyalty in the State, harmony in families and societies; she comforts the poor, and moderates the rich; she makes us humble in prosperity, cheerful in adversity, unmoved by calumny and reproach; she teaches us to forgive those who have injured us, and to be the first in asking forgiveness of those whom we have injured; she delights the faithful and invites the unbelieving; she adorns the woman and approves the man; she is beautiful in either sex and every age. Behold her appearance and her attire. Her countenance is calm and serene as the face of heaven unspotted by the shadow of a cloud, and no wrinkle of grief or anger is seen on her forehead. Her eyes are as the eyes of doves for meekness, and on her eyebrows sit cheerfulness and joy. Her mouth is lovely in silence; her complexion and colour that of innocence and security; while, like the virgin, the daughter of Zion, she shakes her head at the adversary, despising and laughing him to scorn. She is clothed in the robes of the martyrs, and in her hands she holds a sceptre in the form of a cross. She rides not in the whirlwind and stormy tempest of passion, but her throne is the humble and contrite heart, and her kingdom is the kingdom of peace.—*Bishop Horne.*

Patient Bearing is Reasonable.—It is but reasonable to bear that accident patiently which God sends, since impatience does but entangle us, like the fluttering of a bird in a net, but cannot at all ease our trouble or prevent the accident. It must be run through, and therefore it were better that we compose ourselves to a patient, than to a troubled and miserable, suffering.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

Ver. 4. *Perfect and Entire.*—There is both unity and distinctness in these terms. "Perfect" means that which fully attains its end. "Entire" means that which is complete, and harmoniously and healthily developed, in all the parts or regions of the spiritual life. The two words are wanted to express the full idea of a Christian.

Christian Character a Thing of Quiet Growth.—It is with the building up of Christian character as with the formation of crystals. In order that a crystal may be properly and perfectly formed, at least three things are necessary: there must be ample time in which all unnecessary fluid can be dissipated, and the component parts of the crystal come gradually together; there must be sufficient room for all the angles and planes of the crystal to attain their regular size; and there must be the absence of agitation, so that all the points and proportions of the crystal shall be evenly and symmetrically formed. Christian character, when it is what it ought to be, is

more beautiful than any crystal that nature's laboratory ever produced; and in order that it may reach its perfectness time is necessary. It is a thing of quiet growth; it has to rise gradually and by many stages into form and beauty; to hurry through religious processes will be to mar and spoil the result; we must "let patience have her perfect work." And space is as needful as time. If we shut ourselves up in a narrow place, if we go away from the broad, open world, and confine ourselves to a monk's seclusion, to a hermit's solitude, we shall be cramped and restricted; and while some parts of our character may become finely and delicately developed, others will be stunted and dwarfed, and the character as a whole will be anything but perfect. The absence of agitation, too, is important. Whatever may be going on upon the surface of our life to interrupt its tranquillity, deep down in the depths of the spirit in which character has its beginnings, and from which it grows, there must be the unruffled calm which trust in the Father's will and power and purposes never fails to inspire; otherwise our character will be built up by fits and starts, and so will lack the fulness of harmony, symmetry, majesty, which it ought to possess.—*B. Wilkinson.*

The Ideal of Christian Attainment.—"Perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Perfection of character is the idea, the aim, to be kept in the *soul* of the Christian, there to work as a perpetual inspiration to the seeking of perfection in the life and conduct and relationships. St. Paul presents the distinction between full-grown men and little children: the full-grown men are the perfect; they have reached the fulness, the standard, of Christian manhood. St. John has a similar kind of expression: he addresses several classes—the fathers, the young men, the little children; viewing these as different stages on the way to the perfect, that perfect being kept as the thought and aim in the soul of each. The idea of "perfect" comes out more plainly when it is set beside another word, "perfect and *entire*." A man "entire" is one who has preserved or regained a lost completeness; or one in whom no grace that ought to be in a Christian man is wanting. But a man "perfect" is one who has attained his moral end, the standard according to which, in view of which, he was made; or one in whom no grace that ought to be in a Christian is found imperfect or weak, but all have reached a certain ripeness and maturity. The idea of absolute perfection is to be cherished in a man's soul, and that idea is to be sustained by constant communion with the great model of human perfection, Christ Jesus, and a suitable effort is to be made afresh every day to work out that thought of the perfect in the spirit and temper and conduct of the life. Get the thought of perfection within you, and let your whole history be the history of a struggle after the perfect in all the relations of life.

The Christ-model of the Perfect Life.—The perfect—which as merely a creation of our imagination could exert little moral influence upon our life—was to be realised before the actual vision of men, and amidst our common scenes, and so to become the very mightiest moral influence. Christ is the ideal perfection realised in humanity. Christ is God's perfect thought of what man should be. Without the help of Christ's perfect life we could not form the idea of a perfect *man*. It is a simple fact that men never have formed such an idea.. In Christ we not only think of, we see, the perfect. He is perfect on every side: perfect in all the stages of childhood, youth, manhood; perfect in all the spheres of the spirit, temper, speech, relationship; perfect in all the claims of duty, devotion, charity; perfect in all the scenes of success, loss, suffering, death; perfect in all the exercises of will, affection, and desire. In Him perfec-

tion is proved to be, and seen to be, an attainable thing. The ideal of perfect goodness Christ came to preach, and He could preach it with no consciousness that He Himself fell short of it.

The Perfect Work of Patience.—The new life in Christ comes to persons having peculiarities of natural disposition and character. It has its work in moulding, restraining, altering, developing, and completing natural character. It perfects graces that may be existing—perhaps only in germ—in natural dispositions; and it brings them, plants them, cultivates them, when they are lacking. Patience is a grace; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. It takes two forms: 1. It may be the state of our mind and feeling as we go about our duty. 2. It may be the spirit which tones our intercourse with others. What in Christian life is likely to call patience into exercise? 1. The characters and dispositions of those with whom we must associate. Different and difficult temperaments. Some very wilful and trying. 2. The afflictions and trials of life. These often come in a way that disturbs our plans and tries our patience. 3. The element of the "future" in our redemption. Our best things have to be waited for. "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Note the relation of patience to faith and hope. Faith strengthens patience. Patience tempers hope. For examples of patience see Job, Simeon, Paul, and our Divine Lord. The following things tend to support and nourish patience: 1. The sense of God's presence with us. 2. A fitting apprehension of the holy purpose which God has in His dealings with us. 3. The necessarily gradual character of the work of our sanctification. 4. The strain involved in times of trouble. 5. The exceeding great and precious promises of future blessing.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—8.

Commonplace, practical wisdom.—St. James wrote to persons who were placed in difficult circumstances, partly through their own national characteristics, and partly through the events that were transpiring in public life. The Jews of every age, but peculiarly of that age, were of a contentious and quarrelsome disposition, and this made them a troublesome section of the people wherever they settled. It came indeed to be pretty generally understood, that if there was a revolt anywhere, the Jews were mixed up with it, if they were not at the bottom of it. The usual feeling towards Jews in the time of St. James is fairly represented by that towards the Russians in our own day. And the Jews were as contentious in private family life, and in their local synagogue life, as in their public life. St. James evidently has these characteristic elements of the Jewish nature fully in view. When the Jew became a Christian, it might not come to him at once that the Christian tone and spirit, which should characterise him in all forms of intercourse, was altogether different. Very easily could the faith of Christ as Messiah be taken up; and since it was not inconsistent with attendance at the Temple, observance of circumcision, and obedience to the law, it might not strike many of the Judæo Christians that it necessitated any change of temper, or toning of relationships. And then there were others who were called to suffer much in consequence of acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah; and *they* too were perplexed concerning the spirit with which their trials and persecutions should be met. It is in application to both such cases that St. James gives the advice of this passage, though the latter case appears to be the more prominent one. The *wisdom* which some may feel that they lack is "practical wisdom"—what we properly mean by "common sense," or skill

in the wise ordering of life, and in estimating and duly meeting all our various obligations. By "wisdom" St. James does not mean "learning," or "knowledge," or "science." He was evidently a great Bible student, as all earnest Jews were, and seems to have been especially influenced by the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the later sapiential writings, and by the practical writings of the prophets; and it is in the book of Proverbs that we must seek for the sense in which he uses the term "wisdom" in his epistle. *Dean Stanley* points out that the book of Proverbs is not on a level with the Prophets or the Psalms: "It approaches human things and things Divine from quite another side. It has even something of a worldly, prudential look. It is the philosophy of practical life. It is the sign to us that the Bible does not despise common sense and discretion. It impresses upon us in the most forcible manner the value of intelligence and prudence, and of a good education. The whole strength of the Hebrew language, and of the sacred authority of the book, is thrown upon these homely truths." It is planned so as to provide the young man, who has no life-experience to guide him, with "sound knowledge and discretion." It directs him amid the pitfalls, difficulties, and duties on which he must enter with the simplicity of youth still upon him. It was this kind of practical skill, to meet aright the unexpected and almost overwhelming responsibilities of kingship, that Solomon asked in his prayer at the outset of his reign. *Kitto* says: "The wisdom which Solomon craved was that of which he had already enough to be able to appreciate the value of its increase—practical wisdom, sagacity, clearness of judgment and intellect in the administration of justice, and in the conduct of public affairs." Taking *wisdom* then in this simple and practical sense, there is point in the counsel of St. James for us all. Precisely what thoughtful and devout people feel that they lack, especially when trials and misunderstandings seem to attend their endeavour to live the godly life, is the practical wisdom that would enable them to think aright of these trials, and would enable them so to control themselves under them, and so to order their conduct in relation to them, as to be patient under all circumstances, and fully maintain everywhere the Christian spirit.

I. **Practical wisdom for the ordering of life is a common requirement of Christian disciples.**—Life is distinctly a *new* thing to a man when he becomes a Christian. "He has not passed that way heretofore." He has no experiences in the self and worldly life that can be any really practical help to him. He is in much the condition of the young man who, with good principles, but very limited and often unsuitable experiences, goes out into life to meet the surprise of its varied trials and temptations. And we think there is hope for a young man if, on thus entering upon untried scenes, he is humble enough to recognise that he "lacks wisdom." Whether a man came over from Judaism to Christianity or from Paganism, he could never find it an easy thing to adjust himself to the new conditions and responsibilities. It may be questioned whether even now any man finds it an easy thing to adjust himself to the claims of a really earnest religious life. Practically we all find out, sooner or later, that we "lack wisdom"—precisely the wisdom which would enable us to fit our Christian conduct and relationships perfectly and pleasantly to our Christian principles and to the Christian spirit. Look at this "practical wisdom" in some of its more evident spheres. 1. The Christian discovers that he has a new standard for the *management of himself.* Every man finds out that he needs wisdom for the skilful ordering of his own bodily faculties and powers, his mind and abilities, and his temper and passions. "Knowing ourselves" is the intense work of early life; wisely ordering ourselves, according to our knowledge of ourselves, is the even more intense work of early manhood. But the Christian has another, a new, and a higher standard of self-manage-

ment. It needs to be set before us much more forcibly than it is, that the human example of our Divine Lord is that of a man who, with practical skill, ruled and ordered His own bodily life, mastering all its weaknesses, and putting it always into wise restraints. It may very well be that we all feel to "lack wisdom" in *this*, the first sphere of a self-rule. "The body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." 2. But practical wisdom is needed for ordering the *commonplace and every-day associations of life.* A man has to be distinctively and unquestionably Christian, in tone and spirit, everywhere, every day, and in everything. For the man who is not a Christian *always* is not a Christian *at all.* And yet what practical wisdom he needs! So easily he can undervalue the home-sphere, and say, "It does not much matter what I do there." So easily he can make a distinct sphere of business, and say, "Business is business; we do not want religion there." So easily he can be carried away by party feeling, and then but unworthily share in the witness of public life. Facing the commonplace obligations of home and business and society, we may all feel that in our effort to find full and adequate expression of the Christian spirit we all "lack wisdom." Is there a satisfied, or self-satisfied, Christian man or woman? It can only be that by *them* the claim of the Christian religion to tone and rule the every-day life of relations is not duly estimated. 3. And as the unexpected is "the thing that happens" even in the Christian life, practical wisdom is needed for rightly meeting the *anxieties, trials, temptations, and calamities* that come as surprises in every life. Of these St. James was thinking; and it was concerning the securing of the right preparedness for such scenes, and the right response to such circumstances, that he wrote to these Christian Jews. "Let patience [under trials] have her perfect work." "And if any of you feel that you lack the wisdom which would enable you so to order your lives as to win for patience her perfect work, then let him ask for the needed wisdom from God." Surely it comes home to us all, that in our effort to tone our lives with the Christian spirit, and to fill our daily lives with the Christian principles, we do "lack wisdom," we do need practical skill.

II. **Practical wisdom for the ordering of every-day life and relations is a Divine gift.**—"Let him ask of God." Wisdom, as the learning of the schools, can be thought of as a purely human acquisition. It is not indeed so regarded by the Christian, who seeks Divine help and blessing even in the acquisition of knowledge. But this practical wisdom, which adjusts the Christian principles to the relations of life, as if a man had passed through an actual experience, and had well learned the lessons of it, is distinctly a gift of God, a Divine bestowment upon the humble, open-souled, prayerful, obediently-toned man. It would be pleasant to philosophise about this, and to show that what we really need is to put God—God in Christ—into vital relation with each scene and duty and struggle; that we cannot get God save as He gives Himself to us; and that putting Himself into, keeping Himself in, our lives, is His answer to prayer, and His supply of wisdom. Plato has a very striking sentence on the importance of associating God directly with the every-day duties and relations of life: "The best and noblest action which a virtuous man can perform, and that which will most promote his success in life, is to live, by vows and prayers, in continual intercourse with the gods; nay, all who would act with due consideration ought, before beginning any undertaking, whether great or small, to invoke God." We need not deny that practical skill in the wise ordering of our life of duty and relations is mainly gained *by experience.* We grow into it with the advancing years. There is a familiar saying, with reference to our physical health, that a "man is a fool or a physician at forty." By that time the daily experience of dealing with his frailties and tendencies ought to have made him understand himself, and secure a fair share of health.

And it is also true of our mental and moral life, though in these matters we have to bring in some new and important considerations. Given the case of a man who knows what is good for his bodily health, and the assumption is that he will *do it*. But given the case of a man who knows what is for his moral good, and there is no security at all that he will *do it*; there is indeed every probability, or every fear, that he will *not*. *Froude* cleverly hits off the weakness of experience, if we treat his sentence as applying to morals. He says, "Experience is like the stern lights of a ship, which cast their rays over a path which *has been* taken." In relation to the moral and religious ordering of the moral and religious life, we have to take into account the disturbing element of the biassed, self-pleasing will. Use experience how well soever we may, that disturbing element has to be reckoned with: and that makes us feel that we "lack wisdom"; and that drives us to seek the help of God, whose supreme work is in and on man's will. God strengthens with "strength in the soul." Wherein then lies the difference between every man's life and the Christian man's life? Just here—Every man is learning by experience how to live. But his learning is seriously affected and biassed by the uncertainty of his self-willedness. The Christian man too is learning by experience; but he has asked God to set, to steady, to guide, and to control his will; and consequently, for him, the lessons of experience are in the Divine sanctifying. Feeling his lack of wisdom, he asks of God. God *may not* change any of the circumstances of the man's life; but God *does* set him and keep him rightly related to the circumstances; and therefore his life-experience does its best for him. St. James wrote to Christian Jews. It was a good and hopeful sign that they were conscious of "lacking wisdom." From the Christian point of view, then and now, there is no peril like that of the man who is quite sure that he can go alone. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The inspiration of a life of trustful prayer is the daily renewed conviction that we "lack wisdom." Prayer is our expression of the sense of need.

III. **Practical wisdom for the ordering of life is obtained only on conditions.**—"Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Here we are led to think of distinctions among professing Christians, rather than of distinctions between the worldly and the Christian. Even when we ask we may miss the response, by failing to meet the arranged conditions. We must ask for this daily Divine help *in faith*; but that faith required cannot possibly mean the acceptance of certain doctrines. Answer to prayer is never assured in God's word on the ground of the correctness of our intellectual beliefs. Faith in relation to prayer is seen by St. James as steady single-mindedness. The man of faith feels quite sure of what he needs. He has no questioning whatever about it. He gives way to no uncertainties, no doubts. He knows that he "lacks wisdom." He does not waver as to that, and there is consequently point and force in his prayer. And faith in prayer also includes confidence in Him to whom the prayer is addressed. This is indeed the very essence of Christian prayer. To be a Christian at all is to know God so as to trust Him thoroughly. And this confidence has for its sphere everything pertaining to the practical life of godliness. Concerning everything the Christian prays with submission; but it may be said that in praying about material things submission is stronger than expectancy; but in praying about moral and religious things, in which the Christian man should be in full sympathy with God, expectancy ought to be stronger than submission. With an unquestionable and unhesitating confidence we may ask for everything that pertains to the holy life. The positive condition is active faith, full confidence, assured hope of gracious response. The negative condition is, that there shall be no wavering,—no feeling as if we did want wisdom, and then feeling as if we did not; no disputing with ourselves,

as if we could be sure about nothing; no half-heartedness in our praying. Sometimes the ship, swayed about on the waters, is taken as the type of instability; but St. James knew that whatever the appearances, the ship was really answering its helm, and moving towards the desired haven. So he took his figure from the surging waves themselves. For these have no control of their own movements, and are under no apparent external control. They surge this way or that, they rise high or low, according as they are played upon by the ever-varying winds. And so even God can hardly get at the man who wavers, for there are no steady moods to which he can respond. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." The waverer, the doubter, the man who is always uncertain, is a proverbially difficult man to deal with. He is never quite sure what he wants; he never knows how to ask; and before you can get him what he asks, he wants something else. Both God and man are compelled to give up the waverers as hopeless people. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth [doubteth] is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. . . . A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Let me gather up the points of St. James's teaching into a few brief but connected sentences. 1. It is one thing to lack practical wisdom for the ordering of our lives, and another thing to *know* that we lack it. 2. It is one thing to know that we lack, and quite another to be willing to *ask* for a supply. 3. It is one thing to be willing to ask, and quite another to ask *properly*. Of one thing we may be absolutely sure, and we may act on our assurance. If God makes conditions, He lovingly responds to them. "He giveth to all liberally [just the skill for life that they lack], and upbraideth not."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 5. *The Spirit of God's Giving.*—"Giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." When and under what circumstances do we men upbraid one another? 1. When we can recognise no claim in the asker. 2. When we feel that too much is asked. 3. When we expect too much from the asker.

I. **Asking in faith is asking in full trust of the person from whom we ask.**—It need not be trust that we shall get precisely what we ask, and exactly at the time that we want to have it. It must be trust that He of whom we ask will use His judgment in the matter, and give, delay, withhold, or alter as He may see to be for the best.

II. **Asking in faith is setting our heart upon what we ask.**—Our Lord on more than one occasion taught that persistency and importunity were specially acceptable features in all petition. We can never rightly offer any request to God if we doubt whether the thing that we ask is desirable for us. Our heart cannot be in our request if we are uncertain whether God is willing to give, or fear that He may upbraid us. Failure of prayer can usually be traced to the man who prays. It may be that God cannot when He would.

Asking from God.—Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God, under a sense of our own folly and weakness, to ask for wisdom. He to whom we are sent, we are sure, has it to give; and He is of a giving disposition, inclined to bestow on those who ask. Nor is there any fear of His favours being limited to some in this case, so as to exclude others, or any humble, petitioning soul; for He *gives to all men.* If you should say you want a great deal of wisdom, a small portion will not serve your turn, the apostle affirms He *gives liberally;* and lest you should

be afraid of going to Him unseasonably, or being put to shame for your folly, it is added, "He upbraideth not." Ask when you will, and as often as you will, you will meet with no upbraidings.—*Matthew Henry.*

Plato's Idea of Wisdom—Perfect wisdom hath four parts: viz. wisdom, the principle of doing things aright; justice, the principle of doing things equally in public and private; fortitude, the principle of not flying danger, but meeting it; and temperance, the principle of subduing desires and living moderately.

The "Wisdom" of Christianity.—All that the schools of Greece and Egypt and the East had been saying for a course of ages was, Let no man think that he lacks wisdom, for he has it in himself—or at most, If any man lack wisdom, let him come to us. But when the voice of the evangelising angel, whom John saw in his apocalyptic vision, became audible, the schools were silent, and the oracles were dumb, before that simple precept, to which we attach so little value, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." But this asking of God was to the Greeks a mockery. Even those who believed in God had no conception of immediate spiritual intercourse with God, still less of intellectual illumination sent directly from Him. They knew what it was to work out wisdom for themselves, or to seek for wisdom at the hands of human sages; but this was a new idea, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." And that not as a ceremony, but a means, a certain means of acquisition—not of God the unknown and the unapproachable, but God the Giver, God who gives, who actually gives, has given, will give again, will give for ever—not to certain favoured nations or castes or individuals, but to all men—not to Greeks or Jews alone, not to philosophers or priests alone, but to all men, all who ask, all who really desire it, all who ask aright.—*J. Addison Alexander, D.D.*

Knowledge and Discretion.—Learning falls far short of wisdom. . . . Knowledge is the treasure of the mind, but discretion is the key to it, without which it is useless. The practical part of wisdom is the best.—*Feltham.*

Wisdom, whence shall she be gotten?—That which is of supreme importance to us, that which endures through all the changes and decays of nature, that which really determines our fate in life, in death, and after death, is the character which has been framed and developed in us during these fleeting hours of time, and by all the chances and changes of this mutable world. Our highest wisdom, the one true secret of life, is self-training, self-culture, the development of a complete and noble character. Character is supremely important in business and in homes; he whose character is well balanced and well developed, who is not only manly, but a mature and complete man, is equal to any conditions, and rises superior to them all. Into the next world, all we can take is the character we have built up. The ruling bent of our character will determine our fate. Our main task in the world is the formation of character; it is our highest wisdom to endeavour after a character which shall be noble and complete, a character which will fit us both to live and die. Is the highest wisdom within our reach? St. James, writing to Christian Jews under persecution, tells them that patient and faithful endurance, which God sent, and intended adversity to produce, would gradually work out in them that manly and noble character which is our highest good. Trials bravely met search out and carry away faults and defects of character, as the acid bites out the alloy from the gold. They make, or tend to make, us of so complete and entire a manliness that nothing is lacking to us. Some, however, might lack *wisdom* to see that this is the highest wisdom; so St. James says, "If any of you lack [this]

wisdom," which holds the hope of becoming perfect in character above all other aims, let him ask it of God, and it shall be given him. *He* will teach and help you to put a pure and noble character before the happiest outward conditions. He will help you to welcome the trials by which He is seeking to make you steadfast, to brace you to a mature and complete manliness, to supply what is lacking in you, until you lack nothing. If you cannot *see* that to be His purpose, ask Him to show it to you, and He will show it. If you ask *Him* for wisdom to see His purpose in afflicting you, you will *try* to see it. As you pray you grow sincere. You can see more clearly what your life has been given you for, for what high and noble ends. You so relate yourself to the Father of lights that He is able to shed light into your soul. If God is able, surely He is willing. Where God finds an open and prepared, a seeking and receptive, heart, He enters in, and enters to make it wise and good. If you honestly crave wisdom to make His will your will, to aim at that maturity and perfection of character which He knows to be your supreme good, He will as surely give you that wisdom as the sweet, pure, sun-warmed air will flow into your room when you throw open your window to the day. God will never keep His word of promise to the ear, but break it to the hope it has inspired. He is not of two minds, as men often are. He gives because He loves to give and loves you. You need not fear to ask of Him, either because you have so often asked before, or because you have never asked before. "He *upbraideth* not." And whatever forms trials may take, you may be sure of this: God intends them for your good, for the discipline and growth of character —intends them to spur and brace you to fortitude, courage, patience; and therefore He would have you count them all joy, since they will bring you joy at the last if you meet them with a constant spirit. If you care most for character, the trials that brace, refine, and elevate your character should not be unwelcome to you. And if as yet you lack the wisdom which sees in every trial a discipline of character and perfection, ask *this* wisdom of God the Giver, and it shall be given you.—*S. Cox, D.D.*

Who are the Wise?—

Who are the wise?
They who have govern'd with a self-control
Each wild and baneful passion of the soul—
Curb'd the strong impulse of all fierce desires,
But kept alive affection's purer fires.
They who have pass'd the labyrinth of life,
Without one hour of weakness or of strife:
Prepared each change of fortune to endure,
Humble though rich, and dignified though poor.
Skill'd in the latent movements of the heart—
Learn'd in the lore which nature can impart;
Teaching that sweet philosophy aloud
Which sees the "silver lining" of the cloud;
Looking for good in all beneath the skies:
These are the truly wise.

Prince.

True Prayer and True Answer.—Our truest prayers are but the echo of God's promises. God's best answers are the echo of our prayers. As in two mirrors set opposite to each other the same image is repeated over and over again, the reflection of a reflection, so here, within the prayer, gleams an earlier promise, within the answer is mirrored the prayer.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Ver. 6. *Two Kinds of Doubting.*—Intellectual is not moral doubt. The unorthodox are not as the adulterous. Nevertheless, intellectual doubt may

spring from an evil habit of carping criticism and self-opinion, for the foundation of which, in so far as a man himself has been either the wilful or the careless cause, he must bear the curse of its results.—*Ellicott's Commentary.*

Winds and Waves.—"Like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed." The wind represents outside circumstances—something distinct from the sea itself—acting on the waters. When men are not established in principles, and well exercised in self-control, they are easily swayed to and fro by changing outward circumstances. "Each puff of wind catches hold of the water, and heaps it up into a little hill with the face to the leeward; then the crest falls, and the water sinks down into a trough, as deep below the mean surface as the hill was high above it; but the next column of water is then forced up, only, however, to be pulled down again, and in this way the motion of the wave may be propagated across a broad expanse of water. Let the breeze freshen, and the 'little hills' of course become higher; the wind now catches the particles of water on the crest of the wave, and carries them away, scattering them as spray, or water dust, forming foam—'white horses,' as the children call it. Increase the breeze to a gale, and the spray becomes a shower of salt water, until far away sea and sky seem to mingle, and the horizon-line is lost to our sight. Again, as the wind seizes the top of the wave, it makes *it* move faster than the lower part, and we see it bend over in a curve, whose edge is scattered into foam. If the wind be intermittent, as mild breezes usually are, we get a few small waves running in, followed by a larger, higher one, which breaks on the shore."—*Worsley-Benison.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Single-minded and Double-minded.*—The double-minded man halts between belief and unbelief, with inclination towards the latter. The single-minded man does not halt at all; but having a distinct aim before him, moves toward it with a resolute and persistent endeavour. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." St. James is dealing with characteristic dispositions in prayer. Some give force to prayer. Some so weaken prayer that it cannot reach God with any persuasive power. There is—1. The single-mindedness of conscious need. The man is quite sure that what he asks he wants. 2. The single-mindedness of a resolute purpose. What the man wants he sets heart and effort upon attaining. 3. The single-mindedness of faith in God. As the Prayer-hearer, who takes heed to the expressed desires of His people, and waits to bless. 4. The single-mindedness of a loyal submission, which always goes with faith in God. 5. The single-mindedness of importunity, which speaks after the manner of Jacob: "I will not let Thee go, unless Thou bless me." The man of a single mind in prayer may reasonably expect to "receive something of the Lord." There is the double-mindedness—1. Of uncertainty as to what is to be asked. A man may not know exactly what he wants, or may have no confidence that what he asks is a good thing. 2. Of uncertainty whether the matter had better be taken to God, or managed by the man himself. 3. Of uncertainty whether God will take such things into consideration. 4. Of uncertainty whether, after all, prayer is of any real use—whether good and evil things do not come to us just the same whether we pray or not. 5. Of uncertainty caused by never letting a decision rest, but going over it again and again, until opportunity is lost, and nothing is done. The man of a double mind need not expect to "receive anything of the Lord," for the truth is that, in his uncertainty, he never really asks. The "unstable" can neither "excel" nor "attain."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

Discipline comes out of Changed Circumstances.—It was a time in which there were frequent sudden changes in social and business circumstances. In a commercial age some rapidly acquire riches; in an age of national unsettledness and religious persecution some as rapidly lose their all. It is often said that "the hardest thing in life is to *come down* gracefully." It would show a worthier estimate of human nature if we were to say, "The hardest thing in life is to *go up* gracefully." Many more cases of moral ruin attend the sudden increase of riches, and elevation of station, than attend the loss of wealth and place. Nevertheless, men are always willing to stand the moral risk of going up, and never willing to choose the moral blessings that may attend coming down. St. James impresses that both changes are moral testings. The man who is low may look upon his elevation as a testing of his moral character, out of which increased virtue should come. The man who is high should look upon his misfortunes as Divine discipline, having in it a mission of moral blessing for him. So he who goes up may sincerely rejoice in the going up, and he who comes down may rejoice in coming down, since God is so evidently adapting His gracious discipline to each one. It is an advanced Christian thought to which every one cannot hope to attain.

I. **The caste principle is found in all society.**—It may take exaggerated forms in India, and exclusive trade forms in countries such as China, but it is an essential feature of the aggregating, nationalising, and civilising of men. By various affinities men are drawn together into sets, and find their spheres and pleasures in their sets. Every man is born into a class, and fits to his class. Within his class he gets his own particular level by his ability or his means. The caste principle must never be thought of as only evil. It is mingled good and evil, and may be good in an important sense when the members of the various classes are swayed by altruistic principles, and accept the duty of serving one another. Our Lord said, "Ye have the poor always with you"; and He might also have said, "Ye have the rich also with you."

II. **The caste conditions of society are subject to change.**—The rich are brought low, and the poor are exalted. Proof and illustration are abundant in history, and obvious to experience and observation. It may suffice to show (1) that the accidents of life are constantly changing class conditions; (2) the rewards of human enterprise are constantly changing class conditions; and (3) Divinely ordered providences are also constantly changing class conditions. Poor Joseph becomes rich. Rich Job becomes poor. These are types with great followings.

III. **The changed caste conditions of society are disciplinary agencies.**—And the discipline comes to both those who go up and those who come down, because (1) in either case new associations have to be made, and to them the new life has to be fitted; and (2) because the old life may be so seriously out of harmony with the new, that the work of fitting to the new may cost severe strain. It may mean earnest self-culture—"cutting off right hand, plucking out right eye." But discipline through Divine providences has this consolation in it—it is meant to secure for us the highest good. It can only be our own fault if we miss that highest good.

The Crown of Life.—This is a figure for the results accomplished in character, by the resolute, persistent, and heroic endeavour to live wisely and worthily and well. Such efforts are crowned with (1) a spirit of firm endurance; (2) an unshakeable steadfastness; (3) a great tenacity of purpose; and (4) a quenchless

enthusiasm for the right, the true, the pure, and the good. Established and confirmed principles of character are the "crown of life,"—the crown which God gives, though it seems to come in a natural way; the crown which is His recognition and reward.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 9. *Pride in Disguise.*—There is no praise from the plain St. James for the pride which apes humility, nor for the affectation which loves to be despised.

The Anxiety of Riches.—The rich man is in no sense to be envied, *i.e.* the man who trusts in his riches. He is a heavily burdened man. His anxiety concerns—1. The retention of his riches. His fear is seen in exaggerated form in the miser. The rich farmer was worried to know "where to bestow all his fruits and his goods." The rich man is perplexed in these times to know how to put out his money safely, and has to be satisfied with small interest. 2. The use or misuse of his money. He may easily spend it in self-indulgences that bring ruin on himself, body and soul. He may easily neglect to help others with his wealth, and so bring down on himself the curse of the poor and the judgment of God. 3. The future, into which he can neither carry his riches, nor anything that his riches have obtained for him. In view of the worries that riches bring, we may wisely pray the prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

Riches a Natural Acquisition.—Man was born to be rich, or inevitably grows rich by the use of his faculties, by the union of thought with nature. Property is an intellectual production. The game requires coolness, right-reasoning, promptness, and patience in the players. Cultivated labour drives out brute labour.—*Emerson.*

Vers. 9-11. *Exaltings and Humblings.*

I. **The reasons for the rejoicing of the poor.**—*I.e.* of the pious poor. They are exalted—1. Inwardly, by the renewal of their nature. 2. Outwardly, by dominion over self. 3. In rank, by high dignity. 4. By communion with the best intelligences. 5. By the endowment of the best influences. 6. By raising them above the temptations of their condition. 7. By enabling them to adorn all the relationships of life. 8. By raising them to the most sublime felicity. 9. By inspiring them with bright hopes of immortality.

II. **The reasons for the rejoicing of the rich.**—*I.e.* of the pious rich. 1. They are delivered from proud self-exaltation. 2. From the fictitiousness of worldly distinctions. 3. They are conformed to the image of Christ. 4. Able to realise heaven's honours. 5. They have treasures laid up for them for eternity. 6. They are weaned from the world. 7. They are ascending by the cross to eternal bliss. —*Dr. J. Burns.*

Ver. 10. *The Emblem of the Grass.* —Describe the peculiarities of the grass in hot Eastern lands. 1. It shows well. 2. It fades suddenly—under scorching wind and sun. 3. It is lost utterly—at least for the season, and until God sends the reviving rains.

Ver. 11. *Rich Commercial Jews.*— "In his ways"; R.V. "goings." There seems, moreover, looking closely at the text, a special fitness in its exact words; for they mean that the rich shall perish in their *journeyings* for the sake of gain; and to no people could the rebuke apply more sharply than to the Jews, the lenders "unto many nations" (Deut. xv. 6), the merchants and bankers of the world.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—15.

The Mission of Temptation as Excitement to Evil.—From temptation as moral testing St. James proceeds to deal with temptation as a force alluring to the sin of apostasy. Temptation as enticement would seem at first sight to be altogether and only evil. Yet in view of the sinful condition of man, and the redemptive work to be done in him, even temptation in this sense may prove to be an important remedial force, and the man may be blessed who comes into the power of it, but endures, stands fast, effectually resists. The man gains a distinct moral uplift who has come safely through such temptations. It is the moral dignity of Christ that He was tempted, and *did endure.* Temptation to evil applied to moral beings is an essential condition of moral culture, and we cannot conceive of moral culture being accomplished in any other way. The untempted have no virtue. But this brings up the question, Whence comes temptation to evil?

I. **St. James does not here declare the source to be a great evil spirit.**—He wants those to whom he writes to feel that the responsibility in the matter rests on themselves, and therefore he avoids the bare possibility of their shifting the responsibility on any Satan. But the question of the existence and work of a personal devil need not be introduced here, as St. James puts it away from consideration. Whatever idea of the power and authority of Satan we may have, it is distinctly understood that he is no co-ordinate power with God, as, perhaps, Ahriman is with Ormuzd; but a strictly subordinate power, working within the Divine restraints, and working in reality towards the Divine beneficent ends.

II. **St. James deals with those who say that temptation to evil comes from God.**—He affirms that God is never the direct source of temptation. He says that He cannot be, because He Himself cannot be tempted with evil. "At first it might seem as if this assertion did not meet the thought to which it appears to be an answer; but the latent premiss of the reasoning seems to be, that no one tempts to evil who has not been first himself tempted by it." Satan the tempted one is the tempter.

III. **St. James affirms that the source of temptation is found in the nature of man, and the occasion of temptation in the circumstances of man.**—"He is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Man is made for pleasure, and is entrusted with desires. It is his nature to want what will please and gratify him. In this of itself there would have been no difficulty; but in the simple gratification of desires there would have been no character, and no possible creation of character. There came a revelation of God's will to man, which required that he should put his desires into restraint. If he would not, he sinned. In asserting his self-will against God he changed desires into lusts; put himself into the power of his lusts, which tempted him, enticed him, drew him aside to evil. The external world of things, being set in relation to his bodily nature, became the occasion of temptation, when, having lost his self-restraint, desires had become lusts.

IV. **St. James assures that the consequences of sin as yielding to temptation to evil are inevitable.**—They come in the ordinary and necessary outworking of *moral* laws, and are as certain as any results of the outworking of natural laws. Let unrestrained desire do its work, and it will bring forth sin. Let sin do its work, and it will bring forth death. The only possible arrest of the process is in man's own hands—with the Divine help. It lies in gaining that self-mastery which God is ever helping us to gain by bringing us through the sterner discipline of life.

Ver. 12 (R.V.). *The Mission of Temptation as Trial.*—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* promised to them that love Him." It is plain that St. James has two very distinct, yet very closely related, senses in which he uses the word "temptation." Sometimes he means attraction or enticement to sin; sometimes he means trial, trouble, affliction. How these two differing things came to be so closely associated in his mind we can easily understand. Like the other writers of general epistles, he was anxious about the influence of prevailing persecutions on the faith of the Jewish Christians. Persecutions were trials to be borne. But those Jewish Christians were proving them to be much more than trials; to them they were temptations, enticing them away from their new-found faith, back to their old and formal Judaism. How trials become temptations may be illustrated from the effect produced by the family calamities on Job's wife. She was altogether upset when the crowning distress came, and her husband was smitten with a foul and humiliating form of disease. She was tempted by trial, and drawn away from her submission and trust. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die." "The element of testing is recognised as in every trial that comes to the good man. But testing involves temptation. The test is this—Will you resist what you are tempted to think or feel or do under these circumstances of trial? Job was tested by the fiery trials through which he had to pass; but the testing involved temptation to "curse God and die." We are, however, proposing now to treat St. James's word "temptation" as meaning "trial." But as soon as we begin to think of the trials that come into our human lot, an important distinction comes into view. So many of our human troubles we bring upon ourselves; they are the direct, natural, and necessary outcome of our dispositions, cherished habits, negligences, indulgences, or wilfulnesses. Limit thought to any small period of life, say a single year, and it will both surprise and humble us to observe how many of the troubles of that period were manifestly unnecessary and avoidable, if we had been other than we were. It is indeed the exceeding bitterness of human life, to the seriously thoughtful man, that he has brought most of his sufferings upon himself. It is often set before us how true this is in relation to bodily pain and frailty. So much of it is the natural result of our self-indulgent habits, in eating and drinking, in clothing, in exposures, in over-exertions. It may also be shown in relation to those more serious troubles that come through misunderstandings with our fellow-men, and which for many persons make up at least three-fourths of the bitterness of life. Every one of them might have been avoided, if we had cultured a better disposition, exercised a wiser self-restraint, set a worthier watch upon the door of our lips, or shown a readier willingness to seek explanations and reconciliations. We really have only ourselves to blame for such misunderstandings; they are entirely human-made calamities; they are not in any sense heaven-sent trials; and all the bitter hours we may have had, and all the unworthy things we may have been led to say and do, which make wretched hours of woe for others, are all the necessary and natural outworking of our own conduct and our own spirit; they are the woes which we have made for ourselves. But some of our troubles we may fully recognise as sent by God. They come in circumstances which we are wholly unable to control. They are not—save in some very indirect way—related to our own weaknesses or wrong-doings. It may sometimes be very difficult to distinguish between the troubles which we bring upon ourselves and the troubles which God sends; and yet the distinction can be made, and is indeed actually made. Under many of our trials we have a great fretting of conscience—those are our man-made trials. Under other trials conscience is quiet and silent—those are our God-sent trials.

The distinction is clearly seen in the life of Abraham. He made trouble for himself in Egypt and at Gerar, when he deceived with the idea of saving his life. He came into troubles which God sent, when he went to Moriah to sacrifice his only son. What we need to see is that all the troubles which we bring upon ourselves bear the character of *judgments*. They are always the whip that scourges the wilful. They are always designed to arouse to a sense of sin. They are disciplinary and corrective, but in the way of punishment, of judgment. The troubles which God sends have no judgment-element in them—to teach this one truth is the great message of the book of Job. We need to look this truth full in the face. God-sent troubles are not judgments, are not punishments. Job was not punished, Job was not judged, by his trials. God-sent troubles are Divine testings, and are culture rather than discipline. They are for the nourishing of virtue, rather than for the correction of fault. And therefore it is fitting that for those who *endure* God-sent trials there should be provided gracious and even abundant rewards, summarised in the figure of the "crown of life." There are periods in the histories of individuals and of Churches, when the God-sent character of their troubles is brought very closely home to them; as there are other periods—which are far harder to bear—when the review of the immediate past shows troubles, cares, burdens, which are manifestly related to our wrong-doing. We see quite plainly that we "sowed the wind," and we had to "reap the whirlwind"; we followed the devices and desires of our own hearts; and the days went on until we found ourselves deep in the bog and quagmire of the proper fruitage of our own doings. Now we are purposing to read the "temptation" of our text as "our God-sent trials." So read, "Blessed is the man that endureth trial."

I. **Blessed is the man who has some trial to endure.**—"Blessed" is the rightly chosen word. There is an important difference between the words "happy" and "blessed." Men are happy, in a lightsome way, with what may "hap" or "happen." Men are blessed, in a serious way, with what they can see God ordains, arranges, or bestows. Happiness is too light a thing to be the issue of any enduring of trial. It represents but a seeming, passing good. Blessedness expresses the very highest condition man can reach. It is man's most delightful mood; it is man's truest riches. Blessed puts the print of heaven on a man. And blessedness cannot fail to be the issue of enduring God-sent trial. Would not our life upon the earth be altogether brighter, better, worthier, without these God-sent trials? Why should we have such things to endure? Our hearts often cherish feelings which, if they took shape as words, would speak like this. But in just this way you have heard the child wonder over the meaning of his school-life—the strain of learning, and the correction of faults. Why cannot we live through our human life without these school-tasks and this school-discipline? The answer to the school-boy is the answer to us. You *can* be something. If you are ever to be what you can be, you must be subjected to school-discipline. To the Christian we must say—You can be something. It is to the honour of God and to your own eternal joy that you should be what you can be. And the God-sent trials are God's ways of making you what you can become. Is it better to go through life as a being scarcely superior to an animal, which the man is who has never known school-training? And could it possibly be better for the Christian to remain all through his life just the saved thing of his conversion-time? And such he must remain for ever if he does not come under the school-training of God, taking shape as heaven-sent trials. We fret under our own particular trials, think them strangely unsuitable for us, and far more severe than anybody else has to endure; and exactly so, and quite as unreasonably, does the child at school. Have you ever sat quietly down to think over the God-sent

trials of your lives, and to ask yourselves which of them you could have done very well without? If you have, you have surely found that you had given yourself no easy task. You looked them carefully over,—diseases that spoiled life's plans and left permanent marks on the body, in helpless limbs, or recurring pain, or local frailties; disasters which swept away income, and compelled you to begin life again; bereavements that plucked away your life-support, and left you fallen, bruised, helpless, almost hopeless: yes, you passed them all in review, and looked out this one and that, quite sure that *they* were unnecessary. But you examined them again; and, as you looked, a flood of Divine light fell on them, and in that light was revealed their mission. You saw the good which they had wrought in you and for you, and you had to put them back into the list, close it up, and say, "I would have had nothing of the God-sent trial other than it has been, for He has made all things work together for good." Blessed is the man that has some God-sent trials to endure. Life with them is hopeful. Life without God-sent trials—who could wish for that?

II. **Blessed is the man who endures the trials God does send him.**—That word "endure" reminds us that God-sent trials are seldom, if ever, single events or incidents—they are *processes*; we have to keep up for some time our right relations to them. Single acts of submission under strokes may be comparatively easy; but the keeping on, the enduring, is always so hard. Enduring is so much more, and so much more noble, than bearing. It is not very much to lie down and let the trials of life trample over you, and *bear* without uttering a groan. Yet that is many people's best idea of the right attitude towards Divinely sent afflictions; but that is not Christian endurance. Eastern devotees can do that sort of bearing work far better than we can. In the ceremony of the Doseh a long line of men will cast themselves down on their faces, and let the whole procession of men and horses trample over their backs without a murmur. No, no, enduring is nothing like that; it is intelligent; it is the resolve of the will, based on the good judgment of the mind, and the right feeling of the heart. Enduring is lifting up oneself to take a right position in relation to our trials, and keeping oneself uplifted so long as the trial stays. Enduring is cheerful. Enduring never separates a man from his duties, his relations, and his services. The man who endures goes about his earthly life as bravely and brightly as ever he did, with his great woe bound fast like a burden on his shoulder, but determined that, if he feels it himself, nobody shall see it, nobody shall suspect it. That is the holy enduring of God's saints. They may try to make their brave burden-bearing invisible, but they cannot quite do it. Lines in their faces, pathos in the tones of their voices, tell us all about it. But then *we* keep silence too, only saying in our souls, "Blessed are they who endure temptation."

III. **Blessed is the man who gains the crown of life promised to them that endure under trial.**—It is not certain where St. James got his idea of the "crown of life" from, or exactly what he meant by it. St. Paul had associations with the great Grecian games, and took his figures from the parsley or the myrtle crowns which decked and honoured the victors in the race or in the fight; but we cannot be sure that St. James had any such associations. We must do what we can toward fixing a meaning for ourselves. Let us try two. 1. Life may be the crown. And this will fit into St. James's teaching. He is speaking of the discipline under which men are placed. They are training for *life*, just as we say that the lads at school are training for life. And when they have endured right through, and the training and disciplining work is done, they are crowned with life; the life for which they have been preparing so long comes to them, and it is a dignity, a glory, a joy, as is a crown. 2. Or it may mean that the life of enduring they have lived through

will be crowned, as the victor in the old games had his victory shown, and gloried in, by placing on his head the myrtle crown—the deathless myrtle crown. It may be that we shall prefer *this* meaning, since the crown of life is plainly the gracious recognition and reward that our Lord will give. Oh the thrill of the old victor as he steps forward, with ten thousand eager eyes fixed upon him, and ten thousand voices shouting glad acclaim, towards the royal seat of the mightiest King of all the kings there, and then feels the King's own royal hand placing the myrtle crown upon his head—the crown which declares he *has* fought, he *has* borne, he *has* endured, he *has* won! Can it be that the hand of the King of kings will place the crown of life upon *our* brow? Yes, if we endure—nobly endure, sweetly endure, persistently endure—our God-sent trials. Our God-sent trials! The past has a rich record of them. The future will surely bring some more of them round to us. And "blessed is the man that endureth temptation," if the temptation take shape as God-sent trial.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 12. *Christian Enduring.*—This is the charm of our Lord's life on the earth. Enduring is the only word that covers and compasses His story. It is fittingly associated with its close, when "He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." It is possible to find "submission" in the cross of the Lord Jesus. It is possible to find something grander far than submission. It is possible to find "endurance," the active doing, not the merely passive bearing. For this is the thrice noble spirit, this is sublime endurance—a man or a woman keeping on doing cheerfully the life's work with their great earth-burden bound tightly on their shoulders. Heroes in the strife are they.

Power to endure a Sign of Manliness.—If we would quit ourselves like men, let us be patient men. It is not a manly thing to be grumbling continually, as some people do, about this, about that, about almost everything—the weather, the state of trade, their health, their neighbours, and so forth. Now whatever troubles us can or cannot be avoided. If it can be avoided, let it be avoided; if it cannot, let it be patiently borne; but let there be no peevishness. I think there is something worthy of respect, and even of admiration, in the idea of manliness entertained by many uncivilised peoples, that a man, worth calling a man, should be able to bear almost any amount of physical torture without a groan. Civilisation has perhaps rendered that too hard a test for us; but we surely need not be so impatient of suffering as to mourn and complain about trifling annoyances.—*H. Stowell Brown.*

The Crown of Life.—The issue and outcome of believing service and faithful stewardship here on earth is the possession of the *true life*, which stands in union with God; in measure so great, and in quality so wondrous, that it lies on the pure locks of the victors like a flashing diadem, all ablaze with light in a hundred jewels. There is such a congruity between righteousness and the crown of life, that it can be laid on none other head but that of a righteous man; and if it could, all its amaranthine flowers would shrivel and fall when they touched an impure brow.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

The Purpose of Temptation.—There is a purpose in temptation. It is not an accident of our history or nature. It serves great moral and spiritual ends which, so far as we know, could not be otherwise attained. It is essential to virtue. In the New

Testament the word has a double meaning. It means the inducement to sin. It means the endurance of suffering. At root they are the same. Suffering tests the character, tries the faith, and so tempts us as much and as surely as does the direct and immediate solicitation to sin. Suffering may tempt men to evil just as certainly as it may train them to good. St. James means by the word "life," not of course mere vitality, for that the man must have had to be tempted at all; nor only immortality, for that might conceivably be his whether he "endured" temptation or not; but "life" in the sense of character—of virtuous and noble character—which is the really vital thing in man, and in which alone a man's true life consists. He receives the "crown of life" as the natural issue and consummation of his endurance. Without the cross of temptation no man can have the crown of life. How is temptation disciplinary? In what way does it influence our spiritual life? 1. By teaching us the bitterness of sin. With the first taste of the forbidden fruit we taste the bitterness of sin. It is this knowledge of sin, this awakened consciousness of guilt, which lies at the foundation of our Christian character, and gives to us our place and part in the redemptive work of Christ. 2. By revealing us unto ourselves. Self-knowledge is the root of all virtue. It is one of the secrets of moral safety and of spiritual growth. In our self-ignorance is our peril. 3. By the general development of the character. Before their temptation Adam and Eve were as children. They were children in their innocence. After their temptation the innocence was lost, and lost for ever; but in place of it was a bitter knowledge and a stern experience, which were as distinct a development on what they were before as is manhood to infancy. Temptation brought them into a wider range of being. By their fall life was altogether changed for them. Their feelings ran in new and deeper channels; their knowledge moved in larger spheres; and the peaceful safety and simplicity of Eden were possible for them no more. What is true of Adam and Eve is true equally of us. We are born innocent. Childhood is our Eden. Though innocent, we are temptable and frail—the more temptable and frail because we are *their* children. We likewise are tempted to our fall, and through the fall we learn exactly what Eve and Adam learnt, the knowledge of good and evil—the blessedness of obedience to the will of God, the poisonous bitterness of wrong. And the wider knowledge admits us into wider life, and instead of continuing children we spring up into the stature of women and of men. The gates of a lost innocence close behind us, and we find ourselves in the great world struggling amid the thorns. Through temptation men fall and sink into unfathomed depths of misery and degradation. It is true. But through temptation also they rise into the image of Christ, "who is the image of God." Through the test and trial of temptation men grow to manhood—manhood grows to sainthood—and sainthood is at last borne into the Divine haven of the eternal peace—the peace of a perfectly harmonious and completed character, every disturbing and discordant element of which has been vanquished, and for ever left behind. So that no temptation would mean no manhood—no sainthood. It would even mean no Christ. For it was out of temptation that Christ came to save us, and it was through temptation that He saved and saves.—*Johnson Barker, LL.B.*

Ver. 13. *Nature is God's Work only.*—Some cannot see in nature (as J. S. Mill) "the work of a being at once good and omnipotent," and prefer to doubt the latter quality sooner than the former. But this nineteenth-century conclusion is no advance beyond the dual system of the Persians, or rather of Mani, who corrupted with his Indian fancies the faith of Zoroaster. The Manichees

settled the difficulty better than our deists, by declaring the existence of a good God and a bad one, and appealed to the daily strife between virtue and vice, nay life and death, in witness of their simple creed.

God no Tempter.—Man does not directly say, "I am tempted of God"; but he is ready sometimes to accuse Him indirectly by saying—God has placed me in such and such circumstances; and therefore God is really the author of the sin into which those circumstances have led me. And it is true that God is the author of temptation in the sense that He provides men spheres of moral discipline. God cannot be thought of as enticing any one to sin. He did put Adam, Abraham, etc., into scenes that were disciplinary. He deals with His people now in the same way. God "tempteth not any man." That is true. But this is also true, "God did tempt Abraham."

Is God the Author of Sin?—The wider notion of temptation includes the allurements of desire, as well as the trials of adversity. In both cases men found refuge from the reproof of conscience in a kind of fatalism. God had placed them in such and such circumstances; therefore He was the author of the sin to which those circumstances had led. The following sentence is from the son of Sirach: "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away" (Ecclus. xv. 11).—*Farrar.*

God not the Author of Evil.—God is made the author of evil, either directly or indirectly. 1. Directly. If we say, Nothing can possibly root it out of my mind that I shall be right in doing what God does; and the more I feel my relation to Him, and the fact that I am formed in His image, the more right this will seem to me. 2. Indirectly. If I feel that a certain thing is necessary for the attainment of a great, good end, and secures it, I cannot help feeling that, as a means to such an end, it is right, and I should be justified in doing it. 3. If a certain state of things in the Divine providence is the best attainable, I cannot possibly feel it to be wrong. These three representations are essentially the same. A necessary means to a good end, or the best attainable condition in a world governed by God, must be in harmony with His will—cannot be felt to be wrong. Free-thinkers and others constantly represent evil as necessary, as a means to a good end, as in harmony with the Divine will. *This cannot be evil.* Then there is no such thing as evil. Sin is a mistake, a fancy of ours, nothing to God. But when you have made the thing itself *not* wrong, when you have quite hidden its moral deformities under the Divine sanction, and have painted the most hideous results with the plausible sophistry of a good appearance in results—which is done when God is made the author of evil—you have left no room for conscience. There is no wrong to be condemned by conscience; there are no evil results, for all is working to a good end. There is no imaginable reason why a man should not do just what he likes best, at least so long as he can escape any threatening law. And that law has surely no right to be resisting what after all is good. Thus the moral foundations are swept into complete ruin. Can that be true of which the legitimate result is such? The value of religion consists in its purity, and its power to awaken pure sympathies in the souls of men. It is not the province of religion strictly speaking—nor is there any occasion for it—to give us the principles of morality, rules for right conduct. To those who acknowledge no supreme Being, and therefore no religion in our sense, all these principles remain precisely the same as to us. They have their foundations, eternal and imperishable, in the very nature of man and the constitution of human society. Religion is that which can elicit our

devotion to these principles by kindling our love and reverence for their highest and most perfect embodiment—as, for example, in Christ. Religion is identical with morality in its principles and aims, yet above it, as moving in a higher sphere of influence and inspiring power. It is this view that renders so indisputable our clear conception of God as good and only good, involved in no evil. If God were a sovereign lawgiver, whose commands could neither be impugned nor judged, we could have no ground for denying that what we call evil might originate with Him. Here the bitter conflict of life arises very much from the confused mixture of good and evil, right and wrong. But in all this the reliance of the mind is on the profound conviction that there is One in whom no such confusion exists. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the religion of the New Testament is, that it marks out with such exact precision, and yet in such grand and lofty outlines, the right and the wrong, and the principles that place them beyond the possibility of being confounded.—*Samuel Edger, B.A.*

Vers. 13, 14. *The Secret of the Tempter's Power.*—Every man is tempted, but every man is differently tempted. Temptations take specific and individual forms, and each age and class, position and pursuit, has temptations of its own. Every generation has its own temptations, since each age brings with it its own social circumstances, its own religious and political conditions, and so—its own temptations. Every man is tempted according to the class to which he belongs, the generation in which he is born, and according to that individuality of character and history which can be his alone. But there is one thing in which they are all alike. The secret of their power over us is ourselves. We are ready enough when we fall to blame some one else. St. James insists that the real responsibility when we are tempted is not in any tempter: it is in ourselves. The real source of temptation is *in us.* To be tempted is to be "drawn away," "enticed"—caught like an animal in a noose—lured like a bird into a trap. And we are "drawn away" not so much by any skill or subtlety of the tempter as by the sensuousness of our nature, the keenness of our appetites, the strength of our desires, the ambition of our intellect, the infirmity of our temper, the weakness of our will, the depth of our selfishness, the greatness of our pride, the greediness of our vanity, the feebleness of our faith. The power of temptation lies in some moral frailty which the cunning of the tempter only brings into the light. By "lust" St. James means desire, longing, appetite, animal or otherwise. Desire unregulated—inordinate—ill controlled. Lust in its lower form we call sensualism, meaning by that desires which spring directly from the senses, and have the animal instincts for their immediate origin and root. The senses are the primary creators of temptation. What are Eve and Adam in their fall but a symbol of the senses at their first and keenest? What was the history of our first-remembered sin? Was it not this?—The strength of our sensuous or sensual desires quickened by some external seduction into longing after that which we knew to be forbidden, and which, though forbidden, we longed for nevertheless. There are other forms of lust—lust of power, and lust of gold. When the spirit of ambition becomes the ruling spirit of a man, the tempter has him in his grip. He becomes selfishness incarnate. The question, "Who shall be greatest?" is a question which has been the bane of the world, and the bane of the Church. It is the bane of every society into which it enters. It is destructive of all peace, of all charity, of all brotherhood. It may be destructive of every virtue and of all morality. There is also the lust of gold, the love of money. It is the spirit of covetousness. It is one of the forms which the love of

power may take. There is no more fertile source of temptation and of sin. There are two ways in which temptation culminates and is made complete: 1. The sinful impulse is so strong that the man courts or creates the circumstances which shall gratify it, and it is thus developed into outward acts of guilt. The man tempts the tempter. 2. Against or irrespective of his will the man is brought face to face with circumstances which tempt what is temptable in him, and he lacks the presence of mind or the strength of will necessary for resistance. Unsought the tempter meets him. He puts a crafty finger on an unsuspected weakness, and in an instant the simple soul is trapped. In each case the strength of the temptation was in the frailty of the man—natural and pardonable frailty, if you will—but frailty, and sinful frailty, none the less.—*Johnson Barker, LL.B.*

Ver. 14. *The Limitations of Satan.*—Satan can merely act on his general knowledge of human nature, aided by particular guesses at the individual before him, whom he would fain destroy. He has learned too well the deep corruption of the heart, and knows what gaudy bait will most attract the longing and licentious eyes.

The Devil as an Objective Person.—There is no more reason to suppose that God has created any such being, or that any such really exists, than there is to suppose that there is a real being called the prince of this world, or another called antichrist, or two others called Gog and Magog. The devil is that objective person, whose reality is the sum of all subjective seductions, or temptations to evil, viz. those of bad spirits, and those of the corrupted soul itself. These bad spirits, sometimes called Legion, together with our own bad thoughts, are all gathered up into a great king of art and mischief, and called the devil. Whether it is done by some instinct of language, or some special guidance of inspiration, in the use of language, or both, we do not know: the latter is more probable. But however it came to pass, we can see that it serves a most important use in the economy of revelation. In the process of recovery to God men must be convinced of their sins, and made thoroughly conscious of their guiltiness, and this requires a turning of their minds upon themselves in reflection, and a state of piercingly subjective attention to their own ill-desert. And yet they must be taken away, somehow, from a too close or totally subjective attention even to their sins. For if they are to be taken away from their ill-desert and guiltiness, they must be drawn out into a movement of soul in exactly the opposite direction, viz. in the direction of faith which is outward. And this exactly is what the grand objective conception of the devil prepares and facilitates. First, their sin is all gathered up, with its roots and causes, into the bad king conceived to be reigning without; and then it is permitted the penitent, or the disciple struggling with his enemy, to conceive that Christ, in whom he is called to believe, is out in force, to subdue and crush the monster.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.**

Ver. 15. *The Conflict in the Believer.*—Even in the heart of the believer two principles of action are at work—the renewal "in the spirit of his mind" after the image of God, and the sinful desire which renders the soul accessible to temptation.—*Webster and Wilkinson.*

Milton's Allegory of Sin and Death.—In Milton's marvellous allegory of sin and death (*Paradise Lost*, bk. ii. 745-814) Satan represents intellect and will opposed to God, sin its offspring, self-generated, and death the fruit of the union of mind and will with sin. In the incestuous union of sin and death that follows, and in its horrid progeny, Milton seems to have sought to shadow forth the shame and foul-

* Dr. Bushnell's note is given as suggestive of thought, not as approved.—ED.

ness and misery in which even the fairest forms of sin finally issue.

The Allegory of Sin and Death.—In looking at the allegory as a whole we note—1. Its agreement as to the relation of sin and death with the teaching of St. Paul (Rom. v. 12). 2. Its resemblance to like allegories in the literature of other nations, as in the well-known choice of Hercules that bears the name of Prodicus, in which pleasure appears with the garb and allurements of a harlot.—*Farrar.*

A Suggestive Image.—The image well depicts the repellent subject. The small beginning, from some vain delight or worldly lust and pleasure; next, from the vile embrace, as of a harlot—sin, growing in all its rank luxuriance, until it bear and engender, horribly, of itself, its deadly child. The word of parturition is frightful in the sense it would convey, as of some monstrous deformity, a hideous progeny tenfold more cursed than its begetter.—*E. G. Punchard, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—18.

The Helpfulness of cherishing Right Thoughts of God.—The tone of every life is given by the idea that is entertained of God. This is abundantly illustrated by comparing the moral life of Pagans and heathen with the gods whom they acknowledge. But it may be also illustrated by the philosophical misrepresentations, and the ignorant caricatures, of the God of Christianity. In whatever sense men make their own gods, "they that made them are like unto them." The moral conduct never can rise higher than the moral conception of the deity worshipped. Then how much is done for humanity when the revelation is made of a *holy* God! How much is done when that holiness is seen to be a human possibility, because realised in the Divine Man, the Lord Jesus.

I. **God is good, and the ultimate Source of all good.**—The apprehension of this is the foundation of morality. We start with the affirmation of goodness in God. "None is good save one, that is God." 1. Everything that is good in the world has the God-stamp upon it. "Every good gift, and every perfect boon, is from above." 2. Everything in the world that is good has the permanent stamp upon it. Evil is in its nature temporary. It needs to be changed into good. Good is in its nature permanent, for it does not need to be changed into anything. 3. Everything in the world that is good is an active force, working at the removal of evil. The highest good that the good God works is making typically good people. (1) God is the source of *good.* (2) God is *always* the source of good. (3) But He is the source only of *perfect* good. That perfect good may be within our power of estimating, or it may be beyond it, and then we are thrown back on our primary conviction of His essential goodness. If God is good, what He does must *be* good, though it may not *seem* good.

II. **God is the Father of lights, who casts not shadows.**—"With whom there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." St. James has in mind the movements, and changing appearances, and uncertain shining of sun and moon and stars. There are sun shadows cast by the varying relative positions of earth and sun and moon. God is thought of as Father of lights, Originator of all lights, eternal Light, who abides, never moves to cast a shadow. His agents may cast shadows; He never does. For ever and for ever shine forth from Him unqualified benedictions. Men may turn those benedictions into curses, but that can never alter the fact that they are benedictions. Earthly atmospheres may dim and defile the rays of the sun, but only by adding some evil to them; the rays are still pure, life-giving rays.

1. God Himself is light. 2. God is the Father (Author) of lights, all lights. Everything that is good, pure, true, right, is in sonship to God. And over everything that is good He has a fatherly care and concern. Whensoever we stand to the good, we stand with God. Whensoever we suffer for the good, we suffer with God. If anything in life is perplexing, and we scarcely know whether to call it evil or good, there is always this sufficing test to apply to it—does it prefer the shadow or the light? Everything that loves the light is of God.

III. **God is the Author of the new life in man, and that life is light like Himself.**—Illustrate from the voice, "Let there be light," which broke up the chaos of the material earth. That voice speaks life to dead souls, light to bring order into the chaos of fallen human nature. We are made "light in the Lord." And some are so made that they might become "light-bearers," "holding forth the word of life." Or to use the figure of ver. 18, to be "a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

Learn—1. That there is peril of deception in regard to God. 2. That peril is great when we only look around us. 3. That peril is great when we take up only man's view of God. 4. That peril is great if, without help from Divine revelation, we try to read human history. 5. That peril is relieved when we follow the teachings of the inspired word. 6. That peril is for ever removed when we come into those personal relations with the Father of lights, which He graciously permits.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 16. *The Peril of Deception.*—"Be not deceived, my beloved brethren." The particular peril St. James has in mind is the peril of being deceived as to the character of God. Right thoughts of God are at the basis of right living. Wrong thoughts of God make possible lives of self-indulgence and sin. Therefore, from the time of the first temptation in Eden, the policy of the evil one has been to suggest wrong thoughts of God, to deceive with regard to the character and requirements of God.

I. **There is peril of deception** from one-sided, and therefore imperfect, teachings about God. They may exaggerate His holy severities, or they may exaggerate His loving-kindnesses.

II. **There is peril of deception when man makes himself the standard of God.**—This reproach is given, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." Man must rise from himself to conceive of God; but he must never match God by himself, or limit God to what he knows of himself. He is not *altogether* such an one as we are. In the image of God was man created, on purpose that he might rise from the knowledge of himself to the knowledge of God.

III. **There is peril of deception when man trusts to what nature can teach,** and refuses the help of revelation. It is not that nature witnesses incorrectly; it does witness imperfectly. It is true as far as it goes; it is unsatisfactory because it cannot go far enough.

IV. **There is peril of deception when undue reliance is placed on the teachings of man.**—It is not merely that there are false teachers; there are also sectarian teachers, who force on attention particular views of God as the foundation of their exclusive views. Safeguard amid the perils of being deceived concerning the being and character of God is obtained through maintaining—1. Personal relations with God; 2. Simple-minded confidence in God's revelations of Himself in and through His inspired word. No man needs to be deceived.

Any man will be easily deceived who wishes to be deceived, or allows himself to be put off his guard.

Vers. 16, 17. *God the Only Source of All Good.*—There is much evil in the world. Why does God permit this? We are called to feel and maintain that He does all things well, that however He may permit He does not do evil; but that, on the contrary, all good, and nothing but good, is to be ascribed to Him. We need to have just views of this matter, since for want of them we greatly err.

I. **The true character of the Deity.**—He is declared to be the only and the unchanging source of all good. 1. *He is the only source of all good.* All light proceeds from the sun. So there is no "good and perfect gift" but proceeds from God—(1) *in nature;* (2) *in providence;* (3) *in grace.* All works for the benefit, the welfare, of His people. 2. *He is the unchanging source of all good.* The sun has its changes, annual and diurnal; but Jehovah, the Father of all heavenly lights, changes not. His light may be intercepted by a cloud, but He Himself remains the same.

II. **The errors we run into for want of duly adverting to it.**—We err exceedingly—1. *In a way of self-vindication.* "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." James adds, "Do not err." Evil is from ourselves, and good is from God. 2. *In a way of self-dependence.* We are prone to look for some good in ourselves, instead of seeking all good from God alone. Satan himself may as well look for these things in himself as we. All our springs are in God. 3. *In a way of self-applause.* We are no less prone to take to ourselves credit from what is good than to shift off from ourselves blame in what is evil. If there is any good in us, it is from Christ that we have received it. If we have attained to anything more than ordinary, we must say, "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." Even if we equalled the apostle Paul we must say, "By the grace of God"; and in reference to every individual act, "Not I, but the grace of God."

Application.—"Do not err." Be aware of your tendencies; correct them. If you arrogate anything to yourselves, you will rob God; and in robbing Him, you will eventually, and to your utter ruin, rob yourselves.—*Charles Simeon, M.A.*

Ver. 17. *Father of Lights.*—God is the Father of all lights—the light of the natural world, the sun, the moon, and stars, shining in the heavens; the light of reason and conscience; the light of His law; the light of prophecy, shining in a dark place; the light of the gospel shining throughout the world; the light of apostles, confessors, martyrs, bishops, and priests, preaching that gospel to all nations; the light of the Holy Ghost shining in our hearts; the light of the heavenly city: God is the Father of them all. He is the everlasting Father of the everlasting Son, who is the Light of the world.—*Bishop Wordsworth.*

Light is God.—To the turning of our planet from the sun we owe our knowledge of the universe. In the symbolism of its darkness and light we have our sublimest revelation of God. Light, which is called God, and is God, issues for ever from the infinite bosom of His darkness. Darkness and light are both alike to Him; for He is as much one as the other. The Son of God, the only begotten Light, reveals the "Father of lights," as suns reveal the ether. God presents Himself in the Light, but also conceals Himself, as we both present and hide ourselves in our garments. "Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment." As the infinite ether is hidden by the daylight, even so is God hidden by the light of the

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

Sun and Cloud.—As the sun is the same in its nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, oft interposing, make it seem to us as varying by its rising and setting, and by its different appearances, or entire withdrawment, when the change is not in it, so God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any mutability or shadowy alterations in Him, but from ourselves.—*Baxter.*

Shadow of Turning.—With Him is nothing analogous to those optical delusions, those periodical obscurations, those vicissitudes of seasons, which attend the annual and diurnal course of the sun. St. James incidentally controverts that doctrine of fatalism in the Pharisees, which ascribed the conditions of men to the influence of the heavenly bodies.

Ver. 18. *Pain and Death in Nature.*—The very struggles which all animated beings make against pain and death show that pain and death are not a part of the proper laws of their nature, but rather a bondage imposed on them from without; thus every groan and fear is an unconscious prophecy of liberation from the power of evil.—*Dean Howson.*

Firstfruits of the Creatures.

I. **Firstfruits to show the possibility of harvest.**—Suppose that never before this year had the fields of earth waved with the golden grain; that now, for the first time, with measured step and waving hand, the husbandman moved to and fro over his fields, scattering the precious seeds. How intently he would watch those fields in the after-weeks! One or two blades force their way through the soil; they grow quickly in one warm, moist corner. The ears form and bud, and swell, and ripen early there; and the husbandman carries home those firstfruits as the assurance that there *can be* a harvest from his sowing.

II. **Firstfruits assure us of the character of the harvest.**—Examine carefully those quickly ripened firstfruits. You can judge from them what will be the quality and the extent of the harvest. The same blights have swept over the field as have smitten those firstfruits. There has been the same soil, the same culture, the same dew and rain and sunshine. You can tell from the handful of firstfruits whether the barns will be loaded and the yield will be enriching. Do these firstfruits stand well? Are they strong in the stalk, full in the ear, free from mildew and rust? Then soon you shall see the whole valley waving in the summer breeze, and reflecting the golden glory of the summer sky. You shall hear the sharp cutting of the reapers, as they gather in the precious grain. Are those firstfruits thin and speckled, and small, and unsteady on the stalk? Then there is a wail of despair in the soul, for the harvest will scarcely repay the cost of ingathering. St. James calls the first Jewish Christians the "firstfruits of his creatures." There is a promise for the race in every unusually good man; then what promise there must be in Christ!

Firstfruits of the Human Harvest.—There are always some favourable situations in a country where the harvest ripens quickly. This is especially the case in Palestine, parts of which are tropical or sub-tropical. The interest of "firstfruits" lies in their implying "after-fruits." But to a Jew, with the feelings and associations of Mosaism, a peculiar interest attached to "firstfruits," and by the term a special thing was understood. The fruit of all manner of trees, for

the first three years, was not to be eaten, nor any profit made of it; in the fourth year it was to be holy, and used only to praise the Lord, being either given to the priests, or solemnly eaten by the owners before the Lord in Jerusalem; in the fifth year it might be eaten, and made use of for profit, and thenceforward every year. Explain man's harvest of the earth and harvest of the sea. He only reaps and gathers in what God provides for him. Then it is most befitting that he should make first acknowledgment to God. From Cain and Abel show the natural impulse which leads man to make his thank-offering. A portion of the very blessing God has given us is the best thank-offering. Explain God's harvest of the earth. He "would have all men to be saved." The Redeemer shall "see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." Early Church a kind of firstfruits. First seals to a ministry. First converts in a revival. First decided ones in a family. Firstfruits are an *assurance*—the harvest is coming. Firstfruits are an *evidence*—of what the harvest will be. Firstfruits are an *inspiration*—to keep on working for the larger and fuller return. Close with the argument of the apostle—"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me a chief might Jesus Christ shew forth all His long-suffering, for an ensample of them which should hereafter believe on Him unto eternal life" (1 Tim. i. 16). Work out the answers to these questions: Who are the first saved ones among us? What ought they to be to *God*, to *themselves*, and to *others*? They should be "proofs" and "patterns."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—21.

Hindrances to Spiritual Receptiveness.—In His parable of the sower our Lord presented to view some of the more usual hindrances, such as come from preoccupation, shallow-mindedness, and worldly cares. St. James presents to view those which in a special manner affected the Jews of the Dispersion. Loquacity, quarrelsomeness, self-assertion, love of mastery, were characteristic of them; and all of these spoil receptiveness, and tend to destroy it. Good influences can only enter in at the doors which meekness, and quietness, and anxiety to learn and serve, can open. Men's character-conditions usually suffice to explain the limitations of Divine blessing to them. They have not, because they are not *able to receive*. Power to receive depends on resolute dealing with our personal evils in character.

I. **One great hindrance is hasty talk.**—"Slow to speak." *Much* talk is perilous; but hasty talk is more perilous. Much talk usually goes with little thought. Hasty talk goes before thought, and often utters what the thought would neither approve nor support. Hasty talk is no less a hindrance when it is pious talk, or talk about religious things. There are no persons more difficult to influence for good than those who have "too much to say." Hasty talk expresses and nourishes self-conceit and self-satisfaction. Mere fluency is the gravest peril of the Christian teacher.

II. **Another great hindrance is hasty temper.**—"Slow to wrath." It is difficult for us to realise the suddenness, unreasonableness, and intensity of anger in Eastern countries, and, perhaps we may say, even specially among the Jews. One writer says: "I have never met with a people so much disposed to violent anger, especially from slight causes, as in the case of the inhabitants of the East. Men get angry with each other, with their wives or children or animals, or even with inanimate things, with surprising frequency. The noticeable points are, want of control, and want of anything like ordinary proportion between the *cause* and *degree* of the emotion. These fits of anger, to any save

a superior, are marked by most expressive demonstration." Evidently St. James feared that among the Jewish Christians the new Christian spirit was not recognised as a force bearing on the restraint of this national characteristic. Still appeal is often made, in excuse of failure, to "human nature." A man will explain his wrong-doing by his disposition, as if the first sphere of the Christian sanctifying were not that very disposition. The power of wrath in man is a necessary and noble element of character. The expression of wrath is often a sign of lack of self-restraint. Lack of restraint is a condition in which evil can work effectively, but good cannot. Good takes a man who is in restraint. Temper spoils the work that good would do. The Christian religion is a distinct force unto self-restraint. It helps to the possession of every "vessel of the body in sanctification and honour." And that represents a condition of full receptivity to gracious influences.

III. **Another great hindrance is found in the relics of old corruptions left in us.**—"Putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness." John Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, represents some Diabolians as left lurking and hiding in "Mansoul," and ever hatching and plotting mischief. St. Paul speaks of the "old man with his corruptions"; evil habits, unregulated and unsubdued desires and passions; injurious friendships; all that is involved in the term "the flesh," as used by the apostle.

"The flesh and sense must be denied,
Passion and envy, lust and pride."

IV. **A last hindrance is our failure duly to cultivate some sides of the Christian character.**—"Receive with meekness the engrafted word." Meekness is one of the neglected sides, partly because we do not see how that can be cultivated. And it cannot be directly. It can be indirectly. Active graces can be nourished by direct dealing with them; passive graces can only be cultured by attention to the things which form for them good soil and atmosphere. There are specialities of character in male and female; the Christian character is inclusive of both, and the Christian never can gain his full receptivity unless both the characteristic male and female graces are duly nourished into fulness of strength and beauty.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 19. *Swift to Hear rather than to Speak.*—If we were as swift to hear as we are ready to speak, there would be less of wrath and more of profit in our meetings. I remember when a Manichee contested with Augustine, and with importunate clamour cried, "*Hear me! Hear me!*" The father modestly replied, "Nec ego te, nec tu me, sed ambo audiamus apostolum" ("Neither let me hear thee, nor do thou hear me, but let us both hear the apostle").—*Manton.*

Talkativeness.—We are overhasty to speak—as if God did not manifest Himself by our silent feeling, and make His love felt through ours. The disciples of Pythagoras, especially if they were addicted to talkativeness, were not permitted to speak in the presence of their master, before they had been his auditors five years.—*M. Evans.*

Ver. 20. *The Besetting Sin of the Jews.*—The besetting sin of the Jews was to identify their own anger against what seemed sin and heresy with the will of God; to think that they did God service by deeds of violence, and that they were thus working out His righteousness. The teaching of St. James here is after the pattern of the purely ethical books of the Old Testament.

Ver. 21. *Engrafted, and so within us.*—The gospel *word*, whose proper attribute is to be *engrafted* by the Holy Spirit, so as to be livingly incorporated with the believer, as the fruitful shoot is with the wild natural stock on which it is engrafted. The law came to man only from without, and admonished him of his duty. The gospel is *engrafted* inwardly, and so fulfils the ultimate design of the law. —*Fausset.*

The Engrafted Word.—"Engrafted," or "implanted," here has special reference, as the Greek shows, to the object in view. The word is designed to fructify, and it is something not akin to the recipient. An agency is implied, and in this connection the apostle is thinking of ministers as the planters; and the heavenly doctrine so enters the soul and pervades it as to become a second nature, thoroughly identified with the life, even as the graft which has taken well becomes after its insertion into the stock completely one with it. And yet it is from the stock it draws sustenance and strength, and becomes a fruit-bearer.

Truth received with Meekness.—The truth is not to be received with a passive meekness merely. Unless it be received with an active meekness, the engrafted word, that might have grown and converted the whole tree, dies. To get the full illustration of this, we must suppose a wilful crab stock, not merely passive, but endued with a power of self-determining perverseness, to say to the gardener, "You may cut me and apply your graft to the cutting, but not one particle of my sap shall ever enter into its vessels." The consequence would be, inevitably, that the crab tree would remain a crab tree, and the fruit-bearing graft, for want of co-operation on the part of the crab tree, unsustained by the sap, would die; it could not grow unless received with active energy by the crab tree.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22—25.

Following up Religious Instructions.—One of the weaknesses of the Hebrew Christian communities was that so many of the members thought they were called to teach, and were able to teach. It is the constantly recurring weakness of the so-called Free Churches, which encourage their members to use their various gifts in the service of the Church. Persons who think they can teach and cannot are amongst the most difficult and troublesome people to deal with. St. James's counsel here is directly addressed to such persons. He politely but searchingly says, "You would make better hearers than teachers; and you would find plenty of sphere for your energy, if you set yourselves to *do* the things about which you hear." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." There is a *hearing only*, which leads to nothing. The seed of truth lies as on a hard field-path, exposed to the birds. There is a *talking only* about what is heard, which is more than useless, which is mischievous, because self-satisfying. There is a *doing* of what we hear which is in every way valuable, for it implies thought, care, anxiety, right sense of responsibility and duty. Doing prefers silence.

I. **Religious knowledge is not the final result of religious instruction.**—It is *a* proper result, one to be distinctly aimed at. But it may be made a final result by the teacher who has the special gift of teaching; and by the hearer who is mentally strong, naturally critical, or unduly interested in doctrine. It needs to be strongly urged on public attention in these days, that religious knowledge is no more than a stage on the way to the final result aimed at by the public presentation of religious truth. *F. W. Robertson* says, "I can conceive

of no dying hour more awful than that of the man who has striven to *know* rather than to love, and finds himself at last in a world of barren theories, loving none and adoring nothing."

II. **Religious feeling is not the final result of religious instruction.**—This truth appeals to quite a different class of hearers—to the emotional class. There are very many persons who think they can never get a blessing from public services unless their feelings are moved. And the claim of these really good, but somewhat weak-charactered, people mischievously influences our public preachers, who allow themselves to cultivate the merely rhetorical and pathetic, and to imagine that they have gained splendid triumphs when they have subdued congregations to tears. It is well therefore to set forth the surface and temporary character of religious emotions, and the temptation to satisfy ourselves with them, and even flatter ourselves in our goodness as indicated by them. Many a Christian's life, if read searchingly, will be found very full of high, forced, fictitious emotions and feelings, but very weak in masteries of evil, power of principles, self-sacrifices, holy charities, and good works. People seem to prefer that which cultivates the sentimental.

III. **Religious talk is not the final result of religious instruction.**—Some hearers simply reproduce what they hear, with variations, and imagine they have reached the true result when they have given everybody whom they can influence their idea of the sermon. And their talk is of no value to themselves, or to any one who listens to them. In every sphere of life it is found that the talkers are the helpless people, if they are not the mischievous people. While they stop and talk, the real work of life waits undone. True preaching tends to stop talk, by compelling people to *think*, and to inquire what they can *do*.

IV. **Religious doing is the final result of religious instruction.**—Our Lord, as the great Teacher, constantly enforced this truth by direct word, *e.g.* "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them": by pictures, "as of the good tree that brings forth good fruit"; and by parable on parable, such as that of the "talents." The apostle constantly urges the same thing. St. James has it for the one thing that he variously illustrates and impresses. The true hearer is "the doer that worketh"; and the true preacher or teacher is he who can inspire men *unto doing*, lead into the life of service.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES

Ver. 22. *Spiritual Parasites.*—The plants that grow on the great trees, and thrive on the sap of the trees, only bring forth their own fruit unto themselves. They in no sense help the mission of the trees. Nay, their simple receptiveness becomes a drain of the tree's life, and even effects its ultimate ruin. There be those in the fellowship of Christ's Church who are "hearers only"; receptive only; they take in everything, give out nothing, help in nothing, do nothing but serve and please themselves. They are but parasites, but they may have a fatally mischievous influence on the Church's life. He who receives is honourably bound to use what he receives in the common service; but this no parasite ever does.

Living the Truth.—A brief and simple but very expressive eulogy was pronounced by Martin Luther upon a pastor at Zwickaw, in 1522, named Nicholas Hausman. "What we preach," said the reformer, "he lives."

True Religion.—A man's religion is not a thing all made in heaven, and then let down and shoved unto him. It is his own conduct and life. A man has no more religion than he acts out in his life.—*H. Ward Beecher.*

An End in view for Hearers of the Gospel.—It is strange folly in multitudes of us to propound no end in the hearing of the gospel. The merchant sails, not only that he may sail, but for traffic, and traffics that he may be rich. The husbandman ploughs, not only to keep himself busy, but in order to sow, and sows that he may reap with advantage. And shall we do the most excellent and fruitful work fruitlessly—hear only to hear, and look no further? This is indeed a great vanity, and a great misery, to lose that labour which, duly used, would be of all others most gainful; and yet all our meetings are full of this.—*Leighton.*

Vers. 22-24. *Profitless Hearing.*

I. **The vacant hearers.**—These are men who are drawn mechanically to the sanctuary, and leave all but their bodies elsewhere.

II. **The curious hearer.**—This spirit brings the attention to bear upon a subject, but merely to dissect and criticise it.

III. **The captious hearer.**—Here the attention is excited only to be turned against the teachings of religion. The business here is to catch the preacher in his words.

IV. **The fashionable hearers.**—These welcome the Sabbath so as to display to advantage their attractions.

V. **The speculating hearers.**—These are they whose selfishness leads them to make a pecuniary gain of godliness. It is respectable to attend Divine worship, therefore they go.

VI. **The self-forgetful hearers.**—Those who listen to find out their neighbours' defects.

VII. **The prayerless hearers.**

VIII. **The unresolved hearers.**—*J. T. Tucker.*

Ver. 23. *Eastern Mirrors.*—The mirrors in use among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans were of polished metal; and as these presented a less perfect image than our modern mirrors, to see through, *i.e.* by means of, a mirror had become among the later Rabbis, as well as with St. Paul, a proverbial phrase for man's imperfect knowledge of Divine things.

Objects that may be looked at.—St. James especially draws attention to the character of the looking, and the dependence of the after-results upon that character. But we may also compare the objects looked at, and the results dependent on looking at right and fitting objects. There is—1. Looking *in* at self. 2. Looking *around* on others. 3. Looking *out* at truth. 4. Looking *up* to God. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews bids us "look off"—look away—"unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Characters seen in the Use of Mirrors.—Vanity is thus shown. So is the anxiety to please. But the indifference which involves a hurried and careless use of the mirror should be recognised as a moral weakness. A Christian man ought to be the "best possible" in every relation of life, and in the use of every power of influence. Much influence does come from his personal appearance, expression of countenance, and manners. A careful use of the mirror may therefore be a sign of right Christian carefulness, and anxiety to serve others in every kind of ministry. "It is possible, though it can hardly be insisted on, that there is an emphasis on a *man's* casual way of looking at a mirror, and the more careful gaze supposed to be characteristic of a *woman.*"

Ver. 24. *Fading Impressions.*—This is described as an actual occurrence, seen and noted by the writer. There is a recognition of the well-known face, followed by instant and complete forgetfulness; and thus is it often with the mirror of the soul. In some striking sermon, or book, a man's self is made manifest to him, and the picture may be too familiar to cause aversion; but, whether or no, the impression fades from his mind as quickly as the

echoes of the preacher's words. At the best the knowledge was only superficial, perhaps momentary, widely different from that which comes of a holy walk with God.—*E. G. Punchard, M.A.*

Ver. 25.. *The Perfect Law.*—That must be the law which secures to man the liberty and the power *to do right.* And that liberty and that power are precisely the things which man supremely needs, seeing that he finds himself under persuasion and constraint *to do wrong.*

The Perfect Law and its Doers.—St. James is the preacher of works, but of works which are the fruit of faith.

I. **The perfect law.**—In every part of the revelation of Divine truth contained in the gospel there is a direct moral and practical bearing. No word of the New Testament is given to us only in order that we may *know* truth, but all in order that we may *do* it. No man can believe the principles that are laid down in the New Testament, and the truths that are unveiled there, without their laying a masterful grip upon his life, and influencing all that he is. In the very central fact of the gospel there lies the most stringent rule of life. Jesus Christ is the pattern, and from those gentle lips which say, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," law sounds more imperatively than from all the thunder and trumpets of Sinai. In the great act of redemption, which is the central fact of the New Testament revelation, there lies a law for conduct. God's love redeeming us is the revelation of what we ought to be; and the cross, to which we look as the refuge from sin and condemnation, is also the pattern for the life of every believer. It is a law just because it is a gospel. If your conception of Christianity has not grasped it as being a stringent rule of life, you need to go to school to St. James. This thought gives the necessary counterpoise to the tendency to substitute the mere intellectual grasp of Christian truth for the practical doing of it. Not what we believe, but what we do, is our Christianity; only the doing must be rooted in belief. Take this vivid conception of the gospel as a law, as a counterpoise to the tendency to place religion in mere emotion and feeling. Notice that *this* law is a *perfect law.* James's idea, I suppose, in that epithet, is not so much the completeness of the code, or the loftiness and absoluteness of the ideal which is set forth in the gospel, as the relation between the law and its doer. He is stating the same thought of which the psalmist of old time had caught a glimpse. "The law of the Lord is perfect," because "it converts the soul." That is to say, the weakness of all commandment—whether it be the law of a nation, or the law of moral text-books, or the law of conscience, or of public opinion, or the like—the weakness of all positive statute is that it stands there, over against a man, and points a stony finger to the stony tables, "Thou shalt!" "Thou shalt not!" but stretches out no hand to help us in keeping the commandment. It simply enjoins, and so is weak—like the proclamations of some discrowned king who has no army at his back to enforce them, and which flutter as waste-paper on the barn-doors, and do nothing to secure allegiance. But, says James, this law is *perfect,* because it is more than law, and transcends the simple functions of command. It not only tells us what to do, but it gives us power to do it; and that is what men want. The world knows what it ought to do well enough. There is no need for heaven to be rent, and voices to come to tell men what is right and wrong; they carry an all but absolutely sufficient guide to that within their own minds. But there is need to bring them something which shall be more than commandment, which shall be both law and power, both the exhibition of duty and the gift of capacity to discharge it. The gospel brings power because it brings

life. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law." In the gospel that desideratum is supplied. Here is the law which vitalises, and so gives power. The life which the gospel brings will unfold itself after its own nature, and so produce the obedience which the law of the gospel requires. Therefore, says James further, this perfect law is freedom. Of course, liberty is not exemption from commandment, but the harmony of will with commandment. Whosoever finds that what is his duty is his delight is enfranchised. We are set at liberty when we walk within the limits of that gospel; and they who delight to do the law are free in obedience,—free from the tyranny of their own lusts, passions, inclinations; free from the domination of men, and opinion, and customs, and habits. All those bonds are burnt in the fiery furnace of love into which they pass, and where they walk transfigured and at liberty, because they keep that law. Freedom comes from the reception into my heart of the life whose motions coincide with the commandments of the gospel. Then the burden that I carry carries me, and the limits within which I am confined are the merciful fences put up on the edge of the cliff to keep the traveller from falling over, and being dashed to pieces beneath.

II. **The doers of the perfect law.**—James has a long prelude before he comes to the doing. Several things are required as preliminary. The first step is, "looketh into the law." The word employed here is a very picturesque and striking one. Its force may be seen if I quote to you the other instances of its occurrence in the New Testament. It is employed in the accounts of the Resurrection to describe the attitude and action of Peter, John, and Mary as they "stooped down and looked into" the empty sepulchre. In all these cases the Revised Version translates the word as I have just done, "stooping and looking," both acts being implied in it. It is also employed by Peter when he tells us that the "angels desire to look into" the mysteries of redemption, in which saying, perhaps, there may be some allusion to the silent, bending figures of the twin cherubim, who, with folded wings and fixed eyes, curved themselves above the mercy-seat, and looked down upon that mystery of propitiating love. With such fixed and steadfast gaze we must contemplate the perfect law of liberty if we are ever to be doers of the same. A second requirement is, "and continueth." The gaze must be, not only concentrated, but constant, if anything is to come of it. Old legends tell that the looker into a magic crystal saw nothing at first, but, as he gazed, there gradually formed themselves in the clear sphere filmy shapes, which grew firmer and more distinct until they stood plain. The raw hide dipped into the vat with tannin in it, and at once pulled out again, will never be turned into leather. Many of you do not give the motives and principles of the gospel, which you say you believe, a chance of influencing you, because so interruptedly and spasmodically, and at such long intervals, and for so few moments, do you gaze upon them. Steadfast and continued attention is needful if we are to be "doers of the work."—*Homiletic Review.*

Practical Exhortations.—1. Cultivate the habit of contemplating the central truths of Christianity as the condition of receiving in vigour and fulness the life which obeys the commandment. 2. Cultivate the habit of reflective meditation upon the truths of the gospel as giving you the pattern of duty in a concentrated and available form. 3. Cultivate the habit of meditating on the truths of the gospel, in order that the motives of conduct may be reinvigorated and strengthened. Make of all your creed *deed.* Let everything you believe be a principle of action too; your *credenda* translate into *agenda.*—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 26, 27.

Practical Religion.—The word "religion" is used only by St. James. But St. Paul speaks of "the Jews' religion"; and we are accustomed to speak of a man's "religion." Evidently St. James means religion on its practical side—our religion, not as it is an unseen inner life of thought and feeling, but as it finds expression in conduct and relations, and other people can see it. We may say that he means the religion of the religious—the converted. He is not attempting to describe what the Christian religion as a whole is and demands; he is resisting the tendency of the times to make a sentimental faith everything. St. James is often misunderstood because we separate ver. 27 from its connection. In ver. 26 the case is presented of the man who makes a show of religion. There is such a thing as an ordering of conduct merely to produce a good impression. In such a case there is no personal discipline of which the ordered conduct is the genuine expression. And the man is a self-deceiver. His outward profession and show of religion are of no moral value to him, or indeed to any one else. Then in ver. 27 we are told what sincere religion is, as a contrast to this. It also is ordered conduct; but not merely ordered conduct. It also is careful and elaborate worship; but it is not merely elaborate worship. It is self-discipline, and what comes out of that. It is service of others, and the Christly sphere which that spirit of service can always find. These things are not the whole of religion; they only represent the practical side of religion. St. James does not intend to give any definition. He assumes the fact as fully recognised, and not needing fresh statement, that religion has its devotional side. St. James deals with the Christian in the world, and taking his place and part in the world. He treats of the Christian's proper relations to the sins and sorrows of the world. And this is what he says—The Christian must come helpfully near to the sorrows, but take care to keep clear of the sins.

I. **The practical religion with which a man may satisfy himself.**—This is not a proper test of religion, but it is the test which men persist in putting. 1. Some try a practical religion of *austerities.* Dr. Pusey wrote to a friend to send him a "discipline"—that is, a self-scourging whip with five thongs and five knots. Henry Martyn sought to humble himself by walking about with pebbles in his shoes. It is a mistake to deal with the body, the agency for expressing, instead of with the agent that expresses. 2. Some try a practical religion of ritual. Distinguish worship, as natural expression for the soul, from ritual as man-made moulds into which to force the expression. Ritual commands no Divine authority, and can have no inspiration in it. Its centre is man himself. Its genius is good works, done for the sake of doing them. 3. Some try a religion of pietism that is not often practical. They are interested in excited feelings. They think they serve when they only feel; or only put themselves in the way of getting excited feelings. But how self-centred emotional religion is! How enslaving also it is! Hot-house religion; and the plants drawn up long and thin, with no robustness in them. It is very doubtful whether a pietistic religion ever satisfies the man himself for long. There is perhaps nothing that tires and sickens a man so soon.

II. **The practical religion with which the Father-God is well pleased.**—"Pure religion and undefiled." Genuine, sincere religion, with no secret self-pleasing at the heart of it. Pure; clear through; that does not fear to be judged under the sunlight. Undefiled, unstained with self-seeking. It includes: 1. Kindly interest in, and care for, others. What you *do* in society. Religion must get beyond the circle of personal interests. Specific cases of possible service as given by St. James are types of all kinds of call to brotherly service. The condition of widows and orphans in Eastern countries is inexpressibly sad.

If we would see the model religion in its practical aspect, we can find it in the human life of the Lord Jesus. With Him worship and self-culture were always kept in their proper place and relations. The days were spent in going about doing good. Earnest Christians are often troubled because their busy lives give them such little opportunity for soul-culture; but that life of service is the very best soul-culture, a culture that advances all the more healthily because it is not watched. Religion is "life for others." 2. Wise dealing with self. What you *are* in society. It is singular that visiting the needy should be put first, and self-keeping second. We should have reversed the order. But there is a reason for the order St. James prefers. It is in ministering to the spotted that we best keep ourselves from the spots. Christ touched the leper with a healing touch; therefore He contracted no leprosy. Nurses and doctors are remarkably safe from contagion. Activity against evil is the best preservative from evil, as is illustrated in the case of the slum sisters of the Salvation Army. Be ministering angels, and you will be sure to keep pure as the angels. Here, too, in Christ may be seen the model religion. Activity of service kept him from taking stains. The fungus flourishes in the sopped and decayed branches of the tree. Idle folk are always bodily or morally diseased folk, and they ought to be. Stain comes on things that are laid by. Church grumblers are never Church workers. Keep unspotted by keeping on serving.

III. **The two things, service of others and self-keeping, fit together, and make up together the practical religion which the Father-God approves.**—They seem to be two distinct departments; they really are one. Religion on its practical side is doing something for somebody, and that proves to be the secret of keeping ourselves clean. We must keep clean as nurses must who tend fevered patients. Experience tells that unlovely things which get stored in the mind have a way of coming up to view, depressing and degrading us, when we have no special interests occupying thought and heart. When the soul is full of interests there is no chance whatever for the evil; it is, most happily, crowded out. Religion then is just this—when seen on its practical side—keeping ourselves free from contamination by finding spheres of Christly service outside ourselves.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 26. *Men's Inconsistencies.*—Men in the same period of their lives, in the same day, sometimes in the very same action, are utterly inconsistent and irreconcilable with themselves. Look at a man in one light, and he shall seem wise, penetrating, discreet, and brave; behold him in another point of view, and you see a creature all over folly and indiscretion, weak and timorous as cowardice and indiscretion can make him. A man shall appear gentle, courteous, and benevolent to all mankind; follow him into his own house, maybe you see a tyrant, morose and savage to all whose happiness depends upon his kindness. A third in his general behaviour is found to be generous, disinterested, humane, and friendly; hear but the sad story of the friendless orphans too credulously trusting all their little substance into his hands, and he shall appear more sordid, more pitiless, and unjust, than the injured themselves have bitterness to paint him. Another shall be charitable to the poor, uncharitable in his censures and opinions of all the rest of the world besides; temperate in his appetites, intemperate in his tongue; shall have too much conscience and religion to cheat the man who trusts him, and, perhaps, as far as the business of debtor and creditor extends, shall be just and scrupulous to the utmost mite; yet, in matters of full as great concern,

where he is to have the handling of the party's reputation and good name —the dearest, the tenderest property the man has—he will do him irreparable damage, and rob him there without measure or pity. And this seems to be that particular piece of inconsistency and contradiction which the text is levelled at, in which the words seem so pointed as if St. James had known more flagrant instances of this kind of delusion than what had fallen under the observation of any of the rest of the apostles.—*Laurence Sterne.*

Detraction of Others.—They who are free from the grosser sins, and even bear the outward show of sanctity, will often exalt themselves by detracting others under the pretence of zeal, whilst their real motive is love of evil-speaking.—*Calvin.*

Vain Religion.—1. In a vain religion there is much of show, and affecting to seem religious in the eyes of others. 2. There is much censuring, reviling, and detracting of others. 3. A man, in a vain religion, deceives his own heart.

Evil-speaking.—Of the many duties owing both to God and our neighbour, there are scarce any men so bad as not to acquit themselves of some; and few so good, I fear, as to practise all. Every man seems willing to compound the matter, and adopt so much of the system as will least interfere with his principle and ruling passion. Very possibly St. James had grievously suffered, through being cruelly reviled and evil spoken of. All his labours in the gospel, his unaffected and perpetual solicitude for the preservation of his flock, his watchings and fastings, his poverty, his natural simplicity and innocence of life—*all* perhaps were not enough to defend him from this unruly weapon, so full of deadly poison; and what, in all likelihood, might move his sorrow and indignation more, some who seemed the most devout and zealous of all his converts were the most merciless and uncharitable in that respect, having a form of godliness, but full of bitter envyings and strife. With such he expostulates in the third chapter. In our text St. James seems to have set the two characters of a saint and a slanderer at such variance that one would have thought they could never have had the heart to have met together again. But there are no alliances too strange for this world. There is nothing so bad which will not admit of something to be said in its defence. Are not the inconveniences and ill-effects which the world feels from the licentiousness of this practice, of slandering and evil-speaking, sufficiently counterbalanced by the real influence it has upon men's lives and conduct? If there was no evil-speaking in the world, thousands would be encouraged to do ill, and would rush into many indecorums, like a horse into a battle, were they sure to escape the tongues of men. If we take a general view of the world, we shall find that a great deal of virtue, at least of the outward appearance of it, arises from the terror of what the world will say, and the liberty it will take upon the occasions we shall give. Numbers of people are every day taking more pains to be well spoken of than what would actually enable them to live so as to deserve it.—*Laurence Sterne.*

The Sin of Unguarded Speech.—"Bridleth not"; so as to have it in full control, and restrain all its impetuosities, and guide it in right and wise and worthy directions. A classification of Christian sins would have to include some unsuspected ones, and some imperfectly considered ones. Unguarded speech is too often regarded as a weakness or frailty; it is not usually estimated to bear all the characteristics of a *sin.* It is a sin to which persons of a certain particular disposition are especially exposed; but every Christian is in peril of being taken at unawares, and saying what had much

better have been left unsaid. By "unguarded speech" we may mean: 1. The worthless and often mischievous utterances of a talkative disposition. 2. Speech before thought, of which thought disapproves. 3. Speech in too high a tone of voice. A man so speaking is like a runaway horse. 4. Speech of cherished wrong feeling, which is sure to make our words unkind or unjust. 5. Speech forgetful of Christian principles and the Christian spirit. How may speech be wisely guarded (bridled)? 1. Form the habit of speaking seldom, and only after thought. 2. Accustom yourself to learn by reviewing the effects of speech. 3. Cultivate a quiet tone of voice. 4. Remember what is due to others. 5. Avoid speaking under excitement. 6. Season speech with the salt of Christian wisdom and charity.

Scripture References to the Tongue and Speech.—Ps. xvii. 3, xxxiv. 1, xxxv. 28, xxxix. 1, li. 14, lii. 2, lvii. 4, lxiv. 3, lxxi. 24, cxx. 3, cxl. 3, cxli. 3; Prov. vi. 17, x. 20, xii. 18, xviii. 21, xxi. 23; Matt. xii. 34; 1 Tim. iii. 8; and others.

Ver. 27. *An Evidence of the Value of Christianity.*—There are many religions in the world. Each makes a great claim in its particular district. Which may we say is the best of the world's religions? Which of them can we fully satisfy ourselves with. It is easy to say that we prefer Christianity. But then we were born into it. And the devotees of other religions prefer theirs for precisely the same reason. We ought to have some better ground than this for our decision, that Christianity stands altogether first among the world-religions. How shall we proceed to judge the worth of the different religions? 1. Compare their sacred books. Take the Persian Zend-Avesta, the books of Confucius, the Shastras of India, the Koran of Mahomet, and the Bible of Jews and Christians; and there is no test, literary, moral, artistic, or religious, that does not give the first place to the Christian Bible. 2. Consider the antiquity of the religions. Reformed Parseeism belongs to the time of Daniel; Confucius dates 551 B.C., and Mahomet 570 A.D.; legends give early dates to the Hindoo and Egyptian: but the primary principles which have unfolded into Judaism and Christianity belong to the very origin of man as a moral and responsible being. 3. Take the relative numbers of the adherents of the religions; and then Christianity must take a low place, for the great human religions outnumber its adherents by millions, though Christianity has associated itself with the most advanced and civilised races. 4. Or estimate the religions by the elaborateness of their ceremonial; then Christianity, in its most ritualistic forms, can offer no rivalry to Hindooism. If these were sufficient bases of judgment, it would have to be admitted that Christianity does not offer unquestionable advantages. The text suggests a better term of judgment—the only safe one. Pure religion is practical. The test question, by which every religion should submit to be tried, is this—Does it practically work out into purity and charity? That test is fully in harmony with the spirit of our age. Since Bacon's day (1561) observation and experience have taken the place of speculation and theory. Now we ask for verification by experiment. The new method was at first applied in natural science; it is now applied in social, moral, and religious science. We have no reason to fear the application of the new method to Christianity. Let men judge it by its fruits. Appeal may be made without hesitation—1. To the experience of the *world.* The history of the race tells of no such help towards righteousness and charity as Christianity and its antecedent, Judaism, have given. The world has never reached without it such high ideals of righteousness and charity as Christianity has helped man to reach. Even the refined and intellectual Greeks exposed deformed infants on

Mount Taygetus. 2. To the experience of the *nation.* Wherever there has been a fine edge on the national conscience, and a stern loyalty to principle, and a pathetic sympathy with suffering, there we find the culturing of Christianity. 3. To the experience of the *family.* Which owes its existence and its preservation almost entirely to Christianity. It may be most positively affirmed that the highest ideal of family life has never been attained anywhere except under the inspiration of Christianity. 4. To the experience of the *individual.* Multiplied personal testimony can be given that Christianity is, consciously, an inspiration to righteousness and charity. If men will not listen to us when we argue that Christianity is true doctrinally, they cannot fail to listen when we show that it is, and has been, the living force in humanity, ever working towards righteousness and charity. It has been urged as an objection to Christianity, that some of the world's worst tyrannies have been supported by its name. It is easy to recall crusades, religious wars, persecutions, dragonnades, and inquisitions. But the reply has been effectively made over and over again—These things are not Christianity, but bigots or bad men using Christianity for their ends. They are not the expression of Christianity; they are caricatures. They are the outcome of a temporal Christianity worked in the interest of hierarchies; they are not kin with the spiritual Christianity of its Founder. They often have followed upon man's attempts to blend together religion and politics, or rather to make religion serve political ends. Mohammedanism consecrates the sword and the battle. Christianity says, "Put up thy sword into his place." What a testimony to the value of Christianity England makes on her Hospital Sundays! Why, for sustaining her national charities, does our nation appeal so directly to her professing Christians? Why does not the appeal go to the clubs, the theatre-goers, the attendants on places of amusement, the visitors at public libraries, the great companies, the business men, or the excursionists? Why is the appeal made to those who distinctly bear the Christian name? The fact is that everybody knows, even the scoffer knows, that Christianity ought to, and actually does, work out into purity and charity. That is its evidence. That makes it the unquestionable first of religions.

Uniting Christian Doing with Christian Being.—And how high a contempt and provocation is it of the great God, so totally to pervert the whole design of that revelation He hath made to us, to know the great things contained therein only for knowing sake, which He hath made that we might *live* by them! And oh! what holy and pleasant lives should we lead in this world if the temper and complexion of our souls did answer and correspond to the things we know! The design of preaching has been greatly mistaken, when it has been thought it must still acquaint them who live under it with some new thing. Its much greater and more important design is, the impressing of known things (but too little considered) upon the hearts of hearers, that they may be delivered up into the mould and form of the doctrine taught them, and may so learn Christ as more and more to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put off the old man, and put on the new. The digesting our food is what God now eminently calls for.—*John Howe.*

The Adornment of Religion.—Our religion is not adorned with ceremonies, but with purity and charity.—*Manton.*

Pure and Undefiled Religion.—Errors of the most fatal kind were early found in the Christian Church. Even in the apostle's days a mere form and profession of religion was deemed sufficient. The value of good works was depreciated and the necessity of performing them denied. Against such errors the

apostle James lifted up his voice like a trumpet. The pure religion which God alone acknowledges leads to the most self-denying exercises of love, and to a freedom from all the world's corruptions.

I. **His description of true religion.** —He takes a practical view. He speaks not of principles, although he believes in the necessity of faith; but it must be a living and operative faith only, which will save the soul. He does not advert to the exercise of our affections towards God, but only to our actions towards men.

II. **Here we see how religion will influence us in reference to**—1. *The world at large.* It is not required of us to renounce the world entirely, to abandon society altogether; but, from its corruptions, pleasures, riches, and honours to keep ourselves free even as Jesus did. We are not to be conformed to its sentiments and habits, nor court nor desire its friendship. 2. *That part of it which is destitute and afflicted.* Love is the life and soul of religion; and as it will extend to all in general, so will it manifest itself particularly towards those who are afflicted. Visiting the afflicted is an office which the true Christian will delight to execute. Love and charity are enjoined by Christ. Men will applaud this religion; but consider—

III. **The use we are to make of it.** —1. *As a criterion whereby to judge of our state.* "Victory over the world" is one of those marks which are universally found in the Lord's people, and in no other. A delight in all the offices of love to men for Christ's sake distinguishes Christians from all other persons. Here is the touchstone. 2. *As a directory whereby to regulate our conduct.* "Come out from the world, and be separate." "Bear ye one another's burdens." Not to the peculiarities of a sect are we urged, but to "pure and undefiled religion." This command is equally obligatory on all. The various modes of our obedience will be judged of by God Himself, who alone knows what our respective states and circumstances require. See the compassionate visitor opening the sources of consolation which the gospel affords, till the unhappy sufferers are brought to kiss the rod that smites them; see him administering present relief, and devising means for the future support of the family; how is he received as an angel from heaven! How the widow's heart rejoices! "Go and do thou likewise." "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—*Charles Simeon, M.A.*

Religion a Social Concern.—By religion we understand the service which is due to the supreme Being, and this service must of course correspond to His nature; so that our views of religion will be true or false in proportion as we understand or mistake His Divine character. Religion, corresponding to His nature, consists chiefly of two parts: (1) cherishing those sentiments of love and gratitude which are due to infinite goodness; and (2) actively promoting the purposes of this goodness—that is, promoting our own and others' present and future welfare. St. James only describes the methods of its manifestation. They consist in doing good to others, and in doing good to ourselves. We infer that religion is a *social* principle, intimately united with social duty, belonging to us as social beings. 1. It is founded in our social nature, and springs from our social relations. 2. Religion is a social concern, for it is a subject on which men have a strong tendency to feel and act together, and thus it is a strong bond of union. 3. Religion is a social and public as well as a private concern, because the common relation of God to all men is not merely a ground of sympathy and attachment, but makes it a duty to offer Him public, and the most public, acknowledgments. 4. Religion is a social concern, for it operates powerfully on society, contributing in various ways to its stability and prosperity. Few men suspect, perhaps no man comprehends, the extent of the

support given by religion to every virtue. 1. It is a right and duty in men to influence one another on the subject of religion. 2. If individuals are authorised and bound to promote religion, then the same right and obligation appertain to the community. A community is bound to incorporate religion into its public institutions, and to secure, if possible, to all its citizens the benefits of Christian worship and instruction.—*W. E. Channing, D.D.*

Kindness and Character the True Worship of the Father.—A definition is that which traces the boundary of a thing, so as to separate it from all other things. A definition must include the thing—the whole thing, and nothing but the thing defined. If this verse is to be regarded as a definition of religion, then it is both defective and misleading. Defective, because it does not include the whole of religion—it shuts out the whole *spiritual* life of man. Misleading, for it includes things which, though invariably accompanying religion, are not peculiar to religion. Kindness and purity of life are not plants that bloom only on religious soil. But the verse is not a *definition.* With us the word "religion" means "godliness," the grand sum-total of duties and relations to God and man. To the translators of the Bible it meant the *outward* form of piety, the *external* service of God. St. James presupposes conversion, presupposes all that Christ and Paul say of the inner spiritual life. The matter discussed in the text is—How shall the Divine life in the soul show itself? What shall its ritual be—its *worship*? It will not dispense with old forms of worship; but it will not content itself with these. The true Christian ritual is kindness and character. Christianity has love to God for its substance, and morality for its ritual. St. James says here that the religious man worships God truly every time he does a kindness to men, and that his unspotted character, like the holy fire that burnt unceasingly, is itself a perpetual pure and undefiled act of the truest worship. We need to have our ideas of religious service enlarged.

I. **Some have thought that God was pleased with bloodshed and pain**; and therefore they have offered up their prisoners of war, and even their own children, to the gods.

II. **Others have thought that He would be pleased if men were very cruel to their own bodies.**

III. Others insist that God is pleased with **gorgeous ceremony.**

IV. **Yet others think to please Him with pietism.**—Sentiment, emotion, and all other things that we present in public worship must be translated into some practical form—incarnated in some act, and "go about doing good." Then is God truly served, and helped, and pleased. Kindness and character: God loves these, and as His will more and more permeates humanity, ceremony, persecution, and sectarianism will die, and *love to God*, with earth for its temple, the homes of men for its shrines, words of kindness for its psalmody, deeds of kindness for its offering, a pure heart for its holy of holies, the smile of God and the redemption of the world for its reward, will take their place.—*J. Morgan Gibbon.*

Religion in the Details of Life.—The difficulty of religion is the taking up of the cross daily, rather than the taking it up on some set occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances—the serving God in little things, the carrying of religious principles into all the minutiæ of life, the discipline of our tempers, the regulation of our speech, the momentary sacrifices, the secret and unobserved self-denials. Who that knows anything of the difficulty of piety does not know that there is greater danger of his failing in these than in trials of apparently far greater cost and sterner endurance? It is not comparatively hard to put the armour on when the trumpet sounds, but it is to keep the armour on when there is no alarm of

battle. The warfare with our spiritual enemies is not a series of pitched battles, with intervals of resting and recruiting; it is rather daily, hourly, momentary fighting. This is the "driving out little by little" to which the Almighty promises "the reward of inheritance."—*H. Melvill.*

Unspotted from the World.—As men and women grow older they change. Of all the changes that they undergo those of their moral natures are the most painful to watch. The boy changes into the man, and there is something lost which never seems to come back again. Presently his life no longer sounds with a perfectly clear ring, or shines with a perfectly white lustre. He is no longer unspotted. When a grown man sees this, he is sure that the change has come somehow from the boy having grown up to manhood *in the midst of his fellow-men.* The manhood has had to grow here in this great universal mass of things, this total of many various influences which we call "the world." Home, school, business, society, politics, human life in general in all its various activities—out of this have come the evil forces that have changed and soiled this life. He has walked through mire, and the filth has gathered on his skirts. We have all been "spotted by the world." The worst thing about all this staining power of the world is the way in which we come to think of it as inevitable. We practically believe that no man can keep himself unspotted. There is a worse thing than this. When a man comes not merely to tolerate but to boast of the stains that the world has flung upon him. In view of all this we come to our religion. See how intolerant religion is. She starts with what men have declared to be impossible. She refuses to bring down her standards. She insists that men must come up to her. No man is thoroughly religious, she declares, unless he goes through this world untainted, as the sunbeam goes through the mist. Christianity could not sustain itself in its great claim to be from God unless it took this high and God-like ground—that whoever named the name of Christ must depart from all iniquity. We go for our assurance to the first assertion of the real Christianity in the *life of Jesus.* That life was meant to be the pattern of the lives of all of those who called themselves His followers. If He walked through the same muddy streets of sordid care, and penetrated the same murky atmosphere of passion that we have to go through, and thence came out pure and unspotted from the world, then He is really God manifest in the flesh. Filling ourselves, then, with this idea, that the spotlessness of the Saviour's life is the pattern of the spotless life to which we must aspire, study that life. 1. The first thing that strikes us about it is its *positiveness.* Jesus was never guarding Himself, but always invading the lives of others with His holiness. He did not spend His life in trying not to do wrong. He was too full of the earnest love and longing to do right—to do His Father's will. Many of our attempts at purity fail by their negativeness. All merely negative purity has something of the taint of the impurity that it resists. Morality is apt to be conceived as negative. Religion is by its very nature positive. Religion is higher than morality, as manly virtue is nobler than childlike innocence. But is any such purity as Christ's, so positive, so strong, possible for *us*? Christianity is a religion of the supernatural, and, to any one who is thoroughly in its power, it must bring the presence of a live supernaturalism, and make that the atmosphere of his life. Make the Incarnation the one pervading power of a man's life. A deep, living sense of God is the true vitality of a human soul which quenches the poisonous fires of corruption. This, however, is not enough; Christ must come nearer to the soul than this before it can really by Him "escape the corruption

that is in the world." There must be the personal relation between the soul and its Saviour. We must grasp the bewildering thought of a personal love for our single souls. The soul gives itself to Christ, and is its own no longer. He feels now with Christ's feeling, and corruption drops away from him as it drops away from Christ. He walks unharmed, because he walks in this new sense of consecration. That is the perfect ransom of a soul. "When I am so thankful to Christ for all He suffered in my behalf that I give up my life to Him to show Him how I love Him, and by my dedication to Him am saved from the world's low slaveries and stains—then, it seems to me, my heaven is begun, its security and peace I have already entered. I am already safe within its sheltering walls, and all my happy, restful life takes up already its eternal psalm. Already I have 'washed my robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" It is by a Christ-like dedication to the world that Christ really saves us from the world. They say the doctors and the nurses are the least likely to catch the epidemic. If you have a friend who is dishonest or impure, the surest way to save yourself from him is to try to save him. What was it that saved Jesus from the *infection* of the world? Was it not the same divinity which made Him the *Saviour* of the world? It is the ineffable union of Christ with the sinner that most bears witness to Christ's sinlessness. We may be saved from the wickedness of the world by our pity for it. We shall be far from its contagion the closer that we come to its needs. We shall be as pure as the angels the more completely we give ourselves up to the ministering angel's work. This is the true positiveness of the Christian's purity, the real safety of the loving and labouring life.—*Phillips Brooks.*

Sincere Religion will stand Testing.—*Vain* religion is contrasted with *pure* and *undefiled* religion. Pure, or clear through. Undefiled, or unstained with self-seeking. Our supreme danger in the religious life is willingly cherishing mixed motives. "Their heart is divided." There is praise of God and praise of self. "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." Illustrate by the architect who built a temple, and put the king's name on the plaster that would weather off, and carved his own name deep in the stone underneath. If our religion is sincere and simple, it will stand testing. Who puts the test? God, even the Father. God, the heart-searcher. God, the Father, who is the severest of heart-searchers. Nothing searches like love.

I. God, testing our religion, expects to find us "unspotted from the world."—Illustrate from the early Church. Christians were then set in close daily contact with heathenism, which tended to degrade and corrupt all social life. But the distinction between the Church and the world can never be safely obliterated. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." But what is the distinction between these two? The world is the *self*-pleasing sphere; the Church is the *God*-pleasing sphere. But here is our practical difficulty—We all come into personal religion as men and women already "world-spotted" by our experiences. Nay, it is worse than that—with a strange tendency to take world-spots. But provision is made for keeping us. Christ is our hedge. The Holy Spirit is a gracious defensive power within us. But God's grace in us must be responded to by all due keeping of ourselves. We need not willingly go where there is dirt. We can keep our clothes tight about us, and high up, if we must be where there is dirt. So many of the stains on our garments need not have been there. The mystery we have to find out is—How was it that Christ's garments would not *take* stains?

II. God, even the Father, testing our religion, expects to find us visiting the fatherless and the widow.—The specific cases are put as types of

practical religion. They are valuable and important as signs in themselves. They are more so if regarded as types. Illustrate—We keep the household crockery clean, not for show, but *for use*. We must keep ourselves clean for service. Learn what Christian service is from Christ. Where did He find spheres? He was always doing something for somebody. That is practical religion. Not profession, not feeling, not ritual, though these are good enough in their places; but the *inward* goodness of the pure heart, and the *outward* goodness of a life of charity.

Morality the Ceremonial of Christianity.—The outward service of ancient religion, the rites, ceremonies, and ceremonial vestments of the old law, had morality for their end. They were the letter of which morality was the spirit, the enigma of which morality was the meaning. But morality itself is the service and ceremonial (*cultus exterior*, θρησκεία) of the Christian religion.—*Coleridge.*

The Double Sphere of Practical Religion.—Doing in two spheres properly follows upon religious instruction. 1. Doing in the sphere of personal culture. 2. Doing in the sphere of kindly and self-denying service to others.

Undefiled Religion.—1. That in which is no trace of insincerity. 2. That in which there is no strand of self-seeking. God in our religion keeps it sweet. Self in our religion tends to make it foul.

Three Interests of Religion.—Religion in its rise interests us about ourselves; in its progress, about our fellow-creatures; in its highest stage, about the honour of God.—*Fausset.*

Personal Purity and Active Charity.—These two things here mentioned (visiting the fatherless, etc.) are not the sum-total of true religion. They are but samples of the stock. Here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, a part or parts is put for the whole. It is as if I described a living man by saying that he breathes. But he does many things else. He sees and hears, he walks and talks, he thirsts and hungers, and a thousand things besides. Still, unless he breathes, he is not alive, but dead; and dead is the religion which does not aim at these two things—personal purity and active charity; in other words, doing good and being good.—*Guthrie.*

Religion in its Visible Form.—Not piety, but the externals of religion. Θρησκεία only means religion in that sense in which we apply the word to any form or system of worship. Thus we might speak of the whole Mosaic ritual and ceremonial as the Jewish religion. It refers to the outward and visible forms in which religion embodies itself, not to the inner life of religion as it exists in the soul. What the apostle here means then is—The outward form and ritual in which your Christian life is to be manifested purely and acceptably to God does not consist in any liturgical system, but in visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and in keeping yourselves unspotted from the world. This is a lesson of as much importance to the ritualists of this day as for those of old, whilst attention to the precise, I might almost say "technical," meaning of the word translated "religion" guards it from the perversion of the legalist and the Pharisee. A holy and charitable life has taken the place under the new dispensation which, under the old, was held by sacrifices, ablutions, etc. Precisely the same idea is conveyed in Rom. xii. 1 and Heb. xiii. 15.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1. *The Jews of the Dispersion.*—Long before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and even the preaching of Christianity, Jewish colonists were found in Europe as well as Asia. *Milman* says: "Even where they suffered most, through their own turbulent disposition or the enmity of their neighbours, they sprang again from the same undying stock, however it might be hewn by the sword or seared by the fire. Massacre seemed to have no effect in thinning their ranks, and, like their forefathers in Egypt, they still multiplied under the most cruel oppression." While the Temple stood these scattered settlements were colonies of a nation, bound together by varied ties and sympathies, but ruled in the East by a Rabbi called the Prince of the Captivity, and in the West by the Patriarch of Tiberias, who, curiously, had his seat in that Gentile city of Palestine. The fall of Jerusalem, and the end therewith of national existence, rather added to than detracted from the authority of these strange governments; the latter ceased only in the reign of the emperor Theodosius, while the former continued, it is said, in the royal line of David, until the close of the eleventh century, after which the dominion passed wholly into the hands of the Rabbinical aristocracy, from whom it has come down to the present day.—*Ellicott's Commentary.*

A Kingdom become a Religion.—The Dispersion "showed to both Jew and Gentile alike that the barriers which had hedged in and isolated the hermit nation had broken down, and that what had ceased to be thus isolated had changed its character. A *kingdom* had become a *religion.* What henceforth distinguished the Jews in the eyes of all the world was not their country or their government, but their creed. "Through this they were henceforth to influence men as under the old conditions was impossible." "They themselves also were forced to understand their own religion better. When the keeping of the letter of the law became an impossibility, they were compelled to penetrate into its spirit." The universality of the services of the synagogue taught the Jew that God's worship was not confined to Jerusalem, and their simplicity attracted proselytes. Even in matters of detail—the lessons, the singing, the ritual—the services of the synagogue prepared for the services of the Christian Church.—*After Dr. Plummer.*

Ver. 6. *Surging Sea and Placid Lake.*—Trust Christ, and so thy soul shall no longer be like "the sea that cannot rest," full of turbulent wishes, full of passionate desires that come to nothing, full of endless moanings, like the homeless ocean that is ever working, and never flings up any produce of its work but yeasty foam and broken weeds; but thine heart shall become translucent and still, like some land-locked lake, where no winds rave nor tempests ruffle, and on its calm surface there shall be mirrored the clear shining of the unclouded blue, and the perpetual light of the sun that never goes down.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

Blessed through Humiliations.—

Then grudge not thou the anguish keen
Which makes thee like thy Lord,
And learn to quit with eye serene
Thy youth's ideal hoard.

Thy treasur'd hopes and raptures high—
Unmurmuring let them go,
Nor grieve the bliss should quickly fly
Which Christ disdained to know.

Thou shalt have joy in sadness soon;
The pure, calm hope be thine,
Which brightens, like the eastern moon,
As day's wild lights decline.

Thus souls, by nature pitch'd too high,
By sufferings plung'd too low,
Meet in the Church's middle sky,
Half-way 'twixt joy and woe,

To practise there the soothing lay
That sorrow best relieves;
Thankful for all God takes away,
Humbled by all He gives.

Keble.

The Mission of the Rich.—When rain from heaven has filled a basin on the mountain-top, the reservoir overflows, and so sends down a stream to refresh the valley below. It is for similar purposes that God in His providential government fills the cup of those who stand on the high places of the earth, that they may distribute the blessing among those who occupy a lower place in the scale of prosperity.—*Rev. William Arnot.*

Ver. 12. *Enduring Temptation.*—There were two children who were placed in different homes, at a distance from the father whom they loved. One child was with a family, every member of which esteemed his father; his name was never mentioned but with love and veneration; his character was upheld as a very model of excellence, and the child's admiration for his father grew with his years and strengthened with his ripening understanding. Far different was the case with his brother. The family he was placed with seemed bent

on weaning his affection from his father, and undermining the confidence he reposed in him. They seldom indeed ventured upon open accusation, but were ever insinuating doubts as to his father's uprightness, discretion, or love. The child was deeply hurt at these suspicions; he stifled them continually; but they awoke thoughts of which he could not always lose at once the painful impression. Often did he say to himself, "Let them talk as they will, I *know* that my father is good and wise and tender; I *know* that he loves me: how often have I proved it! I am foolish to be so distressed; ere long I shall see him face to face, and hear from his own lips an explanation of many things which I cannot now unravel: till then, suspect and suggest as they may, I *will* believe in his excellence and love!" In due time the father sent for both his children to his own home; but think you he welcomed that child with less affection and approval who would love on and trust him through base insinuation and suspicion? See here a picture of two believers. Few doubts ever assail the happy faith of one. The other passes through deep spiritual conflict, a malignant devil, an unbelieving world, and a corrupt heart, are ever whispering hateful suspicions of his God. "Though perplexed, he will not despair"; though silenced and confused, he continues to follow; though beaten by the waves, he clings to the rock. Though his Master is slandered and traduced, he keeps in His service. He continues with Him in his temptations; and in the day of God he too shall hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"—*Bickersteth.*

Temptation as Trial.—Temptation generally signifies no more than trial—any opposition or difficulty that may exercise our graces, and so make them known. In this sense God Himself tempts men—that is, tries and proves them; and thus He tempted Abraham. Sometimes temptation means dangerous trials and enticements to sin, which we are more likely to sink under than to overcome. In this sense God tempteth not any man, nor will He, if we resist such enticements, "suffer us to be tempted above what we are able" (1 Cor. x. 13).—*Clio.*

Ver. 15. *The Wages of Sin.*—A religious writer gives us this parable: A hermit was conducted by an angel into a wood, where he saw an old man cutting down boughs to make up a burden. When it was large he tied it up and attempted to lift it on his shoulders and carry it away, but finding it very heavy he laid it down again, cut more wood, and heaped it on, and then tried again to carry it off. This he repeated several times, always adding something to the load, after trying in vain to raise it from the ground. In the meantime the hermit, astonished at the old man's folly, desired the angel to explain what this meant. "You behold," said he, "in this foolish old man an exact representation of those who, being made sensible of the burden of their sin, resolve to repent, but soon grow weary, and instead of lessening their burden, increase it every day. At each trial they find the task heavier than it was before, and so put it off a little longer, in the vain hope that they will by-and-by be more able to accomplish it. Thus they go on adding to their burden until it grows too heavy to be borne, and then, in despair of God's mercy, and with their sins unrepented of, they lay down and die. Turn again, my son, and behold the end of the old man whom thou sawest heaping up a load of boughs." The hermit looked, and saw him in vain attempting to remove the pile, which was now accumulated far beyond his strength to raise. His feeble limbs totter over their burden; the poor remains of his strength were fast ebbing away; the darkness of death was gathering around him, and after a convulsive and impotent attempt to lift the pile, he fell down and expired.

Death in Sin.—The tale of the goblet which the genius of a heathen fashioned was true, and taught a moral of which many a deathbed furnishes the melancholy illustration. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of a cup. Coiled for the spring, a pair of gleaming eyes in its head, and in its open mouth fangs raised to strike, it lay beneath the ruby wine. Nor did he who raised the golden cup to quench his thirst, and quaff the delicious draught, suspect what lay below, till, as he reached the dregs, that dreadful head rose up, and glistened before his eyes. So, when life's cup is nearly empted, and sin's last pleasure quaffed, and unwilling lips are draining the bitter dregs, shall rise the ghastly terrors of remorse and death and judgment upon the despairing soul. Be assured a serpent lurks at the bottom of guilt's sweetest pleasure.—*Dr. Guthrie.*

Ver. 19. *Slow to speak, slow to wrath.*—In a cavalry squadron of the great German army which fought so bravely at Gravelotte, the youngest officer was from Westphalia. He was an impetuous, hasty young man. Among his men there was one who often excited his anger, for he was, as every one agreed, a very stupid recruit, and as the lieutenant was hot-headed and quick, so was the recruit slow and awkward in everything. Constantly was it said to the poor recruit, "You can do nothing right!" But, however men may speak and judge, they cannot see into the inmost heart, and God, who knows everything, judges differently

from them, and knows what such despised ones can and will accomplish. In the terrible battle of Gravelotte the Westphalian squadron, after a hitherto victorious struggle, was at last, by fresh attacks of superior forces, so hardly pressed that the men were separated from each other. Then it happened that our lieutenant, too, parted from the rest of his troop, was fallen upon by two powerful troopers, but by putting forth all his strength he defended himself against these, till his arm became weary and his eye grew dim. He had already looked death in the face, and in his heart said farewell to his loved ones at home. But now suddenly, in furious gallop, a horseman rushes up. He had been halting some hundred yards off behind a wall, and in a few moments could safely have rejoined his company, for he heard the French signal given to retreat, and the trumpets of his own company coming nearer. But when he saw his lieutenant in danger of death, with a firm hand he grasped his sword, jumped over the wall and dealt first to one and then to the other of the hostile troopers blows which stretched them both upon the ground. When, after a few moments, the lieutenant succeeded in bringing his foaming horse to a standstill, and the soldier, who was no other than the so-called stupid recruit, was again firmly in the saddle, the latter gazed at his officer with beaming eyes and said, "Have I done right now?" But before the lieutenant could reply and say, "Yes, yes, you have indeed done right," a bullet whizzes from out of the bushes and pierces the soldier through the forehead, so that he drops down dying from his horse. The lieutenant throws himself weeping upon the man, and calls into his ear, "Yes, comrade, you have done right." He hears no more. He has received his sentence from another Judge.

Anger.—As Plato, having taken his man in a great fault, was of a sudden exceedingly moved, and having gotten a cudgel as though he would have beaten him, notwithstanding desisted, and used no further punishment, one of his friends standing by him and seeing this thing, demanded of him why he had gotten such a cudgel; to whom he answered, that he had provided it to correct and chastise his own anger, which seemed to rebel against him and would no longer be ruled by reason; in like manner should we do when we are troubled with this passion of anger, and get either a knife or a sword to cut the throat of it when it beginneth, and is as it were in its infancy; for we may easily at the first oppose ourselves against it, as against a tyrant, and not permit it to have rule over us; but if we suffer it to increase and to fortify itself, it will, by little and little, overrule us, and at length become invincible.

Anger in the East.—I have never met with a people so much disposed to violent anger, especially from such slight causes, as in the case of the inhabitants of the East. I scarcely met with a native, during some months, who was not subject, upon even slight provocation, to what would be called with us unreasonable anger. It is common with men and women, old and young, rich and poor. It scarcely seems possible, in many cases at least, to heighten or deepen the expression of bad temper by any new gesture, or look, or word, or tone of voice that is not employed. One can hardly imagine the almost frightful energy with which they give vent to their fiery and ungovernable passion in many cases. Two men will stand facing each other for minutes, often rising to the highest pitch of violence in gesture and look and language; yet they seldom strike one another. I have watched, for example, a large *Turk* face to face with an equally large *Nubian*, black and glossy as polished ebony, who acted towards each other, for minutes, as if nothing could satisfy them save the annihilation of one or both parties, and yet the only personal damage done was that the *Nubian* spat in the face of the Turk, and then walked away as if he had finished his adversary—who looked, in his turn, as if he had been beaten. They seldom proceed to personal violence. Your dragoman *must* quarrel with his servants, and these with one another. Every village you pass you hear the sound of quarrelling—generally, so far as you can observe, without any adequate cause. I can well understand why the expression "angry without cause" should have been used.—*National Sunday-school Teacher.*

Ver. 22. *Doers of the Word.*—Cromwell is said to have once entered a church where stood gold and silver figures of the twelve apostles. "What do these here?" said he. "Nothing," was the reply of the priest in charge. "Very well," said Cromwell, "take them away; melt them down, and send them about doing good."

Hearing and Doing.—There is a story told of two men who, walking together, found a young tree laden with fruit. They both gathered, and satisfied themselves for the present; but one of them took all the remaining fruit, and carried it away with him, the other took the tree, and planted it in his own ground, where it prospered and brought forth fruit every year; so that though the former had more at present, yet this had some when he had none. They who hear the word, and have large memories, and nothing else, may carry away most of the word at present, yet he that perhaps can but remember little, who carries away the tree, plants the word in his heart, and obeys

it in his life, shall have fruit when the other has none.—*Old Writer.*

Religious Excitement ineffective.—A celebrated preacher of the seventeenth century, in a sermon to a crowded audience, described the terrors of the last judgment with such eloquence, pathos, and force of action, that some of his audience not only burst into tears, but sent forth piercing cries, as if the Judge Himself had been present, and was about to pass upon them their final sentence. In the height of this commotion the preacher called upon them to dry their tears and cease their cries, as he was about to add something still more awful and astonishing than anything he had yet brought before them. Silence being obtained, he, with an agitated countenance and solemn voice, addressed them thus: "In one quarter of an hour from this time the emotions which you have just now exhibited will be stifled, the remembrance of the fearful truths which excited you will vanish; you will return to your carnal occupations or sinful pleasures with your usual avidity, and you will treat all you have heard 'as a tale that is told.'"

Ver. 23. *Seeing Ourselves.*—The wife of a drunkard once found her husband in a filthy condition, with torn clothes, matted hair, bruised face, asleep in the kitchen, having come home from a drunken revel. She sent for a photographer, and had a portrait of him taken in all his wretched appearance, and placed it on the mantel beside another portrait taken at the time of his marriage, which showed him handsome and well-dressed, as he had been in other days. When he became sober he saw the two pictures, and awakened to a consciousness of his condition, from which he arose to a better life. Now, the office of the law is not to save men, but to show them their true state as compared with the Divine standard. It is like a glass, in which one seeth "what manner of man he is."

Ver. 26. *Bridling the Tongue.*

I. **What is the general vice or fault here referred to,** or what disposition in man is supposed in moral reflections and precepts concerning bridling the tongue? The fault referred to is not malice, but talkativeness, a disposition to be talking. This disposition is a grave matter, because it is so difficult to hold in restraint. It does not necessarily involve slander, perjury, or even ambitious vanity; but it is the occasion of numberless ills and evils and vexations of life.

II. **When may it be said of any one, that he has a due government over himself in this respect?**—The due and proper use of any natural faculty or power is to be judged of by the end or design for which it was given us. What then is the design of the gift of speech? Not only was it to meet necessary occasions, but also to minister enjoyment and satisfaction. A secondary use of speech is to please, and to be entertaining to each other in conversation. As the end and use, so likewise the abuse of speech, relates to the one or other of these, either to business or to conversation. Three things may be given as cautions against mistakes in conversation: 1. Silence; 2. Talking of indifferent things; 3. Speaking good or evil of others. If people would observe the obvious occasions of silence; if they would subdue the inclination to tale-bearing, and that eager desire to engage attention, which is an original disease in some minds, they would be in little danger of offending with their tongue, and would, in a moral and religious sense, have due government over it.—*Bishop Butler.*

Ver. 27. *Blight on Sickly Plants.*—When blight or mildew comes to a garden, the plants that suffer first and most are those which have been badly cared for, and are, in consequence, weak and sickly. It is not often that hardy and vigorous plants are attacked and injured. If we fail to use the means which are needful for sustaining our souls in spiritual health and soundness, we shall be very liable to the blighting influence of evil. It is only by being careful to maintain a vigorous spiritual life, that we can hope to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."—*B. Wilkinson.*

Sympathy with Widows.—One of the late Dr. Spencer's parishioners, in Brooklyn, New York, met him hurriedly urging his way down the street, one day; his lip was set, and there was something strange in that grey eye. "How are you to-day, doctor?" he said pleasantly. He waked as from a dream, and replied, soberly, "I am mad!" It was a new word for a mild, true-hearted Christian; but he waited, and with a deep earnest voice went on: "I found a widow standing by her goods thrown in the street; she could not pay the month's rent; the landlord turned her out, and one of her children is going to die; and that man is a member of the Church! I told her to take her things back again. I am on my way to see him."

CHAPTER II.

SINS OF PARTIALITY, ETC.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Have not.**—Better, "hold not." *Webster* translates, "Without showing degrees of deference, maintain ye your faith." **The Lord of glory.**—There are no words in the Greek answering to "the Lord," but the insertion is necessary in order to complete the English sentence. Some would, however, give to the genitive, τῆς δόξης, only the qualifying power of an adjective, and render either "glorious faith," or "faith of the glory revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ." *Plumptre* explains thus: "In believing in Him who was emphatically a sharer in the eternal glory (John xvii. 5), who had now returned to that glory, men ought to feel the infinite littleness of all the accidents of wealth and rank that separate man from man." **Respect of persons.**—Greek is a plural, "in respectings of persons"; showing preferences for one person rather than another.

Ver. 2. **Assembly.**—Greek, συναγωγή. The only place in the New Testament where the Jewish word is used for a Christian congregation. In the Jewish synagogue the people sat according to their rank, and members of the same trade sat together. James regards this as unadvisable in Christian congregations. The word ἐκκλησία, translated "Church," was preferred for Christian assemblies. It implied that those attending were called out from the rest of mankind, and united by new and spiritual bonds. **Gold ring.**—Better, "a man golden-ringed, in bright apparel." Gorgeous apparel, splendid in colour and ornament. *Gay*, ver. 3. **Vile.**—Dirty, squalid, the sign of poverty, or of some mean form of occupation.

Ver. 3. **Have respect.**—Give special consideration and attention to. **Under my footstool.**—That is, "on the floor at my feet." "In practice the seats most coveted among the Jews were those near the end of the synagogue which looked towards Jerusalem, and at which stood the Ark, that contained the sacred scroll of the law."

Ver. 4. **Partial.**—Same word as "waver," "doubt," of chap. i. 6. "Are ye not divided in your mind?" Part wishing to be loyal to Christ, and part wishing to gain the favour of the well-to-do man. "Have ye not doubted" whether in Christ rich and poor really are one? **Judges of evil thoughts.**—Better, "become judges having evil thoughts, which altogether bias your judgment." "Evil-thinking judges."

Ver. 5. **Rich.**—That is, "to be rich." The poor *in this world*, or so far as this world is concerned, are referred to. A true estimate of poverty and riches is suggested. **Heirs of the kingdom.**—Some of the better manuscripts read, "heirs of the promise."

Ver. 6. **Despised.**—Done dishonour to. Their acts expressed a cherished contempt. **Oppress you.**—Lord it over you. καταδυναστεύουσιν, act the potentate over you. **Draw you.**—Drag you. It is not that a particular rich member does this, but that he belongs to a *class* that does it.

Ver. 7. **They.**—The rich class, largely composed of Sadducees. **Ye are called.**—Or, "which was called over you [at baptism]" (Matt. xxviii. 19).

Ver. 9. **Commit sin.**—*Alford*, "It is sin that ye are working." **Convinced.**—Convicted by.

Ver. 10.—Omit word "point"; insert "precept" or "commandment." Because the law is only the various application of one essential principle.

Ver. 13.—Render, "For the judgment shall be merciless to him that wrought not mercy." **Rejoiceth against.**—Or, "triumphs over." *Shakespeare* has, "When mercy seasons justice"; "The quality of mercy is not strained," etc.

Ver. 14. **Say.**—Or, "make profession." The man may really have the faith, but it cannot be an *effective* faith if it finds no expression in actions. "Faith, without acts of faith, is but a dream." **Works.**—Simply "actions." Not meritorious works. **Can faith.**—Not faith generally, but his particular faith—the faith which proves itself to be mere sentiment.

Ver. 16. **Be ye warmed and filled.**—The verb is either imperative, "Get yourself warmed and filled," or indicative, "Ye are warming and filling yourselves." *Plumptre* prefers the indicative form. "What greater mockery than to be taunted with texts and godly precepts, the usual outcome of a spurious and cheap benevolence!"

Ver. 18.—This is the language not of an objector, but of one whose views James approves. **Without.**—That is, "apart from," "distinct from." The suggestion is that the two things cannot either wisely, or rightly, be separated.

Ver. 19. **Tremble.**—Shudder.

Ver. 20. **Vain man.**—Empty-headed; a term of contempt: see Matt. v. 22.

Ver. 22. **Made perfect.**—Or, "a complete, and therefore acceptable, thing."

Ver. 23. **Imputed.**—"Was accounted as equivalent to righteousness." His willingness to do, joined with the effort to do, was reckoned as if the thing was actually done.

Ver. 24. **By works.**—That is, by the acts which indicate faith to be a reality, and alive.

Ver. 26. **Dead.**—In the sense of being ineffective; mere helpless sentiment not moving, actuating principle.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—9.

Right and Wrong Respect of Persons.—It has well been said of St. James, that "he manifests a straightforward good sense which scatters at a stroke the precepts of hypocrisy, and the illusions of religious conceit. He assails the characteristic faults of the Jewish mind; the religious arrogance, presumption, and laxity; the asperity of mutual crimination, and the readiness to assume an intolerant jurisdiction over other men's conduct and opinions." How little practical influence a merely ritual religion, a religion of professions and sentiments, might be was shown in the assemblies of the Jewish Christians. Class distinctions were unduly recognised; the rich worshippers were flattered, and the poor neglected or insulted. In a Christian community there should be the equality of a common Divine life, for that life a rich man can have in no fuller and no healthier measures than a poor man can have. By the term "respect of persons" we understand, showing special favour to some, not on the basis of good judgment, or from a desire to do right, but on the ground of personal favour, or to gain some personal advantage. It is therefore again and again asserted that there is no "respect of persons with God"; it is again and again urged that "respect of persons" is a grievous sin in judges and magistrates. St. James points out that it is a most unworthy and most mischievous spirit, when it gets into Christian communities. But it is important that we should recognise a right "respect of persons" as well as a wrong. So long as there are varieties of station, varieties of relationship, and varieties of ability among human beings, there will be spheres for a proper respect of persons. The child ought to respect his parent; the servant ought to respect his lord; the workman ought to respect his master; the poor ought to respect the rich; the citizen ought to respect his governors. But then it is equally true, though less recognised, that the parent ought to respect the child, the lord the servant, the master the workman, the rich the poor, and the governor the citizen. It was just in this mutual respect that the social system of China failed. It is in this that the social system of Christianity claims universal acceptance. In China five relations are recognised, but in each case exclusive attention is given to the claims of the superior on the inferior; the inferior is not conceived as having any rights against the superior. The five relations are: sovereign and minister; father and son; husband and wife; elder and younger brothers; and friends. Christianity must not be thought of as a force interfering with social relationships, and affecting those signs of mutual respect which materially help to preserve the order of society. It does give a man such self-respect as will keep him from adulation or flattery of anybody, and from servility in his dealings with anybody. St. James, however, is not dealing with general social relations; he is writing to Judæo Christians concerning what is befitting for them in their specially Christian relationships. They are brought into fellowship on conditions which altogether override all social distinctions. Neither intellect, nor wealth, nor manners, nor clothes give a man special claim or place in a Christian community. Spiritual life alone gives a man a place, and spiritual gifts alone give a man a position. Within Christian communities persons are respected for their piety and ministry. The Duke of Wellington was right when, kneeling beside a poorly clad villager at

the communion-rail, he quietly reproved the verger who wanted to remove the poor man, by saying, "Let him alone; we are all equal here."

I. **Respect of persons is wrong when it puts circumstances before character.** —When it shows deference to a man for what he *has* rather than for what he *is*. It is the common and every-day estimate that we make of men. The workman judges a man by his ability to find him work. The business man values men by their purchasing power. The poor are unduly impressed by fine clothes. Women are constantly in danger of estimating others by their appearances. It is not possible, nor would it be right, to change altogether the relationships of the week on the Sunday. We should not expect men to be otherwise toward each other at Christian worship than they are towards each other in daily business. St. James proposes no such unreasonable thing. The proper respect due to one another is as necessary in the house of God as anywhere else. Servility is very different from respect. The assumption of St. James is that the man with the gold ring, dressed in fine clothing, is wanting to make an impression, to proclaim his superiority; and what St. James reproves is the failure to deal with such a man according to Christian principles. Christians ought never to be carried away by outward appearances, by circumstances of wealth, by chance of getting personal advantages from the well-to-do. And yet what striking illustrations of the evil St. James denounces can be found in the pew system of our modern churches, especially where the support of worship is directly dependent on the gifts of the people. The man who can pay is everywhere thought more of than the man who can pray. Up to quite recent times there were separate, and specially hard and uncomfortable, seats for the poor in many churches and chapels. They had to sit in a low place. St. James calls this sort of thing wrong, because: (1) it reveals bad, self-seeking dispositions in those who show such servility—"they are partial, and judges of evil thoughts"; (2) it shows that they formed no true estimate of character, for these *showy* rich men were just the very men likely to become their oppressors and persecutors; and (3) the treatment of the poor, contrasted with this treatment of the rich, convicted them of sin against the foundation law of the second table—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Such servility always shows low conditions of spiritual life; for when we go past our own circumstances to concern ourselves with our own characters, we are pretty sure to be keen to recognise cultured character in others, and to be indifferent to mere show of circumstance.

II. **Respect of persons is right when it puts character above circumstances.** —When it shows deference to a man for what he *is* rather than for what he *has* (see ver. 5). That may make us attentive and obliging to poor people as well as rich. Nay, it is quite possible that we may find more call to attention to the poor than to the rich. For it is the compensation of those in lowly estate that they have less to hinder the progress of soul culture, and so often reach heights of Christian attainment, and Christian power of service, that are altogether beyond the rich. But servility to the pious poor would be as mischievous as servility to the showy rich. Let respect be given wherever it is due. But do not be carried away by appearances. "The Lord looketh not on the outward appearance. The Lord looketh on the heart." And so should we who are taught of Christ and bear the Christian name.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *Worship of the Modern Golden Calf.*—True reverence and submission are in no way condemned by this scripture; but their excess and gross extreme, the preference for vulgar wealth, the adulation of success, the

worship, in short, of some new golden calf. Respecting persons is a sin of the rich, who despise the poor; of judges, who are influenced in their decision by the status of prisoners; and of the poor, who are constantly tempted to time-serving.

No Classes within Christian Churches.—Right relations of classes in society involve mutual respect. But Christianity recognises no classes. It brings men into the unity of a common new life. There are no classes in the children of one family. The redeemed are restored sons in the family of God. Christianity makes new relationships on the basis of the new family life. It keeps its "respect" for cultured and sanctified character, rather than for external conditions.

Ver. 2. *The Weakness of the Early Church.*—We must not judge the early Christian Church too harshly. The appearance of a stranger in costly apparel, with a gold ring, however common a mark simply of wealth in later times, would in those days cause a far greater and more painful surprise in an obscure and probably timorous assemblage of Christians than at this distant period we are willing to believe. The time of persecution had already commenced, and upon his testimony how many issues might depend! Anxious to propitiate the favour of the great man, we can easily imagine that every consistent courtesy would be offered to him. The prominently jewelled ring, itself an insignium of the equestrian and senatorial order, would instantly announce the rank of the visitor. Many of these rings are preserved in the national and Continental collections; they are solid, tapering, and of massive gold, with a large jewel, often an onyx or jasper cameo on the face. Some of these specimens weigh nearly an ounce. The gems are often engraved with magical devices, as charms of talismanic power, or valedictory inscriptions for the wearer. Others, like Hannibal's famous ring, contain a secret recess, in his instance filled with poison. Such ornaments were both cumbersome and costly, so much so that a Roman writer ridicules an enervated fop by stating that,—

> "Charged with light summer rings, his fingers sweat,
> Unable to sustain a gem of weight."

Ver. 4. *The Sin of Partiality.*—In the common intercourse of life it cannot but be that men have preferences for one person over another. This, indeed, is the basis of the selections on which human relationships rest. We come into life unions because of our partialities. The sin of partiality is determined by (1) the occasion, (2) the way in which it finds expression. Class partialities are wrong. Sect partialities are wrong. Partialities are always wrong when they lead us to do injustice, by giving to one what is due to another, or by withholding from any what is his due. Within the Christian Church, where all should stand in the equality of brotherhood in Christ, partiality must always be a source of bickerings, jealousies, and heart-burnings.

The World's Standard.—The world must always measure by its own standard, and consider poverty a curse, just as it looks on pain and trouble as evil. The peril of *organised* Christianity is unduly estimating those who can *pay*.

Ver. 5. *Poverty and Piety.*—"There are no gains without pains, and no pains without gains." Our Lord taught that, relative to the religious life, the rich were placed at some very grave disadvantages. It is but the truth involved in this teaching, that those who are poor in this world are at advantage in relation to the religious life. It must, however, be kept in mind that the cares of the poor, their painful efforts to obtain a livelihood, and the lack of cultured intelligence, provide serious hindrances to piety.

There is not much to choose between poor and rich in respect of occupation and worldly care, but the *kind* of occupations of the rich are more inimical to the religious life and spirit than those of the poor. They tend to nourish self-reliance and self-satisfaction, and so draw men's minds and hearts away from God. True religion—the religion of Christ—proposes to culture into perfection man's *whole* nature, but it finds one side of man's nature specially neglected, and it puts its strongest force into it. The passive graces (characteristic of woman) flourish in the soil of *dependence*; and that is the habitual attitude of the poor. True, the strain of poverty often makes men bitter and hard; but where there is the religious sense, the poor have always been found noble examples of piety, spirituality, and service. "Blessed are the poor," when poverty of circumstance is joined with "poverty of spirit," that keeps the soul open and receptive.

Powerful Men from the Ranks of the Poor.—Moses was the son of a poor Levite; Gideon was a thresher; David was a shepherd-boy; Amos was a herdsman; the Apostles were "ignorant and unlearned." The reformer Zwingle emerged from a shepherd's hut among the Alps. Melancthon, the great theologian of the Reformation, was a workman in an armourer's shop. Martin Luther was the child of a poor miner. Carey, who originated the plan of translating the Bible into the language of the millions of Hindostan, was a shoemaker in Northampton. Dr. Morrison, who translated the Bible into the Chinese language, was a last-maker in Newcastle. Dr. Milne was a herd-boy in Aberdeenshire. Dr. Adam Clarke was the child of Irish cottars. John Foster was a weaver. Andrew Fuller was a farm-servant. William Jay of Bath was a stonemason.

Vers. 6, 7. *Good and Bad among the Rich.*—The denunciations of the rich by our Lord and by His disciples may be seriously misunderstood and misused. They are when they are employed to support class enmities, and to excite prejudices against the rich, and to hinder them from accepting the religious life. The conditions of society in the time of our Lord need to be fully understood and wisely estimated. Then the rich were self-satisfied Pharisees or cynical Sadducees, and one of the grave disabilities of the age arose from the arrogance, masterfulness, and injustice of the rich. But even then there were good and bad among the rich. There was a Barnabas as well as a Dives, a Joseph of Arimathæa as well as a Herod. Let severe reproaches come upon those who are rich and bad. Let the Divine acceptance and human respect come to all those who are rich and good.

I. **The bad among the rich are not those who have riches or acquire riches, but those who trust in riches.**—There are many persons who are born into the possession of wealth. From no point of view can this be regarded as any reproach to them. It simply makes the set of human conditions which are to provide the discipline of their lives. Character has to be won under these conditions, call them conditions of privilege, or of disability, as we may please. There are many who acquire wealth by their genius, perseverance, or by fortunate circumstances. They need not be envied; character has been made or spoiled in the getting of the riches; and now the great question is—How do they stand related to the riches they have acquired? Our Lord repeated His saying so as to make His reference quite clear—"How hardly shall they that *trust* in riches enter the kingdom!" It is the trusting in, not the having, that always has made, and still makes, the bad rich man.

II. **The bad among the rich are not those who are rich, but those who will be, are determined to be, rich.**—When a man forces his way to get riches (1) he can have no spirit of

humility and submission before God; (2) he is very likely to do shameful wrong to his fellow-men; and (3) he is sure to "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts." There is such a thing as being "rich" toward God.

Ver. 8. *The Law of Human Relations.*—Very remarkable is the insight which our Divine Lord showed in dealing with the revealed law of God. He went behind all formal commands to the essential principle. Love God, and you will do everything right, because love will be the constraint of obedience. There really is no need of a second law. One is only stated in accommodation to human weakness. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is involved in loving God with all our heart. We must love whosoever God loves. We cannot help loving those who stand in the same relation to God as we do. Observe, however, that the claim of the Divine relation is not precisely the same as the human relation. We are not to love God *as ourselves.* We are not to love our neighbour with *all our mind and soul.* God stands absolutely first and alone. Our relation to Him is unique, and all-inclusive. A whole devotion of the whole self to God is consistent with all due service of others. But what we give to God may be shared with none. His sacrifice is a *whole burnt-offering.* There is a careful limitation in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself.*" It is not "as you love God." It is "as you love *yourself.*" But "yourself" comes after God, and can stand in no rivalry with Him. We must love ourselves consistently with supreme love to God. We must love our neighbour consistently with supreme love to God. There is a certain subtlety in St. James's reference to this law. He hints that our love to self sets us continually upon efforts to *serve* self; and if we love our neighbour as we love ourselves, that love will continually set us upon efforts to *serve them.* True love is always, and everywhere, the inspiration of service. Show how this "royal law" seeks to get applications in the family, business, social, and church spheres. We can never meet aright our obligations to our neighbour until we can be said to *love* him so as to take a personal interest in his well-being.

Vers. 8-10. *The Royal Law.*—After rebuking partiality, St. James goes on to lay down the rule of the believer's duty to his fellow-men. In the few words of this most comprehensive law, we have the essence of the second table of the Decalogue. The Christian's duty is to cherish towards every man a true *kindliness.* "As thyself;" as much in degree would be impossible; but as really, as constantly, as persistently in spite of ill-deserving. We do not exactly *love* ourselves, but we care for ourselves, we sympathise with ourselves; and without the smallest sentimentalism, in the homeliest reality, we might do the like toward our fellow-men. And to do this is, in the full Scriptural meaning, to love our neighbour as ourself. The law which bids us do so seems all our duty to our brethren in humanity; for once the genuine principle of unselfish kindliness is implanted in us by God's Spirit, that principle will prompt every right deed, and permit no wrong deed. Prejudice rather than selfishness is the main obstacle within ourselves to the due keeping of the royal law—at least in the case of really worthy people. There are not many who are at all worthy to be called Christian people who find it in the least difficult to feel kindly towards any mortal creature when they really come to know him tolerably well. St. James goes on to point out a too common way in which this law is broken. "If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin." This was the besetting sin of the people he had in his mind, and was writing to. It is transgression, plainly enough, whether the person unduly respected be oneself or another. Meeting the possible objection that "respect of persons,

though not quite right, is no great matter," St. James says, that anything wrong is a great matter; doing wrong, you break God's law; and if you break God's law on one point, it will not avail you to plead that you keep it on twenty; you are a law-breaker, a transgressor, and you must rank as such and take the consequences. Far from being a paradox, it is almost a truism. Every man punished for a breach of human law is held a law-breaker, a criminal, just for the one crime he has done. The law is a whole; you break it by breaking any one of its innumerable provisions. Dwell upon the vital and central matter of that kindly principle within us which will be the spring of all duty to our fellow-men. Nothing worth is that kindliness which dwells in a mere soft heart and a super-sensitive nervous system. Nothing worth is that so-called Christian love which ends in tears, and reaches not to stout, daylight work. Nothing worth is that philanthropy which results from mere physical feeling. Sound, equable, lasting kindliness, not to be discouraged or soured, not to be wearied out, is that which is implanted by God's blessed Spirit, and which takes note of men not merely as the objects whose sufferings remind of our own, but as beings on whom a common Father has conferred a common immortality, and towards whom a common Saviour has felt a common love. Ordinary people will never attain what is in the least like loving our neighbour as ourselves, unless by the abounding grace of God's blessed Spirit. It is possible by God's grace to cultivate and keep a frame so sweet and kindly, as that you shall be sources of blessing and help to those around you, as you go on your pilgrimage way. There are excellent gifts, but there is a most excellent. There are mighty graces, but there is a mightiest. A kind heart, a sweet temper, is the very best thing the Holy Ghost can give to mortal man or woman. It is the thing that is likest God. It is "the mind which was also in Christ Jesus"—the very same.—*A. K. H. B.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—13.

The Law of Liberty.—That is the name for the law under which the Christian is placed; the law by which the Christian regulates all his life, conduct, and relations. One of the old divines puts it in the following quaint way: "I hear it said that a Christian may do what he likes. And so he may. Only a Christian is a man *with a fresh set of likes*." The law of liberty can only be given to those who can be entrusted with it. It is a familiar point of apostolic teaching, that the formal law of Judaism proved ineffectual to the production of righteousness. St. James presents this truth in one form here. That old law so held together that the breaking of one part of it involved the penalty of the whole. The breaker was a transgressor, and as such must be dealt with. For the moment St. James takes the strictly Jewish standpoint. He wanted to deal with men who prided themselves on keeping the greater and more evident laws —as the young rich ruler did—but thought that very little importance attached to breaking it in its smaller provisions, or in matters that did not very manifestly disturb social order. They would wholly shrink back from "killing" or "adultery," but they were quite indifferent to "despising the poor," which, indeed, was hardly associated with that searching law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But that really is the very essence of the second table of the Mosaic law, and therefore in breaking that law they broke it all. But St. James would have them understand that, as Christians, they were under a new law, one that was at once more searching and more inspiring, one that concerned itself about both the great and the little in Christian life and conduct. If they

responded to the call of that law in merciful consideration of one another and kindly treatment of one another, they need be under no fear of judgment. Under the "law of liberty," "mercy rejoices over judgment."

I. **The "law of liberty" frees from the bondage of the older law.**—Because men were not able to go alone, not able to guide their moral or social life of themselves, therefore a formal law was given, stating precisely what they should do, and what they should not. It was a book of rules for their guidance in all relationships. But when a man *wants* to do the good and the right, he can put his book of rules on the shelf. That book is just as valuable as ever it was, only *it* does not now concern him, he does not need it; the new life in him can find all good and befitting expressions. The Christian has no evil word to say of the old law. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Only he does not need it; because the very essence of it—love to God and his neighbour—is *in him.*

II. **The "law of liberty" allows him to be a "law unto himself."**—When can a man be a law unto himself? When he is a man. It is the very mission of Christianity to make men; to nourish that self-restraint which ensures that no bodily passion and no external temptation shall prove overwhelming. A child cannot be a law unto himself. A youth can, only with important limitations. A man ought to be able to rule himself. A man in Christ Jesus ought, and can. He is free; but free unto holiness, free to do right. Christ was a "law unto Himself."

III. **The "law of liberty" permits a man to bind himself to Christ.**—The free man need not be without attachments, without examples, without guidance, without a master. He is free in this sense—that he allows no one, and nothing, to put bonds on him. But he is free to put bonds on himself; and when he does so, he never thinks of them as bonds, he never calls them bonds. He is free to bind himself to Christ, but His service is perfect freedom. It were not freedom if the man were not free to choose his friend or his master.

IV. **The "law of liberty" enables a man to use the old law when he pleases.**—If he is free to put it away on the shelf, he is free also to take it down. In the free endeavour to adjust his life and relations, he may often find in the old law good counsel and guidance. He discovers its practical and experimental value, but has no such sense of its constraint as properly came upon the Jew. St. James intimates that if men order their conduct, as Christians, according to the "law of liberty," they will never be servile to the rich and never despise the poor. Mercy will be sure to tone all their judgments.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 10. *Offending in One Point.*—A law is the expression of the meaning of the law-making power. The constitution of the United States is the declaration of the method by which the law-making power—the people of the United States—intends to govern. A law will be right and beneficent in the proportion of the moral elevation of the power promulgating the law. A bad king, other things being equal, will promulgate bad laws. A community debased in moral tone will establish for itself correspondingly deteriorated laws. On the other hand, a supremely good governing power will express itself by law supremely good. God is the governor of the universe, and God is the supremely good; therefore the law which He has promulgated must be the expression of a nature infinitely good, and so must itself be infinitely good. This infinitely good law of God is stated for us,—in man's moral constitution; in the Ten Com-

mandments; in the condensed universal formula for right living by the Lord Jesus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and strength and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself"; still further, this law of God is taken out of a merely cold and mechanical and dead statement, and set before us and illustrated in the living person Jesus Christ. Our scripture declares that though a man keep the whole of this law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Why? Because, first, *of the essential unity of the Divine Lord.* The law of God is not made up of parts dissimilar in authority. You are under no less obligation to love your neighbour as yourself than to love God with your whole being. The sanctions sustaining either part of the law are just the same. The law of God is the expression of the one nature of God. Each particular of the law is equally holy with every other, and equally good with every other, and equally authoritative with every other. "For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." The law of God is a complete circle. It makes little difference whether you break into the circle at what you call the top or bottom or on either side; if it be fractured anywhere, it is broken. Here is some most precious statue, perfect save that it is broken as to its least finger. Is the statue whole? Is the unity of its beauty unimpaired? Is it not henceforth for ever a broken thing? In some true sense do not features and feet and limbs and hands share in the damaged unity? Is it not really true that that broken finger, offending though only in that one point against the law of wholeness, is yet guilty of breaking the entire law of wholeness? That perfect statue is the law of God. God's law possesses in itself the majestic unity of perfection. It is the expression of the one perfect nature of Jehovah. Each least particular of it is essential to the unity and completeness of the whole. And if you break it in one particular, you for ever damage that law's oneness, and do, in a most true sense, break it all, and so are guilty of it all. Profoundly true are these words of Milton: "If the law allow sin, it enters into a kind of covenant with sin; and if it do, there is not a greater sinner in the world than the law itself." Because, second, that *disposition* which would break one point would, other things being equal, break any other point. "He who would, for sound religious reasons, keep one precept, would, from the same conscientious motive, abstain from breaking all the rest; and, on the other hand, he who would not for any religious reasons abstain from breaking one, has nothing within himself which would restrain him from breaking all the rest." Because, third, *the sin in one point inevitably spreads into sin in other points.* As a fire that breaks out in one place, but soon consumes the whole dwelling.—*Anon.*

God's Law is a Whole.—As a chain is snapped by failure of the weakest link, so the whole law, in its harmony and completeness as beheld by God, is broken by one offence of one man; and the penalty falls, of its own natural weight and incidence, on the culprit.

I. **The requirement.**—Keep the whole law.

II. **The failure.**—Stumble at one point.

III. **The Divine reading of the failure.**—It is virtually breaking all the laws, for it is breaking the thing—the law. The man who fails stands before God, not for a particular offence, but for breaking the law. This, however, must not be so presented as to lead men to assume that God recognises no *degrees* of criminality. What has to be impressed is the large moral significance of apparently insignificant moral offences.—*Anon.*

A Law of Liberty.—That is, a law

which secures a man freedom for righteousness; and consequently comes down severely on a man when that freedom is abused.

Ver. 12. *The Dual-sphere of Relations.*—"So speak ye, and so do." A man finds expression for what is in him by speech and by action. He is known by his fruits in conduct; but it is also true that he is known by his fruits in conversation. A man comes into association with others and influences others by the substance and tone of his talk and by the example of his actions. But the importance of a man's conduct-sphere is often exaggerated. It is when it is said that "three-fourths of life is conduct." It is when the speech-sphere is not adequately and harmoniously estimated along with the conduct-sphere.

I. **A man's speech judged by the law of liberty.**—The law of liberty is that law of liberty which orders a man's life when he *wants to do right.* A man becomes free of law, and a law unto himself, when the love of righteousness is fully established in him. But this law of liberty becomes, in the use of the man himself concerning himself, the sternest and most searching law. It ensures such speech, such conversation, as becometh the gospel of Christ.

II. **A man's conduct judged by the law of liberty.**—Apply the explanation of the law of liberty, given above, to the sphere of man's actions and relations. When a man is right-minded, and attempts to rule his own conduct, there is a guarantee of righteousness. This truth is set forth in his characteristic way by the apostle John, when he says of the man ruled by the law of liberty, the love of righteousness, "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." But the application of Christian principles to the sphere of conduct is much more constantly dealt with than their application in the sphere of conversation. And many an earnest Christian spoils the witness of his life because he does not pay due regard to the witness of his lips. It is not without special significance that the word "conversation" is used in the New Testament. It means the whole turning about of our relations, but it evidently includes the element of *speech.*

Ver. 13. *The Relativity of Mercy and Judgment.*—The psalmist puts mercy and judgment together in a way that is somewhat surprising: "Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work." It is as if he had said of God, "His mercy is judgment"; "His judgment is mercy." It would be no real mercy if God did not judge and punish His creatures. It would be no judgment of the Divine Father of men if mercy were not at the very heart of it. St. James here suggests that—1. Usually mercy and judgment go together, hand in hand. 2. Occasions may occur which require judgment to go first, and mercy keep in the background. The special case referred to is that of the man who has showed no mercy to his fellow-man; a case illustrated by our Lord's parable of the unforgiving servant. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." 3. Occasions may arise in which mercy stands forth to do her work, and judgment must lag behind. We can think of cases in which the mercifulness and charity of a man may put an arresting hand on judgment and "hide a multitude of sins. —*R. T.*

Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment.—Mercy is dear to God, and intercedes for the sinner, and breaks his chains, and dissipates the darkness, and quenches the fires of hell, and destroys the worm, and rescues from the gnashing of teeth. To her the gates of heaven are opened. She is the queen of virtues, and makes men like to God, for it is written, "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke vi. 36). She has silver wings like the dove, and feathers of gold, and soars aloft, and is clothed with Divine glory, and stands

by the throne of God; when we are in danger of being condemned, she rises up and pleads for us, and covers us with her defence, and enfolds us in her wings. God loves mercy more than sacrifice (Matt. ix. 13).—*John Chrysostom.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—20.

Sentimentality is not Religion.—In every age the difficulty has had to be dealt with, of confusing profession with piety, and sentiment with religion, and talk with service. The difficulty especially associates with Christianity, which is essentially a spiritual religion; has no sphere if it does not get a soul-sphere; but when it has gained the soul-sphere, persists in gaining the body-sphere also. In the early Church there were the deceived and the self-deceived—those who took up with religion from interested motives, and those who had very unworthy notions of what religion is and requires. Some were carried into the Christian profession on passing waves of emotion, and when the excitement died down they were surprised to find in what responsibilities they were involved. Some were intellectually convinced of Christ's claims, but did not come into the moral influence of personal relations of love and trust. Intellectual belief is not bound to bear fruit of godly living; personal faith is. The trust which binds to Christ binds to the service of Christ. The faith which *saves*, and the works which *serve*, are linked indissolubly together. These are the truths St. James presents in this paragraph in his practical, pointed, and illustrative style. Two words will give the contrast which St. James so forcibly presents. *Saying, showing.* Saying that we have faith. Showing that we have faith. Both are right. Profession may be the duty of the hour as truly as charity. But there is this marked difference between the two. *Showing* can stand alone, but *saying* cannot. A man who shows his faith by his works need not make profession, for the works will make all the profession that is needed. But the man who shows his faith only by his profession will find the profession is altogether a worthless thing to himself and to others, unless it is followed up by answering works of charity and service. Of the Pharisee class our Lord said, "They say and do not"; and in those words may be found the keenest and most severe reproach.

I. **Saying that we have faith, or resting in profession and sentiment.**—This is a special peril at times, under particular sectarian conditions, and to peculiar natural dispositions. Such times are times of revival; such conditions are demands of special beliefs; such dispositions are prevailingly emotional. There are insincere and time-serving forms of making religious profession; but we need only take sincere forms with which men are self-deluded. St. James wants us clearly to see that merely saying we have faith cannot save. It has no necessary saving influence in the life; it has no moral power. This has been embodied in the familiar saying, "Hell is paved with good intentions"; which were ineffective things, and could not save the man from going to hell. Therefore it is constantly pressed on attention that the faith which saves is not intellectual belief, of which we can make a profession, but heart-trust, which brings us into personal relations with Christ, and compels service to *Him* in the service of *his*. As professors we are always in danger of living a sentimental rather than a practical Christian life. The danger seems expressed in our common modes of speech. We say we make a profession of religion. Would it not be better, less exposed to misunderstanding and mistake, if we were to say we have begun, and are trying to live, a Christian life? We may easily become satisfied with making a profession; we can never be satisfied if our effort is to live a godly, righteous, and sober life. The danger of sentimentality

starts with us in the very beginning of our religious history. The great force of influence brought to bear on us then tends to nourish *feeling*. Very little effort is made to urge on us the doing of duty, and the acceptance of a life of charities and sacrifices. And a serious estimate of many advanced Christian lives brings to light the mastery of this evil. To many the searching Spirit of Christ may have to say, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." The fact is that people prefer that which cultivates the sentimental, increases mere knowledge, or pleases with the delicacies of high feeling; they are often offended when, with plainness and point, the claims of the Spirit of Christ are shown bearing upon temper, and home, and indulgences, and business, and charity. But profession of faith, if it stand alone, if that is all a man has, does not save, and cannot. Our Lord stamped the helplessness of mere *saying* in His severe reproach, "Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name? and by Thy name cast out devils? and by Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22).

II. **Showing that we have faith.**—Or expressing faith in service. St. James gives a definite case in illustration. A distressed Christian brother, needing actual food and clothing, comes to the man who *says* he has faith, and expects his saying so to suffice. The man lives in the region of excellent sentiment and pious talk. And he gives plenty of these things to his distressed brother; but *no clothes* and *no food*. Now what good could that do either to the professor or to the distressed brother? It did not nourish the professor's faith only to talk; and it did not help the poor man in his need to listen to talk. It would have *shown* the man's faith—and showing is speaking loudly and effectively—if he had given some clothes and some food. Ministry, charity, the life of service—this is the true profession, the proper showing forth of godliness. Think of Dorcas, and the crowd that gathered about her house, mourning for her, and showing the garments she had made for them. That crowd wept for her because of what she had *done*. Think of those holy women who ministered of their substance to Christ, and were honoured by Him for what they had *done*. Nay, think above all of Christ Himself, over whose whole life shines the glory of something *done* to relieve, and comfort, and raise, and save His fellow-men. "He went about doing good," showing how much more "blessed it is to give than to receive"; and "leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps"—this example, not talking about his faith, and satisfying Himself with talk, but *showing* His faith by works of loving charity and devoted service. There may be: (1) faith without works; (2) works without faith; (3) faith seen in works; and (4) works culturing faith. Isolated faith is a helpless (dead) thing. There are three possible stages of faith: (1) faith spoken with the lips; (2) faith seen in the life; (3) faith felt in the deeds which carry the persuasion of it to others.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 14. *Faith as Trust, and Works as Charity.*—According to St. James, faith was moral conviction, trust, and truth, and yet such a theoretical belief only that it might be held by devils. Works are not those of the law, but an active life of practical morality and well-doing. Justification is used in a proper or moral sense, but not the higher, or "forensic," as we now call it.—*After De Wette and Alford.*

Religion is Devotion and Duty.—The Church of every age is warned against the delusive notion that it is enough for men to have religious

emotions, to talk religious language, to have religious knowledge, and to profess religious belief, without the habitual practice of religious duties, and the daily devotion of a religious life. —*Ellicott's Commentary.*

St. James no Antagonist of St. Paul. —*Lightfoot* says, "It becomes a question whether St. James's protest against relying on faith alone has any reference, direct or indirect, to St. Paul's language and teaching; whether, in fact, it is not aimed against an entirely different type of religious feeling, against the Pharisaic spirit which rested satisfied with a barren orthodoxy, fruitless in works of charity."

True Faith.—True faith rests not in great and good desires, but acts and executes accordingly. It will be long enough ere the gale of good wishes carry us to heaven.—*Bishop Hall.*

Vers. 15, 16. *Feeling without Action.* —We pity the wretchedness and shun the wretched; we utter sentiments just, honourable, refined, lofty; but somehow, when a truth presents itself in the shape of a duty, we are unable to perform it. And so such characters become by degrees like the artificial pleasure-grounds of bad taste, in which the waterfall does not fall, and the grotto offers only the refreshment of an imaginary shade, and the green hill does not strike the skies, and the tree does not grow. Their lives are a sugared crust of sweetness, trembling over black depths of hollowness; more truly still, "whited sepulchres," fair without to look upon, "within full of all uncleanness."—*F. W. Robertson.*

The Lesson of Commonplace Charity. —St. James's illustration is decidedly commonplace, but it has its power, suggestiveness, and pointed application in that very fact. Men could have found excuses, and shifted off from themselves the application of St. James's truth, if he had found some unusual or peculiar case. The skill of a Christian teacher is often shown in the fresh adaptations of commonplace truths or illustrations. The commonplace appeals to the universal conscience. How very usual is the case of a fellow-creature needing clothes and food. How often is the good word that costs nothing, and does nothing, made to stand in place of the good deed which costs something, and does much. 1. The good word may be good, but not timely. 2. The good word is but mockery when it stands by itself. Many a poor beggar who wants a crust has been mocked with a sermon. 3. The good word is acceptable and useful when it goes along with, or follows after, the kindly deed. The lesson of commonplace charity is, that it is always better to help the distressed with our hands than with our lips. The lips may do good service when they back up what the hands do. Do not *say* to the cold and naked, "Be ye warmed": warm them, and save your talking to them until they are warmed. All our good works should be instinct with the same principle. *Do* first, and let good speech be the fair companion of good deeds.

Ver. 17. *Faith and Works.*—Suppose I say, "A tree cannot be struck without thunder"; that is true, for there is never destructive lightning without thunder. But again, if I say, "The tree was struck by lightning without thunder," that is true too, if I mean that the lightning alone struck it without the thunder striking it. Yet read the two assertions together, and they seem contradictory. So, in the same way, St. Paul says, "Faith justifies without works"—that is, faith alone is that which justifies us, not works. But St. James says, "Not a faith which is without works." There will be works with faith, as there is thunder with lightning; but just as it is not the thunder but the lightning, the lightning without the thunder, that strikes the tree, so it is not the works which justify. Put it in one sentence—*Faith alone justifies, but not*

the faith which is alone. Lightning alone strikes, but not the lightning which is alone without thunder; for that is only summer lightning, and harmless.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Faith as a Cipher.—Faith is like a cipher in arithmetic, which, no matter how often it is repeated, represents nothing "being alone," but when added to the units it gives them value. So faith and works.—*Bayot.*

Faith and its Fruits.—Faith must be known by its fruits. When a mighty cliff is to be shattered by gunpowder, a small chamber is prepared in the interior, and filled with the powder, then a wire connected with an electric battery is carried in. At the appointed signal the spectators watch the cliff, and if they see no movement they know the messenger that flashed along the wire has not been received. If it had been, the cliff would have heaved, and fallen into the sea.

The Word "Dead" as applied to "Things."—It has been shown by *Professor Drummond* that things are properly said to be dead when they fail to "respond to their environment." Then we have to find what is the particular environment of faith: then we can test faith, and see if it is living, and if it is living by an all-round and complete response to its environment.

Vers. 17, 18. *Faith a Sentiment and Faith a Power.*—St. James has really but one topic. It may be expressed in this way—Godliness is practical. It is the spirit that tones, and gives good character to, all human life and relations. This is true of *all* godliness; it is pre-eminently true of the Christian godliness. The old Jew repeated his profession of faith—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord"—day by day, until it became a meaningless routine, and he could keep on saying it, and even pride himself in keeping on, while well-nigh everything in his life and conduct and relations was inconsistent with the due fear of God, and with a fitting sense of the brotherhood of man; subversive of the first principles of religion and justice and charity. The condition was well represented by the Pharisees of our Lord's day, who came under His severest denunciations, because they prided themselves upon their faith, but kept it clear of all influence upon their works. They said, but did not: were always ready to show their *faith*, to talk about it, to boast about it; but they dared not, and did not wish to, show their *works*; and they needed to have themselves shown up to themselves by the searching and revealing words of Christ. Judaism did not contemplate any such divorce of faith and works. Indeed, the Mosaic system provided against any such possibility by its elaborate system of works—duties, ceremonies, relations, obligations—in and through which the faith of the Jew might find expression. Jewish ritual was valuable *with* faith, but worthless and mischievous *without* it. The faith that *did* nothing *was* nothing. St. James writes to Jews who had come to accept Jesus as Messiah and Saviour—to Jews whose new formula of faith was, "I believe in one God, and in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent": and a very good creed to believe that was. But the peril attached to it was that which attached to the old Jewish creed, and indeed to all creeds. It was of no value by itself, and yet men were always tempted to satisfy themselves with it alone. A man's faith is a living thing, and all living things want to do something; they want to work; and they are known by their works. We do not call a thing alive that does nothing; and faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. St. James does but announce a universal fact and principle, one that is as true to-day as yesterday. A faith that could *do nothing*—poor, weak, worthless thing—never saved anybody yet. Doing nothing, it could not do *that*. A faith that can do nothing neither

God nor man can take any notice of. It is a bubble, and bursts with a touch. St. Paul scorns the vain thing as much as St. James; and our Divine Lord and Master scorns it even more than they. He sees men repeating their "Shema" (their "apostles' creed") day by day, and He says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The matter vitally concerns us, and it may be shown that—1. These are two distinct things—faith and works. 2. They can be separated, so that man may have one and not the other. 3. When separated, faith becomes a sentiment, and works become a snare. 4. When united, faith becomes a power of life in works, and works become a nourishment of the power in faith.

I. **These are two distinct things—faith and works.**—Faith is a mood of the mind. Works are activities of the body. Works are things done; faith is the soul that should be in the doing. Faith puts the man into the sphere of the unseen. Works keep the man in the sphere of the seen. Faith is sometimes spoken of as the intellectual apprehension of certain propositions; then we call it belief, but it may not mean our apprehension, it may only mean our acceptance of something on the basis of an authority that we recognise, and to which we submit. No "works" are necessary to "belief"; and no moral redemption was ever wrought by the mere belief of anything. "Saving faith" is more than "belief." Faith is personal trust in a person, who is felt to be worthy of the trust. It is heart-reliance. To that trust the belief that is an intellectual apprehension may, and does, powerfully help; but it is the *trust* that saves, not the *belief*. It has been pointed out, by *Godet* and others, that the faith of St. James is really not the same thing as the justifying faith of St. Paul. And if this is clearly apprehended, all thought of contradiction between the teachings of St. James and St. Paul is made impossible. *Godet* says: "The faith of which St. James affirms that it does not justify is quite of a different kind from that of which St. Paul affirms that it suffices for justification. They differ with respect to their object and their nature. When St. Paul teaches justification by faith, he means faith in the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ; or at least—when he is dealing with Old Testament personages—faith in the gracious promises of Jehovah, of which this redemption was the fulfilment" (we should have preferred to say, faith in Jesus Christ Himself, in whom is the redemptive power); "whereas the faith which St. James declares to be insufficient for salvation means simply—he says so himself, chap. ii. 19—that belief in the one only God which distinguished the Jews from the heathen." The fact is, that St. James had in mind the theory of salvation by faith in the unity of God which Pharisaic Jews so tenaciously held. Justin Martyr says to Tryphon, the Jew, "As for you Jews, you affirm that even when you are sinners, yet if you know God, He will not impute to you your sins." And in a Judaistic document of the second century it is said, "A monotheistic soul has this privilege above that of an idolater—that even when it has lived in sin it cannot perish." It is clear that St. James means by faith "belief"; and belief in one particular thing—belief with which men satisfied themselves, to the neglect of all other sacred obligations. Is *that* sort of faith of any more service now than it was then? St. James is right. Such "faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself." "Works" are distinct from "faith"; but here again St. James and St. Paul mean two different things by the term. St. Paul writes concerning works that *precede* faith, and represent a man's own endeavour to secure a ground on which to claim salvation. "Works," in that sense, are clearly antagonistic to faith; and the apostle properly urges that all such works must be put away before a saving faith can even become a possibility. But St.

James has not "works" in any such sense before his mind at all. He was thinking only of the works which should come *after* faith—should be the sign of faith, the proof of faith, and the proper culture of faith. St. James is precisely in the same range as St. Paul when the apostle urges that "they which have believed God should be careful to maintain good works." Works instead of faith will save no man. Works expressing faith, and showing it to be real, living, will save any man, because the faith in the works is the required Divine condition of salvation on man's side.

II. **These two things—faith and works—can be separated, so that a man may have the one and not the other.**—We all know and esteem highly the men and women who abound in good works, fill their lives with active charities, and serve their generation with self-sacrificing services and generosities, and yet make no profession or pretence of religion. And do we not also know many who have only faith, a helpless, workless faith—who can fight for their particular setting or little piece of truth, and feel sure of the special favour of God because their belief is right, but never "lift up hands that hang down, never strengthen feeble knees," never comfort sorrowing hearts, but can only press their beliefs, as the absolute grounds of salvation, even upon the dying? A man who has nothing but his faith, and prides himself in that, separates himself from humanity, and from Jesus Christ, the brother of humanity, and may be classed among the unloveliest of the unlovely, going about judging his fellows by his own poor mental standard. But the fact that the two things, which are knit and welded together in the purpose of God, *can* be separated by the wilfulness and the false teachings of men, so that one of us may have the faith, and another of us may have the works, is full of the most serious import to us all. Because neither of these, *by itself*, can save us. Faith cannot save, if alone. Works cannot save, if alone. That sort of faith saves which can be called a *works-faith*, a faith that is living enough, real enough, to do something, something good and something kind. How is it with us? Have we faith? Is it delightfully orthodox, so that we are quite proud of it? We do well. "The devils also believe," and do something more than believe—they "tremble." St. James rises into scornfulness. "If a man say he hath faith, but have not works, can *that* faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet he give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?" Have we only works? I do not mean any manufacturing of self-righteousness by strict obedience to law—that is a Pauline idea, and does not come to St. James's mind here. Are we full of the "milk of human kindness"; ever ready to serve; inventive in charities; a father to the poor; the helper of the widows; a Dorcas in generous thoughtfulness? If it all be *without faith*, if it have no inspiration in our love to the Lord Jesus, which love carries to Him our trust, what doth it profit? Can works save? He is deluded who thinks so. They will be appraised at their worth. They are, and they will be, rewarded according to the Divine estimate of their merit; but they never saved a man from his *sins* yet. They bear no relation to saving a man from his *sins*. That comes through a Divine Saviour; and that comes to a man by the faith which links him to the Saviour, and brings to him all the saving power that is in Him. Works do not save. Faith saves, when it is such faith as is real enough, vigorous enough, to do something, to express itself in works. Dead faith cannot save; living faith can; it is the living link with the living Saviour.

III. **When separated, faith becomes a sentiment, and works become a snare.**—If faith is checked from follow-

ing out its natural impulses, it turns back upon itself, and having no air and no exercise gets thin, and ready to vanish away; or else it exaggerates to itself its own importance, and walks about its "little garden walled around" with an uplifted head that may be Pharisaic, but certainly is not Christly. Sentimentality is morally mischievous. It exhausts the religious capacity. It takes the place of service. Cherishing excellent but fruitless sentiments, many a man has gone on into the awful awakening of the after life unsaved. For sentiment never saved a soul from sin yet, and it is certain that it never will. And if a man stops with his proprieties and charities, and satisfies himself with his good works, he puts himself into temptation and a snare. He silences the inward voice—with which comes the Divine voice—convicting of *sin* that needs a *Saviour*. He lets good works stop his ears, and so not a sound of the Saviour's gracious call to the weary and heavy laden can come in to him. Snared and held, it is nothing to him that "Jesus of Nazareth passes by." Is that snare round you? Is your soul facing the great laws of God, and complacently saying, "All these have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?" Listen: those kind things you do are all very well in their way, but there is a *stain on your soul*. What are you going to do with that? You want *Him*—you want to believe in Him—who alone can cleanse the stain away.

IV. **When united, faith becomes a power of life in works, and works become a nourishment of the power in faith.**—Works have their value in the motives that inspire them. Many do kind things simply because they have kind dispositions. Many do kind things because they are overpressed by the sense of duty. And many do kind things because they feel the inspiration of noble examples; but none of these can ever lift our good works into the highest plane. They must have a higher motive than any of these: the "constraining love of Christ," on whom the faith is savingly fixed. Saving faith is life and inspiration for all good works. All is done well, when done for Jesus' sake. And the life of holy service and charity nourishes the faith. By use; for it is wanted for every good deed; but even more, because whoever spends himself in ministry, as the Lord Jesus did, sets himself upon constant renewals of spiritual strength, even as the Lord Jesus did. You *cannot* unite St. Paul's "works" with "faith"; you must put "works," as grounds of claim, altogether away. But you *can* unite St. James's "works" with "faith," and you must do so; for it is only the faith that *can do* something, and *does do* something, that saves the soul from death.

Ver. 19. "*The Lord our God is one Lord.*"—A similar utterance of faith is held to be the test of the true believer in Islam, when the two inquiring angels put their awful questions to the departed soul. But the idea is much more ancient, for a similar confession was required of the just before Osiris, the lord of the Egyptian heaven.

The Faith of Devils.—St. James's expression, "the devils [dæmons] also believe and tremble [shudder]," at once recalls to mind our Lord's treatment of the devil-possessed sufferers, and the spirits of evil that possessed them. One case is especially to the point, and illustrative of this sentence. "There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." There is the faith in Christ of devils; and there is the shuddering fear which faith brings to them. St. James is not intending to argue that devils can believe. Given adequate grounds for any statement, and rational intelligences are bound to believe it, and prove themselves wholly

unworthy of the trust of rational intelligence if they do not. Devils must believe, just as angels and men must. What St. James urges is that the faith of devils in Christ is a *practical* faith. There is almost a touch of humour in his reference to them. Their faith does not abide alone; it does not spend itself in profession; it impels them to *do* something. True, what they do is not much good to themselves or anybody else, but still it *is doing*. They *shudder*. St. James seems reproachfully to suggest, that very much of so-called Christian faith spends itself in sentiment; does nothing; does not even *shudder*.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—24.

The Imputation of Righteousness.—St. James's point in this paragraph seems to be this—Abraham did not gain the righteousness of an *actual* obedience of God's will. He did not actually carry through the Divine command, and sacrifice his son on the altar. But he did fully purpose obedience; he did make every effort to carry his obedient purpose through. He was stopped, not by any change in his purpose, but by a new revelation of the Divine will; and it was therefore perfectly right that the intention and effort should be recognised as the righteousness which would have accrued to him if the sacrifice had been carried through. What St. James suggests is this—Would it have been reckoned as righteousness if Abraham had only thought about obeying, only talked about obeying, only resolved to obey, and had made no effort? It was that "rising up early in the morning, saddling his ass, cleaving the wood, carrying the fire and knife, journeying to Moriah, laying the wood in order, binding Isaac, laying him on the altar, and raising the knife to slay his son"—proving the reality of his faith, which was counted to him for righteousness. And here is a truth full of encouragement for us. Constantly we find that we cannot accomplish what we plan. Again and again we have to mourn that "our purposes are broken off." Abraham was not permitted to do what he would. David was not permitted to carry through that which was in his heart. But incomplete works, which are incomplete through orderings of Divine Providence, not through our moral weakness, suffice to show God the reality, the activity, of our faith, and can be the basis on which righteousness is imputed to us. To prove faith obedience is necessary, but the obedience may be providentially stopped. The active effort to obey suffices; the precise result is unimportant. In Abraham there was faith in God's command; but it was only known and shown by the works of obedience which he so resolutely endeavoured to perform.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 22. *Perfect, or All-round, Faith.*—A thing is perfect when all its capacities are healthily developed, and are finding healthy exercise. Physical training aims to secure a perfect body, by nourishing into harmonious efficiency every organ, every sense, every power. Faith may be thought of as having its capacities, spheres, relations, possibilities, of service. 1. It has the sphere of the mental and moral life of the individual, and needs to get its full influence there. 2. It has its sphere of the relationship with God, and it needs to make full response to all the claims of God. 3. It has its sphere in its earth surroundings, with their various relationships and calls for influence; and it must be exercised into a wise efficiency of service in all that sphere. Perfect faith is all-round, efficient faith, fully responding

in the faith spheres of self, God, and others.

Ver. 23. *El Khalil, the Friend of God.* — *Khalil-Allah*, the "friend of God," is the fuller form of Abraham's title. In many ways it has a peculiar significance. The ancestor of the chosen people is not, as in the legends of Greece and Rome, or even of Germany, a god, or a demi-god, or the son of a god; he is a mere man. The interval between the human and Divine is never confounded. Close as are the communications with Deity, yet the Divine essence is always veiled, the man is never absorbed into it. Abraham is "the friend," but he is nothing more. He is nothing more, but he is nothing less. He is "the friend of God." The title includes a double meaning. He is "beloved of God." In him was exemplified the fundamental truth of all religion,—that God has not deserted the world; that His work is carried on by His chosen instruments; that good men are not only His creatures and His servants, but His friends. And not only was Abraham beloved by God, but God was "beloved by him"; not only was God the friend of Abraham, but Abraham was the "friend of God." To expand this truth is to see what was the religion, the communion with the Supreme, which raised Abraham above his fellow-men.—*Dean Stanley.*

Vers. 21, 22, 24. *Faith and Works.* —The truths revealed by the gospel are not merely verbal statements, but great facts concerning the spiritual world, which exist quite independently of the *words* by which they are *related* to us in the New Testament. And the same spiritual truths are presented to us in Holy Scripture from different points of view. This is especially the case with the relation between the faith and works of a Christian, as set forth by St. Paul and St. James. If we dwell merely on the *words* they use, we may think they contradict each other. If we seek for their whole scope and meaning, we shall find that they are only treating the same subject from different points of view. Probably the epistle of St. James was written *before* that to the Romans. St. Paul tells us that pardon of our past sins and reconciliation to God are not *earned* by any works done in order to merit them. "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt"; but the pardon of our past sins is the *gift* of God—it is simply an act of "grace," or free mercy on the part of God towards sinful men. St. James tells us that Abraham, in the hour of trial, when he had offered up Isaac, was justified by his works also, or by the *evidence* which his works gave to angels and to men of the reality of his faith in God. St. James never says that Abraham was *not* justified by faith. He uses the word "works" in a sense wholly distinct from that of St. Paul. When St. James speaks of a man being "justified by works," he means works which are the result of loving faith—works which are wrought by the Spirit of Christ in His faithful followers, works which evidence their faith and are ever tending to perfect it. St. Paul means by "works" the doing of certain outward things in order to purchase salvation. He speaks not of works wrought by the Holy Spirit, but of the "works of the flesh," and directs us to seek that *great inward change* which is the gift of God.—*Robert Barclay.*

Ver. 24. *Justification by Works.*—Of all questions the first and greatest is, "How shall a man be just before God?" Many differences of opinion. Text a deduction from a preceding argument. We should carefully examine the argument.

I. **The apostle's argument.**—1. *Whence did it arise?* He was reproving an evil in the early Church—the showing partiality to the richer members, oppressing and holding in contempt the poorer (ver. 1). This

gives a clue to the whole. Hold not the true faith in so erroneous and unworthy a manner. 2. *Trace the steps of his argument.* This partiality is contrary to the law and the gospel. He appeals to the whole Church. No person can be saved so holding the faith of Christ. How vain pretences to love would be if it were as inoperative as this faith! (vers. 15, 16). He confirms these assertions by an appeal to the Scriptures themselves. Whatever degrees of faith people might pretend to, they can never be accepted by God unless their faith works by love.

II. **The conclusion drawn from it.**—1. *The future judgment will proceed on grounds of perfect equity.* God dispenses rewards and punishments not on arbitrary but strictly equitable grounds. God will judge men not by their faith, which He alone can see, but by their works, which all can see. 2. *Faith is of no value unless attested by works.* Faith at first sees Christ as Saviour from guilt and condemnation. It does not rest there; it lays hold on Him for sanctification, and for righteousness.

A common objection.—*St. Paul's sentiments and declarations on this subject are directly opposed to those of St. James.* St. Paul is proving that a man is not to seek salvation by any righteousness of his own, but simply by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; whereas St. James is proving that a man who professes to have faith in Christ must show forth his faith by his works. St. Paul endeavours to convince the self-justiciary; St. James the Antinomian. St. Paul—works are nothing without faith; St. James—faith is nothing without works.

A few words—1. *Of caution.* (1) *Do not separate faith and works.* If your faith be strong enough to remove mountains, yet if it work not by love, it is but "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal." (2) *Do not confound the two.* You must lay Christ as your foundation first, and afterward raise on Him the superstructure of good works. Faith will honour Christ as the only Saviour of mankind, and works will honour Him as Lord and Master. 2. *Of encouragement.* All difficulties in the subject vanish before a broken and contrite heart; not all *verbal* difficulties, perhaps, but all doubts on the main subject. No righteousness but that of Christ can ever avail for our acceptance before God; and holiness is no less necessary for our final enjoyment of His favours. He will not "despise the contrite heart."—*Charles Simeon, M.A.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25, 26.

Justification by Works.—The common misconception of Roman Catholic doctrine prevents our properly understanding the teaching of St. James. Justification by works is usually understood to mean justification by the strict and precise observance of prescribed religious duties. St. James has in mind acts of kindness, charity, and service, as the signs and expressions of faith in God. Rahab is no illustration of doing religious duties. She is the illustration of doing kindly service. She did a brave thing, and a wise thing, and a charitable thing, in hiding the spies, and getting them away safely, and she did this because she believed in God, and believed that these men were carrying out a mission from God. But should we have heard anything about Rahab's faith, if that faith had done nothing—nothing but talk pious things? Her works proved her faith. She was accepted (justified) on the ground of her faith; but it was because that faith was real enough, vital enough, healthy enough, to *do something.* She was accepted for her works, because the soul of faith was in them.

I. **Some works can never justify any man.**—Works done in order to form a basis of merit—these cannot justify, because they never can be so worthy

or so perfect as to claim Divine acceptance. They may take different forms: good conduct; strained feeling; pious deeds. The hopelessness of them for justifying a man lies in a man's making his own terms of acceptance with God, and *failing to get up to his own terms.* If we are to *claim* justification, we must have an unquestionable ground of claim; and this man can never have, since he carries his moral imperfection into everything he does.

II. **Some works will always justify a man.**—Such works as Abraham's and as Rahab's—works which were the simple, natural, and proper expression of a right state of mind and heart, and had no thought of merit in them, or thought of claim. Abraham did not aim, in trying to offer his son, to build up a merit. Rahab did not, in ministering to God's servants, try to build up a merit. God accepted both—accepted the state of mind and heart of both, accepted the soul of faith with its body of works, which together made a "living sacrifice."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 25. *Rahab read by her Motives.*—Did we fix attention on her manner of life, we should have to express severe condemnation. Did we fix attention on her actions in secreting the spies, and securing their safe departure, we could only give her very qualified praise, for it implied a failure in loyalty to her own country and people. But when we read her heart and her motive, the whole estimate of her life and conduct are changed. Faith in God may override loyalty to country. But she might have had her faith, and no one been the better for it, not even she herself, if it had not been a practical faith, and used its opportunity. She was justified in acting as she did, because she believed what she did. But her faith would only have been as the faith of many around her, a faith which was more fear than faith, if she had not acted. Read her in the light of her motives, and Rahab illustrates the truth that faith is justified by its works.

A Works-faith.—What may be called a "works-faith" is illustrated in Rahab. Divide thus: 1. The faith she had. 2. The interests her faith opposed. 3. The opportunity that came for testing her faith. 4. The triumph of her faith. 5. The proof that it was accepted. 6. The reward of faith which could work. Point out that disabilities and disadvantages of outward circumstances need not prevent faith, though they must make struggle for it.

Ver. 26. *A Truth that can be turned Two Ways.*—"Faith without works is dead." That is the truth on which St. James insists here. But the converse is equally true—works without faith are also dead. They are wholly ineffective for the justification of a man. Works are but routine, outward, material. Faith is but a sentiment, or a response of the human intellect to proofs. Neither works by themselves nor faith by itself can ever accomplish anything in relation to a man's justification and salvation. Put the two things together. Let faith put the man into the works, let the works verify the fact that the man is in the faith, then you have the living, the real faith, which is the condition of salvation on the human side. A man's body is a helpless thing save as quickened by the indwelling spirit. A man's spirit is out of all possible relations until it can get into them through the agency of a body. 1. Body is nothing without spirit. 2. Spirit is nothing without body. 3. The two in relation make a living being. 4. Faith is nothing without works. 5. Works are nothing without faith. 6. The two in relation make the ground of man's justification.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER II.

Vers. 2-4. *A Brahmin's Reproof.*—The other instance in which I had the pleasure to meet this most interesting man (Rammohun Roy) was at breakfast in my own house. On that occasion I invited men of various religious opinions to meet him, and there were about thirty persons present. The conversation was very lively and well sustained. The Brahmin exhibited wonderful shrewdness. "Ah," he said, "you say that you are all one in Christ, all brethren, and equal in Him. Well, you go to the cathedral at Calcutta; there you see a grand chair of crimson velvet and gold—that is for the Governor-General of India; then there are other chairs of crimson and gold—they are for the members of council; and then there are seats lined with crimson—they are for the merchants, etc.; then there are the bare benches for the common people and the poor; yet you say we are all one in Christ; but if the poor man whose seat is *there*, on that bare bench, if he go and sit down on the crimson velvet chair of the Governor-General, they will break his head! yet you are all one in Christ!" Some one was about to expound this matter to the Brahmin, and explain the impropriety of any one taking the seat of the representative of majesty. But the thing was too good for our Quaker friend, James Cropper, quietly to let it go. He so thoroughly sympathised with the Brahmin's view of the matter, that he could not refrain from interposing. "Nay, nay," he cried, "thou must not seek to put aside the force of our friend's remark." So the Brahmin and our friend James had the matter entirely to themselves.—*Dr. Raffles.*

Ver. 5. *Gain in Poverty—Trees struck by Lightning.*—When some giant tree is struck by the lightning's flash and scorched to death, its shattered trunk and torn boughs have not been destroyed by the action of fire from without. The tree, it is true, has been subjected to the direct action of the most intense heat—a heat proportioned to the terrible brilliancy of the electric illumination, which we call lightning. But the action of this heat is rendered fatal by the condition of the tree itself. The dismemberment of its body and branches, which extends to every part, results from the sudden conversion into steam of all the moisture it contains in sap and wood. The instant expansion that thus takes place by the power of the generated steam rends the tree to pieces, just as under very similar circumstances it would burst even a vessel of wrought iron. Thus the giant of the forest falls a victim to its rich and flourishing condition. The greener and fairer the tree, the more its vein-like tissues swell with those nourishing juices that build up a life which has the promise of hundreds of years, the more inevitable and crushing its ruin. It is not otherwise with human greatness and prosperity. While misfortune's stroke finds less upon which to feed in the case of the poor and lowly, whose very poverty is in this respect a protection, its effects are far more deadly on those with whom all is flourishing. Lazarus in his want is far less exposed to the shocks of trial than Dives in his wealth. The humble fishermen of Galilee could, humanly speaking, better face the loss of their all than could the rich and amiable young man, who indeed desired an interest in Christ, but felt that his fortunes were too splendid to be sacrificed even for heaven—"for he had great possessions." It is one of the chief and peculiar glories of the philosophy of the gospel that it teaches us not only the dignity but also the *gain* of poverty, thus extracting its double sting. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" Deeper and more real than we are sometimes apt to suppose is the meaning of the Master's words when, speaking of a state of which He had actual experience, He said, "Blessed be ye poor."—*James Neil, M.A.*

Ver. 10. *Offending in One, Guilty in All.*—The Rev. Mr. Leupolt, of India, found some difficulty in getting the idea contained in the above verse impressed upon the minds of the natives. Argument was resorted to, but without avail. "Never," says he, "could I make the common people understand me without a parable." In this parable he described a scene on the Ganges. "The day was dismal; the wind roared, the thunder pealed, the lightning was vivid, the waves of the Ganges rapid; the infuriated elements threatened destruction to every vessel on its waters; no boat could outlive the storm for any length of time. But see!—what is that? It is a boat in distress, filled with people, rapidly hurried along by the waves. Between the peals of thunder the shrieks of the people are heard. They fear the rocks on the shore, to which the current is driving them. What can be done for them? Could they but be drawn into the creek, they would be safe. Those on the shore look anxiously around, and discover a chain near them. A man instantly fastens a stone to a rope, binds the other end to the chain, and flings the stone into the boat. The rope is caught. The people eagerly lay hold on the chain, while those on shore begin to draw them, amid the raging elements, towards the

creek. They already rejoice at the prospect of deliverance; but when they are within a few yards of the land one link of the chain breaks. I do not say ten links, but *one link*, in the middle of the chain. What shall these distressed people do now? Shall they still cling to the unbroken links? 'No, no!' says one of my hearers, 'overboard with the chain, or it will sink them sooner.' 'What, then, shall they do?' 'Cast themselves upon the mercy of God,' exclaimed another. 'True,' I replied; 'if one commandment be broken, it is as though all of them were broken. We cannot be saved by them; we must trust in the mercy of God, and lay hold on the almighty hand of Christ, which is stretched out to save us.' I have frequently used this parable, and always found it to answer."

Vers. 15, 16. *Practical Prayer and Benevolence.*—In the vicinity of B—— lived a poor but industrious man, depending for support upon his daily labour. His wife fell sick, and not being able to hire a nurse, he was obliged to confine himself to the sick-bed and the family. His means of support being thus cut off, he soon found himself in need. Having a wealthy neighbour near, he determined to go and ask for two bushels of wheat, with a promise to pay as soon as his wife became so much better that he could leave her and return to his work. Accordingly he took his bag, went to his neighbour's, and arrived while the family were at morning prayers. As he sat on the doorstone, he heard the man pray very earnestly that God would clothe the naked, feed the hungry, relieve the distressed, and comfort all that mourn. The prayer concluded, the poor man stepped in and made known his business, promising to pay with the avails of his first labours. The farmer was very sorry he could not accommodate him, for he had promised to lend a large sum of money, and had depended upon his wheat to make it out; but he presumed neighbour —— would let him have it. With a tearful eye and a sad heart the poor man turned away. As soon as he left the house, the farmer's little son stepped up and said, "Father, did you not pray that God would clothe the naked, feed the hungry, relieve the distressed, and comfort mourners?" "Yes; why?" "Because if I had your wheat I would answer that prayer." It is needless to add that the Christian father called back his suffering neighbour, and gave him as much as he needed.

Give to him that needeth.—We read of King Oswald, that as he sat at table, when a fair silver dish, full of regal delicacies, was set before him, and he ready to fall to, hearing from his almoner that there were great store of poor at his gates, piteously crying out for some relief, did not fill them with words, as, "God help them!" "God relieve them!" "God comfort them!" but commanded his steward presently to take the dish off the table and distribute the meat, then beat the dish all in pieces and cast it among them.—*Holdsworth.*

Ver. 17. *True Faith acts.*—True faith rests not in great and good desires, but acts and executes accordingly. It will be long enough ere the gale of good wishes carry us to heaven.—*Bishop Hall.*

Works evidence Faith.—Works are the evidence of faith. There is both light and heat in the candle; but put out the candle, and both are gone, one remains not without the other. As the pure fair orb which borrows radiance from the sun sheds heavenly light upon a world that lies in darkness, so do the Christian's virtues shine. But as that beauteous planet, if ever it come between the world and its true source of light, darkens instead of brightens, throws on the earth below a shadow, not a beam, so what we most admire in man proves but a fatal snare, if it obscure the glory of the cross, the need of free salvation. —*A. L. O. E.*

Oars pulled together.—Two gentlemen were one day crossing the river in a ferry-boat. A dispute about faith and works arose,—one saying that good works were of small importance, and that faith was everything; the other asserting the contrary. Not being able to convince each other, the ferry-man, an enlightened Christian, asked permission to give his opinion. Consent being granted, he said, "I hold in my hands two oars. That in my right hand I call "faith"; the other, in my left, "works." Now, gentlemen, please to observe, I pull the oar of faith, and pull that alone. See! the boat goes round and round, and the boat makes no progress. I do the same with the oar of works, and with a precisely similar result, no advance. Mark! I pull both together, we go on apace, and in a very few minutes we shall be at our landing-place. So, in my humble opinion," he added, "faith without works, or works without faith, will not suffice. Let there be both, and the haven of eternal rest is sure to be reached." As the flower is before the fruit, so is faith before good works. Faith is the parent of works, and the children will bear a resemblance to the parent. It is not enough that the inward works of a clock are well constructed, and also the dial-plate and hands; the one must act on the other, the works must regulate the movement of the hands.—*Archbishop Whately.*

CHAPTER III.

OUR SINS OF SPEECH.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Masters.**—Teachers. In the sixteenth century "master" meant "schoolmaster." Do not get into the way of being teachers. Do not set yourselves up as teachers (Matt. xxiii. 8-10). The title of Doctor of the Law was highly coveted among the Jews. **Greater condemnation,** judgment, than those who are not judged by the standard for teachers. To assert ourselves as teachers is to bring upon ourselves the responsibilities of teachers.

Ver. 2. **Offend.**—Or, "stumble." **Perfect man.**—In the sense of holding himself in complete moral restraint. Control of speech is named, not as in itself constituting perfection, but as a crucial test indicating whether the man has or has not attained unto it.

Ver. 3. **Behold.**—Better, *εἰ δέ*, "if now."

Ver. 4. **Governor.**—Read, "the impulse of the steersman willeth, or may wish."

Ver. 5. **A matter.**—Better, "a forest." The picture presented is of the wrapping of some vast forest in a flame by the falling of a single spark. *Philo* uses the same figure: "As the smallest spark will, if duly fanned, kindle a vast pyre, so is the least element of virtue capable of growth till the whole nature of the man glows with a new warmth and brightness."

Ver. 6. **Course of nature.**—Wheel of birth; R.V. margin, "whole sphere of life." The wheel of life which begins rolling at birth, and continues rolling until death. "From the beginning of life till its close, the tongue is an ever-present inflammatory element of evil." **Hell.**—*Gehenna*; the place of torment, as distinguished from *Hades*, the abode of the dead, or the unseen world.

Ver. 7. **Serpents.**—Or, more generally, "creeping things." "*Kind* of beasts" would be better "nature of beasts"; then "mankind" would read "by the nature of man." Every nature is continually tamed, and is kept in a state of subjection by the human race.

Ver. 8. **Unruly evil.**—*ἀκατάσχετον*, irrestrainable. *Alex.* and *Vatican manuscripts* read *ἀκατάστατον*, a restless, inconstant evil. Prefer "uncontrollable." **Deadly.**—Death-bringing.

Ver. 10. **So to be.**—"These things ought not to occur in this way."

Ver. 11. **Send forth.**—Or, "spout out."

Ver. 12.—The better manuscripts render thus, "Neither can a salt [spring] yield sweet water."

Ver. 13. **Good conversation.**—Or, his "good life"; "good conduct." The usual New Testament idea of "conversation."

Ver. 14. **Strife.**—Prefer "rivalry."

Ver. 15. **Sensual.**—Or, "animal."

Ver. 17. **Gentle.**—Lit. "forbearing." **Intreated.**—Persuaded. **Partiality.**—Chap. ii. 4; R.V. "variance"; without doubtfulness, vacillation, which leads to wrangling.

Ver. 18. **Sown in peace.**—So as to consist in peace. "Every good deed is a fruit produced by the good seed sown in good soil; and every such deed is in its turn the seed of a future fruit like in kind." "True wisdom will go on to sow the fruits of righteousness in peace, and thus, if it may be, to make peace in the world. And that which is sown in peace will produce a harvest of joys. Let others reap the fruits of contentions, and all the advantages they can propose to themselves by them; but let us go on peaceably to sow the seeds of righteousness, and we may depend upon it our labour will not be lost" (*Matthew Henry*).

THE COURSE OF NATURE.

Dean Plumptre's Note on Ver. 6.—These words have no parallel in any Greek author. Literally, we might render, the "wheel of nature, or of birth," as in chap. i. 23 we have "the face of nature," for the "natural face," that with which we are born. The best interpretation is that which sees in the phrase a figure for "the whole of life from birth," the wheel which then begins to roll on its course, and continues rolling until death. The comparison of life to a race, or course of some kind, has been familiar to the poetry of all ages; and in a Latin poet, Silius Italicus (vi. 120), we have a phrase almost identical with St. James's:

> "So, by the law of God, through chance and change,
> The wheel of life rolls down the steep descent."

As an alternative explanation, it is possible that there may be a reference to the potter's wheel (Jer. xviii. 3; Ecclus. xxxviii. 29, where the word "wheel" is used). On this view the tongue would be represented as the flame that by its untempered heat mars the vessel in the hands of the potter. The frequent parallelisms between St. James and the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach are, as far as they go, in favour of this view. A third view, that the words have the same kind of meaning as *orbis terrarum*, and mean, as in the English Version, the whole order or course of nature, *i.e.* of human history in the world at large, has, it is believed, less to recommend it.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

Masterfulness in Speech.—Our Lord in His teaching reproved the pride of the Rabbis, or teachers, of his time: "They love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market-places, and to be called of men, Rabbi." And He gives the counsel which St. James does but repeat in this passage: "But be not ye [My disciples] called Rabbi; for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren." In the tabernacle and temple services everything was kept in the control of the priesthood. There was no attempt at public religious instruction. When the school of the prophets was founded, authorised and systematic religious instruction may be said to have begun. These trained prophets went to and fro through the country using every opportunity for teaching the Scriptures, and the will of God as revealed in them, to the people. After the return from the Captivity synagogues were founded, and the services held in them included both worship and instruction. Persons held in good esteem, or claiming to be Rabbis, were at liberty to give expositions or exhortations, and in this practice is found the beginning of the modern sermon, as a part of Christian worship. But while there was much that was valuable and helpful in this custom, it opened the way to a possible serious evil. It proved difficult to keep unsuitable persons from giving these exhortations, and difficult to put the exhortations into any wise limitations. In every age, and in every society, there are men who love to hear themselves talk, and who push themselves in at every opportunity. In every age, and in every society, there are men who love to be masters, who must lord it over others. And they are often by no means the best persons for the positions they force themselves into. The masterful men and the talkers were a grave anxiety in the synagogue life of the Jews. And when synagogues of Christian Jews were established, the same evil cropped up; it even became more serious because Christianity encouraged the use of special gifts for mutual edification. St. James dealt with a serious and growing evil, when he thus warned the Jewish Christian disciples against too readily setting up to be "masters," or "teachers." In the Christian Church, as in the Jewish, there was the peril of self-appointed Rabbiship. The idea that he can teach often comes to a Christian disciple as a temptation from the evil one, which needs to be steadily resisted.

I. **The disposition to put everybody else right.**—This is not the spirit of the real teacher, but it is the spirit of the would-be teacher, whose masterfulness finds expression in that desire to teach. It is a characteristic of natural disposition, and is close kin with the energy that overmasters difficulties. But it is a perilous characteristic, and needs to be early placed in forcible restraints, and afterwards kept in wise control by the man himself. Unrestrained it makes a man positive, heedless of the opinions of others, and unlovely in his relations with others. It may even make him a heresy-monger, keen to observe any failures from the standard of what he happens to think to be truth. Morally the disposition to set everybody else right is altogether reprehensible: it involves an assumption of superiority which is essentially un-Christian. The man who appoints himself as teacher, whether other people

recognise his teaching gifts or not, "thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think"; and consequently does himself as much moral mischief as he does others. St. James puts one thing upon the consideration of those who are so ready to make themselves teachers. They seriously increase their personal responsibility. The judgment of a teacher must necessarily be a more searching and severe thing than the judgment of a private Christian. Instead of *wanting* to be a teacher, the gifted teacher always shrinks back from the responsibility, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 6). "The test of all ministry must come at last in the day of trial, and fiery inquisition of God."

II. **The need every man has for putting himself right.**—The true teacher feels how much he has to learn; the would-be teacher feels how much he knows. Humility is the pervading spirit of the true teacher; self-confidence is the spirit of the man who thinks he can teach. He is confident of being himself right, and is not in the least likely to admit, with St. James, that "in many things we offend all." Our Lord taught, in a similar way, that the man who could easily find "motes" in his brother's eyes was most likely to have a "beam" in his own, and he had better see to his own "beam" before he presumed to attend to other peoples' "motes." All men have work enough in the disciplining of their own characters; and if a man has a masterful disposition, let him exercise it well on his own faults and frailties. He would do well to exercise that masterful disposition in getting his own masterfulness into good control. We all offend in some things: so we all need to teach and train *ourselves*.

III. **The control of ourselves should come before attempting to control others.**—If the would-be teacher means to gain control of his entire self, he will have to begin with his tongue. If he is like a masterful horse, he will have to put a bit in his mouth. If he is like a wayward, tossed-about ship, he will have to put on a rudder, and take care to hold it firm, and move it wisely. If such a man "offend not in word," he is a "perfect man," in this sense, that he is able also to "bridle the whole body." Who cannot recognise the practical wisdom of St. James's counsel? Who has not earnestly said to himself, "If I could only master my speech, I could easily master myself"? Men talk when they have nothing to say. Men talk before they think. Men talk without criticising what they are going to say. And therefore they constantly "offend in word." "The work of ruling this one rebel [the tongue] is so great, that a much less corresponding effort will keep the other powers in subjection." "Control of speech is named, not as in itself constituting perfection, but as a crucial test indicating whether the man has, or has not, attained unto it." The true spirit of the teacher, whom God calls forth to teach, may be partly seen in Moses, and more fully seen in Jeremiah. With something like unworthy hesitation Moses exclaimed, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." With the shrinking back of a sincere humility, Jeremiah said, "Ah! Lord God, behold I cannot speak; for I am a child." The man who thinks he can God does not use. In his case it is all the man; there is no room for God. The man who fears he cannot God will use, because He can make His strength perfect in the man's weakness.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 2. *Control of Speech a Sign of Character.*—"If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man." *Isaac Barrow* says, "A constant governance of our speech, according to duty and reason, is a high instance and a special argument of a thoroughly sincere and solid goodness." There are

remarkable differences in natural disposition, which make the control of speech much easier for some men than for others. And, indeed, sometimes a naturally silent disposition is the real explanation of what seems to be a man's self-control. And it also needs to be considered, that undue freedom of speech is allied to certain weaknesses of character. The self-assertive man is usually a great talker. So is the conceited man; so is the ambitious man; so is the man who has been a spoilt child. In public life the great talker often succeeds in making himself important. Character means that a man has got all the forces of his being into moderate limitations, and harmonious and mutual relations. His work in his speech gains prominence, because it is most difficult, but most influential when accomplished.

The Sense of Infirmity in Every Man.—"For in many things we all stumble." This should prevent our showing any superiority, or masterfulness, in our dealing with others. "Were we to think more of our own mistakes and offences, we should be less apt to judge other people. While we are severe against what we count offensive in others, we do not consider how much there is in us which is justly offensive to them. Self-justifiers are commonly self-deceivers. We are all guilty before God; and those who vaunt it over the frailties and infirmities of others little think how many things they offend in themselves. Nay, perhaps, their magisterial deportment, and censorious tongues, may prove worse than any faults they condemn in others. Let us learn to be severe in judging ourselves, but charitable in our judgments of other people."—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 4. *Christian Ability.*—Dropping the particular reference to the tongue, or the power of the tongue, take the text as illustrating the fact, that man turns about everything, handles all heaviest bulks, masters all hardest difficulties, in the same way—that is, by using a small power so as to get the operation of a power greater than his own. We have no power to handle ships at sea by their bulk. The soul is a magnitude more massive than any ship, and the storms it encounters are wilder than those of the sea. And yet there are small helms given to us, by which we are able always to steer it triumphantly on, to just the good we seek, and the highest we can even conceive. It is assumed that we have no ability in ourselves, more than simply to turn ourselves into the track of another more sufficient power, and so to have it upon us. Helms do not impel ships. Ours is only a steering power, though it is a very great power at that. For when we so use it as to hold ourselves fairly to God's operation, as we hold a ship to the winds, that is sufficient, that will do everything, turning even our impossibilities themselves into victory. Glance at the analogies of our physical experience. Great, overwhelmingly great, as the forces and weights of nature are, what do we accomplish more easily than to turn about their whole body and bring them into manageable service? Doing it always by some adjustment, or mode of address, which acknowledges their superior force. (Winds, waters, gunpowder, steam, electricity, etc.) Prepared by such analogies, our dependence, in the matter of religion, ought to create no speculative difficulties; but we have as much difficulty as ever in making that practical adjustment of ourselves to God, which is necessary in any and every true act of dependence. Some take it upon themselves to do, by their own force, all they are responsible for. But we have no capacity, under the natural laws of the soul, as a self-governing creature, to govern successfully anything, except indirectly, that is by a process of steering. We can steer the mind off from its grudges, ambitions, bad thoughts, by getting it occupied with good and pure objects that work a diversion. If we could wholly govern

ourselves, our self-government would not be the state of religion, or bring us any one of its blessed incidents. The soul, as a religious creature, is put in affiance, by a fixed necessity of its nature, with God. Having broken this bond in its sin, it comes back in religion to become what it inwardly longs for—restored to God, filled with God's inspirations, made conscious of God. And this is its regeneration. All "impossibilities" we can easily and surely master, by only bringing ourselves into the range of God's operations. The helm-power only is ours; the executive is God's. What is wanted is the using of our small helms so as to make our appeal to God's operation. And there must be a clearing of a thousand particular and even smallest things that will steer off the soul from God—a clearing of the helm for free action. The faith which is the condition of salvation is simply trusting ourselves over to God, and so bringing ourselves into the range of His Divine operation. The reason why so many fail is, that they undertake to do the work themselves, heaving away spasmodically to lift themselves over the unknown crisis by main strength—as if seizing the ship by its mast, or the main bulk of its body, they were going to push it on through the voyage themselves! Whereas it is the work of God, and not in any other sense their own, than that, coming in to God by a total trust in Him, they are to have it in God's working. In a similar way many miscarriages occur after conversion. Nothing was necessary to prevent them, but simply to carry a steady helm in life's duties. Many disciples fall out of course by actually steering themselves out of God's operation. And there is danger that the man who is tending the small helm of duty with great exactness may become painfully legal in it—a precisionist, a Pharisee. The word "operation" may be taken as referring only to the omnipotent working of His will or spiritual force. But there is a power of God which is not His omnipotence, and has a wholly different mode of working; I mean His moral power—that of His beauty, goodness, gentleness, truth, purity, suffering, compassion, in one word, His character. In this kind of power He works, not by what He wills, but by what He is. What is wanted, therefore, in the regeneration of souls, and their advancement toward perfection afterward, is to be somehow put in the range of this higher power and kept there. And here exactly is the sublime art and glory of the new Divine economy in Christ. For He is such, and so related to our want, that our mind gets a way open through Him to God's Divine beauty and greatness, so that we may bring our heart up into the transforming, moulding efficacy of these, which we most especially need. This exactly is Christianity—that Christ in humanity is God humanised, Divine feeling and perfection let down into the modes of finite sentiment and apprehension. In His human person, and the revelation of His cross, He is the door, the interpreter to our hearts, of God Himself—so the moral power of God upon our hearts. Christ, as the Son of man, is that small helm put in the hand, so to speak, of our affections, to bring us in to God's most interior beauty and perfection, and to put us in the power of His infinite, unseen character; thus to be moulded by it and fashioned to conformity with it.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

Ships and Rudders.—The ships that were "so great" in former days were, in fact, scarcely more than cock-boats, or small coasters, scraping round the shores of the inland seas; whereas, now, what we call the great ships are big enough to store in their hold a whole armed fleet of the ancient time, vessels and men together; and these huge bulks strike out into the broad oceans, defying the storms, yet still turned about as before, whithersoever the helmsman will. There he stands at his post, a single man, scarcely more

than a fly that has lighted on the immense bulk of the vessel, having a small city of people and their goods in the world of timber under him, and perhaps with only one hand, turning gently his lever of wood, or nicely gauging the motion of his wheel, he steers along its steady track the mountain mass of the ship, turning it always to its course, even as he would an arrow to its mark.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—12.

The Agency of the Tongue for Good and Evil.—The tongue, as a bodily organ, has no moral quality, good or bad. It is the organ of speech, and does but help to express thought and feeling in language, by means of which one man may influence another. The language-power is man's dignity and man's peril. So truly is it the expression of a man for apprehension by other men, that it can be said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." In this paragraph St. James reminds us in what different spheres the tongue works, and what different things, good and bad, it can do. Evidently it is so supremely important an agency in our lives, that every effort should be made to have it, and to keep it, in full control. "The tongue is the best part of man, and also his worst; with good government none is more useful; and without it, none more mischievous."

I. **The tongue is man's agency for boasting.**—"And boasteth great things"; or, "vaunts great words which bring about great acts of mischief." Boasting is the expression of pride and self-conceit; and it implies that a man fails to see things as they really are, but swells them out by his imagination, so that they may increase his self-importance. The boaster (1) injures himself by his boasting, for it is a habit that grows by exercise; (2) does mischief to others, because undue praise of self always tries to gain support in the disparagement of other people—and men are always injured when they are compelled to take up false impressions; (3) dishonours God, who "desireth truth in the inward parts," and cannot allow His work in a man to be exaggerated, misrepresented, and therefore misjudged. Boasting is one of the surest signs of moral weakness, Those who give way to it are altogether untrustworthy in the relations of life. No one feels safe in having dealings with them.

II. **The tongue is man's agency for inciting to moral evil.**—"The tongue is a fire." A spark of fire which, if only it fall in fitting place, will do fearfully destructive work. 1. The unclean word may burn up innocence in other souls. 2. The slanderous word may burn up the reputations of other people. 3. The critical word may burn up trustfulness in other people. 4. The doubtful word may burn up honesty in other people. A word spoken, or heard, in early life may work as a deadly poison through a whole life. The serpent in Eden incited Eve to disobey with his words. "Every idle [mischievous] word that man shall speak, he shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

III. **The tongue is man's agency for doing wild and wicked things.**—"A world of iniquity among our members." With this should be taken the untamableness of the tongue. It is a wild animal, that even at its best, and in the best men, is but imperfectly brought into control. "Three temptations to 'smite with the tongue' are specially powerful for evil, viz. as a relief from passion, as a gratification of spite, as revenge for wrong. The first is experienced by hot-tempered folk; the second yielded to by the malicious; the third welcomed by the otherwise weak and defenceless; and all of us at times are in each of these divisions." See the prayer of the Catechism, that we may be kept from "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering." "The tongue is an unruly [restless]

evil, full of deadly poison." What evil is wrought by the slanderer, traducer, liar, foul-mouthed, and blasphemer!

IV. **The tongue is man's agency for both blessing and cursing.**—It is not St. James's immediate purpose to show how much *good* can be accomplished by the tongue, when it is in fitting Christian control. He is dealing with the unrestrained tongue, as that is suggested by the free talk of the would-be teachers. He is showing what lengths the evil may run to when the curb is taken off. Here he is showing what contrasted things it can do. It can "bless God," and at the very same time "curse men." What a strange and unreasonable thing that appears to be! How impossible it should be to Christian disciples, whose fountain has been cleansed, whose will is renewed, and who ought to have only pure, loving, worthy things for which they want the tongue to be their agency. Ver. 11 is probably "a vivid picture of the mineral springs abounding in the Jordan Valley, near the Dead Sea; with which might be contrasted the clear and sparkling rivulets of the north, fed by the snows of Lebanon. Nature had no confusion in her plans; and thus to pour out cursing and blessing from the same lips were unnatural indeed." Get the control which makes the tongue utter blessing, and it will cease to curse. Fail to get the control, and let the tongue curse; it will then very soon cease to be able to bless.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 5, 6. *The Tongue.*—In the development of Christian truth a peculiar office was assigned to the apostle James. It was given to St. Paul to proclaim Christianity as the spiritual law of liberty, and to exhibit faith as the most active principle within the breast of man. It was St. John's to say that the deepest quality in the bosom of Deity is love, and to assert that the life of God in man is love. It was the office of St. James to assert the necessity of moral rectitude: his very name marked him out peculiarly for this office; he was emphatically called "the Just"; integrity was his peculiar characteristic. A man singularly honest, earnest, real. Accordingly, if you read through his whole epistle, you will find it is, from first to last, one continued vindication of the first principles of morality against the *semblances* of religion. This is the mind breathing through it all: all this *talk* about religion, and spirituality—words, words, words—nay, let us have *realities*. How can we speak of the gospel, when the first principles of *morality* are forgotten? when Christians are excusing themselves, and slandering one another? How can the superstructure of love and faith be built, when the very foundations of human character—justice, mercy, truth—have not been laid?

I. **The licence of the tongue.**—1. The first licence given to the tongue is slander. It is compared to poison. The deadliest poisons are those for which no test is known. In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spikes of the nettle-leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery. In St. James's day, as now, idle men and women went about from house to house, dropping slander as they went, and yet you could not take up that slander and detect the falsehood there. 2. The second licence given to the tongue is in the way of persecution: "therewith curse we men." Even in St. James's day that spirit had begun. Christians persecuted Christians. From that day it has continued, through long centuries, up to

the present time. Persecution is that which affixes penalties upon *views held*, instead of upon *life led*.

II. **The guilt of this licence.**—1. The first evil consequence is the harm that a man does himself. Calumny effects a dissipation of spiritual energy. Few men suspect how much mere talk fritters away spiritual energy—that which should be spent in action spends itself in words. In these days of loud profession, and bitter, fluent condemnation, it is well for us to learn the Divine force of silence. 2. The next feature in the guilt of calumny is its uncontrollable character. "The tongue can no man tame." You cannot arrest a calumnious tongue; you cannot arrest the calumny itself. Neither can you stop the consequences of a slander. It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burned unquenched beneath the water; or like the weeds which, when you have extirpated them in one place, are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot. 3. The third element of guilt lies in the unnaturalness of the calumny. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be"; *ought not*—that is, they are unnatural. The truest definition of evil is that which represents it as something contrary to nature; evil is evil, because it is unnatural. The teaching of Christ was the recall of man to nature. Christianity is the regeneration of our whole nature, not the destruction of one atom of it. The office of the tongue is to bless. Slander is guilty, because it contradicts this. 4. The fourth point of guilt is the diabolical character of slander. The tongue is "set on fire of hell." This is no mere strong expression; it contains deep and emphatic meaning. Slander is diabolical. "Devil," in the original, means traducer or slanderer. Beware of that habit which becomes the slanderer's life, of magnifying every speck of evil and closing the eye to goodness—till at last men arrive at the state in which generous, universal love (which is heaven) becomes impossible, and a suspicious, universal hate takes possession of the heart, and *that* is hell. Love is the only remedy for slander.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 6. *The Evils of the Tongue.*—Amongst the most important of all subjects must be reckoned the government of the tongue. The consideration of it is well calculated to convince the profane, pluck off the mask from the hypocrites, humble the sincere, and to edify every description of persons. In these words we have given us such a description of the tongue, as, if it had proceeded from any other than an inspired writer, would have been deemed a libel upon human nature.

I. **The true character of the human tongue.**—1. *It is a fire.* Fire, in its original formation, was intended for the good of man; if subordinate, it is highly beneficial, but its tendency is to consume and to destroy. So with the tongue. Even the smallest spark is capable of producing such incalculable mischief as may be beyond the power of man to repair. So a single motion of the tongue may irritate and inflame a man, and change him instantly into a savage beast and an incarnate devil. 2. *It is a world of iniquity.* There is not any sin which does not stand in the nearest connection with the tongue, and employ it in its service. Search the long catalogue of sins against God, against our neighbour, against ourselves, and there will not be found one that has not the tongue as its principal ally.

II. **Its effects.**—1. *Defiling.* Sin in the heart defiles the soul; when uttered by the lips, "it defileth the whole body." Utterance gives solidity and permanency to that which before existed in idea. Though all communications are not equally polluting, yet there is a stain left, which nothing but the Redeemer's blood can ever wash away. 2. *Destruction.* Look at individuals; what malignant passions it has kindled in them! Visit families; what animosities and inextinguishable feuds! Survey churches, nations; it has kindled flames of war, and spread desolation.

III. **The reason of its producing these effects.**—1. *It is "set on fire of hell."* Satan is the source and author of all the evils that proceed from the tongue. The wickedness of the heart may account for much; but if the flames were not fanned by Satanic agency, they would not rage with such an irresistible force, and to such a boundless extent. 1. *How great must be the evils of the human heart.* If God should leave us without restraint, there is not one of us but would proclaim all the evil of his heart, as much as the most loathsome sensualist or most daring blasphemer. 2. *How much do we need the influences of the Holy Spirit.* It is absolutely impossible for man to tame this unruly member. The Holy Spirit will help our infirmities. Christ will give us His Spirit if we call upon Him. 3. *How careful should we be of every word we utter.* Immense injury may we do by one unguarded word. We may take away a character which we can never restore, or inflict a wound we can never heal. We must account for every idle word. Let our tongue be as choice silver, or a tree of life, to enrich and comfort the Lord's people. Let our "speech be always with grace seasoned with salt," for God's honour and man's good.—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

The Sins of the Tongue.

I. Among the many sins of the tongue are **idle words.** "Avoid foolish talking." A wise man "sets a watch on the door of his lips" even when he utters a pleasantry.

II. **Malicious words** are cousins in sin to idle words. Kind words are the oil that lubricates every-day intercourse. There was an ancient malediction that the tongue of the slanderer should be cut out. A slanderer is a public enemy.

III. **A filthy imagination** comes out on the tongue.

IV. There is **profane swearing.** This is the most gratuitous and inexcusable of sins. The man who swears turns speech into a curse, and before his time rehearses the dialect of hell.—*Theodore L. Cuyler.*

Defiling Power of the Tongue.—There is a great pollution and defilement in sins of the tongue. Defiling passions are kindled, vented, and cherished by this unruly member. And the whole body is often drawn into sin and guilt by the tongue. The snares into which men are sometimes led by the tongue are insufferable to themselves and destructive of others. The affairs of mankind and of societies are often thrown into confusion, and all is set aflame, by the tongues of men. There is no age of the world, nor any condition of life, private or public, but will afford examples of this. Where the tongue is guided and wrought upon by a fire from heaven, there it kindleth good thoughts, holy affections, and ardent devotions. But when it is set on fire of hell, as in all undue heats it is, there it is mischievous, producing rage and hatred, and those things which serve the purposes of the devil. As therefore you would dread fires and flames, you should dread contentions, revilings, slanders, lies, and everything that would kindle the fire of wrath in your own spirit, or in the spirit of others.—*Matthew Henry.*

Ver. 8. *The Taming of the Tongue.*—Here is a single position, guarded with a double reason. The position is—"No man can tame the tongue." The reasons: 1. It is unruly. 2. It is full of deadly poison. Each reason hath a terrible second. The evil hath for its second "unruliness"; the poisonfulness hath "deadly." The fort is so barricaded that it is hard scaling it; the refractory rebel so guarded with evil and poison, so warded with unruly and deadly, as if it were with giants in an enchanted tower, as they fabulate, that no man can tame it.

I. **The nature of the thing to be tamed.**—The tongue, which is (1) a member; and (2) an excellent, necessary, little, and singular member.

II. **The difficulty of accomplishing**

this work of taming.—A threefold instruction for the use of the tongue is insinuated to us. 1. Let us not dare to pull up God's mounds; nor like wild beasts, break through the circular limits wherein He hath cooped us. "Weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth." Let thy words be few, true, weighty, that thou mayest not speak much, not falsely, not vainly. Remember the bounds. 2. Since God hath made the tongue *one*, have not thou a tongue and a tongue. Some are double-tongued, as they are double-hearted. The slanderer, the flatterer, the swearer, the talebearer, are *monstrous* men; as misshapen stigmatics as if they had two tongues and but one eye, two heads and but one foot. 3. Do not put all strength into the tongue, to the weakening and enervation of the other parts. He that made the tongue can tame the tongue. He that gave man a tongue to speak can give him a tongue to speak well. Let us move our tongue to intreat help for our tongues; and, according to their office, let us set them on work to speak for themselves. We must not be idle ourselves; the difficulty must spur us to more earnest contention. Look how far the heart is good; so far the tongue. If the heart believe, the tongue will confess; if the heart be meek, the tongue will be gentle; if the heart be angry, the tongue will be bitter. The tongue is but the hand without to show how the clock goes within. A vain tongue discovers a vain heart. "The heart of fools is in their mouth; but the mouth of the wise is in their heart."—*Thomas Adams.*

Ver. 10. *The Discipline of the Tongue from the Christian Standpoint.*—"My brethren, these things ought not so to be." The Christian regards his body, and the various relations with men into which his body enables him to come, as the agency and the sphere in which his renewed and regenerated self is to find and exercise its ministry. His idea for himself he gains through a proper apprehension of the human Christ. Christ was a Spirit, but that Spirit could only work through the agency of a human body, and in those spheres which the human body enabled him to occupy. It was therefore essential that Christ should have His body—every part and force of His body—under perfect control, and at perfect command. His experience would not really be like ours if He had that command as a result of something other than self-discipline. The delay of His ministry until He was thirty years old suggests that, even in His case, prolonged self-culture was necessary, in order to gain practical command of all His bodily powers and forces. If we can realise this, and carefully keep away the idea that He had a *sinful nature*, we shall find ourselves drawn nearer to One, who was "in all points tempted like as we are," for we shall see that His powers of silence, restrained speech, wise speech, were as truly (on the human side) the results of self-discipline, and self-culture, as the same speech-mastery is in our case. It will then come to us that we have in our Divine-human Lord the model of that control of our tongue, of that mastery of our speech-power, which we recognise as the first Christian demand made on us, and the last to which we succeed in worthily responding. The impossibility of gaining *that* self command, which so often oppresses us, is relieved when we can see that *one man* has fully gained it, and that, as a man, He gained it in the same way that we must, by the self-discipline of years, in the inspiration and leading of the indwelling Spirit.

Vers. 11, 12. *The Lesson of the Fountain and the Fig.*—These illustrations impress the inconsistency of Christians using their tongues for unworthy ministries. With a clean soul can only go clean uses of the power of speech. The thought is similar to that so abruptly, and almost

startlingly, expressed by St. John. The Christian man "cannot sin, because he is born of God." Sin and the divine life in souls cannot conceivably go together. A fountain pours forth only what is consistent with itself. If its store of water is in any sense impregnated, you cannot expect to draw sweet water from it. If the stores are sweet, you cannot expect to find foul streams pouring forth, and it would be a surprise and an offence if you did. A wild fig tree properly enough bears wild figs; but if the branch is grafted into the good fig, and receives its good life, you properly expect that it will bear only good figs. It should be thus with Christians. What a man's speech should be is not here considered; what a *Christian* man's speech should be is presented to our view. And it must be consistent with himself, the fitting expression of his new life. You do not expect to hear unclean or unloving speech from a Christian professor. You are sure that there is something wrong if you do. This consideration suggests the appeal which St. James would make. The fountain, in the case of the Christian, had long been polluted, and the streams flowing from it had long been foul, so that the very channels and pipes had become impregnated with evil, and defiled even fresh water that flowed through them. In the case of the Christian the fountain-head had been cleansed and sweetened, so that what was ready to flow forth was pure; but there remained the difficulty of the foul channels and pipes. And the work of daily Christian living is the cleansing of the old channels and pipes, so that the cleansed fountain may pour forth the streams that, untainted and wholly sweet, shall flow into all the associations of the life—sweet even flowing from the tongue which had so long been the instrument of evil.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—18.

Practical Wisdom seen in the Spirit of a Life.—Two things need to be kept in mind if the point of teaching in this passage is to be apprehended. 1. St. James began his epistle by dwelling on the importance of wisdom. He meant that sort of practical wisdom for the ordering and guiding of life and relations which comes to a man through (1) waiting upon God in believing prayer, and (2) through sanctified personal observations and experiences. 2. St. James recognises that these would-be teachers, who set up for themselves in the Jewish Christian Churches, claimed a superiority of wisdom and knowledge, and based their claim to teach on this claim to superior wisdom. The claim was founded on self-assurance; there was no characteristic Christian humility in it. And self-assertive work was doing the practical mischief in the Churches which it always does. It could be known by the bad fruits that it was bringing forth. There is something very like satire in the contrast between the false wisdom and the true in this passage. The man truly wise never is found pushing himself into the place of teacher—he has to *be found out*; and he will be known by the character of his ordinary conversation, and by the skill with which he orders all his conduct, and tones all his relationships.

I. **What will indicate the wise man?**—How may we recognise him? What tests shall we apply to him? Here is a man who claims to be wise for the practical management of life, and possessed with altogether superior intellectual knowledge. How shall we satisfy ourselves concerning his claim? 1. It is a ground of suspicion if he pushes himself forward as a teacher. True wisdom always has humility for its companion. The man who thinks himself to be something, generally is nothing. Men find out the true teachers; very seldom do they find themselves out. The true teacher teaches because he cannot help

it, and often does not know that he can teach. The man who pushes himself into the teaching-place will usually be found more interested in self-aggrandisement than in teaching. 2. It is suspicious if the supposed wise man is more anxious about putting other people's lives straight than about putting his own. Let a man be really wise, and the responsibility of the trust of his own life is sure to weigh heavily upon him; and he will be anxious about his own "conversation," his own turning about in the relations of life, his own good conduct. Let a man assume wisdom for self-seeking ends, and he will usually be found indifferent to his own conduct and relations; attention to these things will in no way serve his purpose. 3. It is more than suspicious if there is to be seen no sign of "meekness." Meekness, in the Scriptures, is not precisely the same thing as "humility." It is the opposite of "self-assertiveness." The meek man never pushes himself to the front. He trusts to value, not to show; to what he *is*, not to what he can *make himself out to be*. But precisely what these would-be teachers in the Churches, whom St. James reproves, lacked, was this *meekness* in their so-called wisdom. From this ver. 13 the importance of personal character and holy example in all Christian teachers may be earnestly presented. Holy living must ensure confidence in him who teaches, and wing the arrows of his good words.

II. **What will indicate the unwise man?**—The results of his personal influence and of his teaching. His pushing will create envying. The places into which he gets other people will be sure to think that they ought to have. Hence will come strife, contentions, disputes, rivalries, schemes for injuring one another, and every evil work. James and John wanted to push into the chief places in the coming kingdom, and they upset the kindly relations of the apostolic company, introducing envying and strife. And that which is true of the unwise man's personal influence will also be true of his teaching. It will upset the kindly relations of the people. It will be inconsiderate. It will be peculiar. It will exaggerate the teacher's own ideas. It will fail to keep the harmony and proportion of Christian truth; and so it will cause heart-burnings, jealousies, envyings, hatred, strife. It is the secret of sectarianism. One is for Paul, and separates himself to Paul. One is for Apollos, and separates himself to Apollos. One is for Cephas, and separates himself to Cephas. And so sectarianism creeps in, and in Christ's Church there is confusion and every evil work.

III. **What will indicate the Christianly wise man?** (ver. 17).—This verse seems distinctly to lift us into a higher plane. St. James appears now to be thinking of the true Christian teacher, in whom is both the spirit and the wisdom of the "great Teacher"; the man who is not inspired to teach by a self-seeking, self-satisfied, and self-reliant spirit, but by the wisdom and the grace that come down from above; the man who is wise through the gifts and teachings of the Holy Spirit; the man who is an "epistle of Christ." St. James does not describe the true Christian teacher; he says that you can always know him by the tone which is on all the results of his personal influence and Christian work. The terms he uses express two things: righteousness, peaceableness. The Christian teacher stands firm to that which is right, just, pure. He shows no partiality, favours no one to serve his own end, is "without hypocrisy"; he always *is* what he seems to be, and so can be fully trusted. And he is peaceable; never makes difficulties, always smoothes them; is accessible to all, pitiful to the erring, gentle to the weak, and inventive in forms of service to others. The atmosphere in which alone the Christian can work is the atmosphere of peace. Spiritual life can never be cultured by any Christian teaching where self-assertive men are creating envying and strife, confusion and every evil work. Three go together—wisdom, humility, and peaceableness.

IV. **What will be the moral power of the Christianly wise man?** (ver. 18).—He who makes peace wherever he goes, *sows peace*; and when the seeds of peace come to their fruitage, that fruitage is found to be "righteousness." And that is the supreme end of Christ's work; and the supreme end of all the work which Christ's servants do for Him. Heaven is come when of humanity it can be said, "The people are all righteous." Out of the seeds of the wise Christian teaching, that makes for peace, that universal righteousness alone can come.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 12. *Wisdom seen in Wise Speech.*—"Let him show out of a good conversation his works." While it may be admitted that St. James uses the term "conversation" in the general sense of "conduct," it may also be recognised that he had in mind the sins of the tongue, and the mischievous talking and teaching of those who pushed themselves into places of authority in the Christian Churches. We may therefore take St. James to suggest that a man can always be known by his talk. Illustrate from different kinds of men: the unclean-minded man; the vain man; the hypocrite; the shallow-minded man; the foreigner; the learned man; the humorous man; the depressed man; etc. The same must be true of the Christian man. 1. What should be the characteristic conversation of a Christian man? 2. How can he secure that the right character shall always rest upon his conversation? To answer with St. James we may say—It depends upon his keeping the "meekness of wisdom." Several shades of meaning attach to the term "meekness," and in each of them we may notice a close connection with wisdom, that is, with the practical wisdom which enables a man to order his life aright, gaining a restraint over himself, and over his circumstances, which is at once represented and illustrated by the control he gains over his speech. 1. Meekness may mean *humility*, the spirit of the man who has come to estimate himself aright. But that right estimate is the work of *wisdom*, which guides judgment and presents the Divine standard. A man is never humble until he is wise enough to look at himself in the light of God and God's claims. 2. Meekness may mean *modesty*, the spirit that does not push, that will not assert itself. And this never comes to a man save out of the practical wisdom that reads life aright, and knows that in the long-run God always proves to be on the side of the man who *is good*, not on the side of the man who *asserts* that he is. 3. Meekness may mean *receptiveness*, the disposition which keeps a man open to ever fresh supplies of Divine grace and strength. And only practical wisdom brings home to a man that sense of insufficiency which prepares him to receive ever fresh Divine help.

Vers. 14-16. *The Secret Source of Strife.*—Self is pushing to the front somewhere. That will always be found the source of strife in families, churches, society, nations. Somebody wants something for himself. His getting it is against the interests of others. Nevertheless, he is determined to get it.

Ver. 15. *A Threefold Description of False Wisdom: "Earthly, Sensual [Animal], Devilish [Demoniacal]."*—Each word is full of meaning. 1. The counterfeit wisdom is "earthly" in its nature and origin, as contrasted with that which cometh from above (Phil. iii. 19). 2. It is "sensual." The word is used by classical writers for that which belongs to the "soul," as contrasted with the "body." This rested on the twofold division of man's nature. The psychology of the New Testament, however, assumes generally the threefold division of body, soul, and spirit,

the second element answering to the animal, emotional life, and the third being that which includes reason and will, the capacity for immortality and for knowing God. Hence the adjective formed from "soul" acquired a lower meaning, almost the very opposite of that which it once had, and expresses man's state as left to lower impulses without the control of the spirit. What St. James says of the false wisdom is, that it belongs to the lower, not the higher, element in man's nature. It does not come from the Spirit of God, and therefore is not spiritual. 3. In "devilish" we have a yet darker condemnation. Our English use of the same word "devil," for two Greek words, διάβολος and δαιμόνιον, tends, however, to obscure St. James's meaning. The epithet does not state that the false wisdom which he condemns came from *the* devil, or was like his nature, but that it was *demon-like*, as partaking of the nature of "demons" or "unclean spirits," who, as in the gospels, are represented as possessing the souls of men and reducing them to the level of madness. Such, St. James says, is the character of the spurious wisdom of the "many masters" of ver. 1. Met together in debate, wrangling, cursing, swearing, one would take them for an assembly of demoniacs. Their disputes were marked by the ferocity, the egotism, the boasting, the malignant cunning of the insane.—*Dean Plumptre.*

Ver. 17. *Practical Christian Wisdom.*—If a man has it, no doubt it will find its first sphere in the management of his own body, mind, temper, passions, etc. But it will be sure also to find its sphere in the relationships and associations of life. It will direct all his dealings with others, and give them a peculiarly gracious character. What will be the leading features of that character? Will they, as St. James gives them, go into the word "sensitiveness" (not touchiness, nor the mere weakness of a nervous disposition)?—sensitive to the clean, to the very beginnings of strife, to the needs of others, to insincerity, to everything unsympathetic, and to a proper response, in good fruits, to the grace of which the Christian feels himself to be the monument. "Confound not wisdom with erudition. They may be connected, and should accompany one another; but they are not always so, and perhaps only in a few instances. Confound not wisdom with a sullen, morose character, with a gravity frightful to all mirth and pleasure, with a life consisting entirely in rigid abstinence and perpetual mortification. Confound not wisdom with singularity in the bad sense of the term, according to which it is an endeavour to attract notice, and to distinguish oneself from others, not so much in important and essential matters, as in insignificant trifles relative to externals. Confound not wisdom with understanding and sagacity. They come, indeed, the nearest to it, are more or less implied in it, and belong in some measure to it; however, they are not wisdom itself."—*Zollikofer.*

Ver. 18. *Righteousness and Peace always go together.*—"The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Righteousness always works towards peace. Peace provides a seedbed in which righteousness can be sown. Find either one of these anywhere, and you will find the other close by. If everybody simply wanted the right, and worked for the right, there could be no wars of nations, no contentions of society, no ruptures in families. The absolute right may sometimes seem to be unattainable; but the Christian right is always within our reach, and that is the interest of my brother and my neighbour rather than my own. In the triumph of the Christian right comes the world's eternal peace.

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER III.

Ver. 6. *Mischief done by the Slanderous Tongue.*—A man who, for a moment's gossiping gratification, drops an idle word affecting a neighbour's character, resembles that Scotchman who, from partiality to the flora of his native land, sowed a little thistledown in the British colony where he had raised his tabernacle, and where that nuisance to agriculturists had been unknown up to that time. It grew and flourished; and breezes—like the active wind of talk, that soon propagates a slander—carried the winged seeds hither and thither, to found for their obnoxious species thousands of new homes.—*F. W. Robertson.*

The Consequences of Slander.—Never can you stop the consequences of a slander. You may publicly prove its falsehood, you may sift every atom, explain and annihilate it, and yet, years after you had thought that all had been disposed of for ever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard the calumny, but never heard or never attended to the refutation, or who has only a vague and confused recollection of the whole, and he asks the question doubtfully, "But were there not some suspicious circumstances connected with him?" It is like the Greek fire used in ancient warfare, which burnt unquenched beneath the water, or like the weeds which when you have extirpated them in one place are sprouting forth vigorously in another spot, at the distance of many hundred yards; or to use the metaphor of St. James himself, it is like the wheel which catches fire as it goes, and burns with a fiercer conflagration as its own speed increases; "it sets on fire the whole course of nature" (lit. "the wheel of nature"). You may tame the wild beast; the conflagration of the American forest will cease when all the timber and all the dry underwood is consumed; but you cannot arrest the progress of that cruel word which you uttered carelessly yesterday or this morning.

Mischief of a Bitter Word.—A bitter word dropped from our lips against a brother is like a pistol fired amongst mountains. The sharp report is caught up and intensified and echoed by rocks and caves, till it emulates the thunder. So a thoughtless, unkind word in passing from mouth to mouth receives progressive exaggerations, and, snowball-like, increases as it rolls. Gossip-mongers are persons who tear the bandages from social wounds, and prevent their healing; they are persons who bring flint and steel, and acid and alkali together, and are justly chargeable with all the fire and ebullition. A whisper-word of slander is like that fox with a firebrand tied to its tail that Samson sent among the standing corn of the Philistines. It brings destruction into wide areas of peace and love. Evil-speaking is like a freezing wind, that seals up the sparkling waters and tender juices of flowers, and binds up the hearts of men in uncharitableness and bitterness of spirit, as the earth is bound up in the grip of winter, when

> "The bitter blast of north and east
> Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves."

Ver. 6. *The "Course of Nature."*—The Greek word translated "course" is derived from a verb signifying "to run," and according to the way the accent is placed, it is read either a *wheel* or a *course*. In the verse the former sense is preferable, as expressing the constant recurrence of similar events in this life; so the old Greek poet (Anacreon) puts it: "Like a chariot-wheel our life rolls on." And Isidorus writes, "Time like a wheel rolls round upon itself." But the allusion of James has also been applied to the unceasing succession of men born one after another, as if he had said, "The tongue has been the means of plaguing our ancestors; it still plagues us, and will hereafter plague our descendants." Plutarch uses the simile, the "stream of nature," referring to the successive generations of men; and Simplicius speaks of "the unceasing circle of nature, wherein there is a constant production of some things by the decay of others." The best critics seem to consider that the apostle has mankind in view in this clause of the verse.—*Parkhurst.*

Ver. 8. *The Tongue.*—"Some men have a tongue as rough as a cat's, and biting as an adder's." "The tongue was intended for an organ of the Divine praise; but the devil often plays upon it, and then it sounds like the screech-owl." "Let your language be restrained within its proper channels; if a river swells over its bank, it leaves only dirt and filthiness behind." "The evil-speaker or whisperer is accuser, witness, judge, and executioner of the innocent." "In the temple at Smyrna there were looking-glasses which represented the best face as crooked and ugly; so is every false tongue." "It is a fountain both of bitter waters and of pleasant; it sends forth blessing and cursing; it praises God and rails at men; it is sometimes set on fire, and then it puts whole cities in combustion; it is unruly, and no more to be restrained than the breath of the tempest; it is volatile and fugitive; reason should go before it, and when it does not

repentance comes after it." "There are some persons so full of nothings, that, like the strait sea of Pontus, they perpetually empty themselves by their mouths, making every company or single person they fasten on to be their Propontis." "The talking man makes himself artificially deaf, being like a man in the steeple when the bells ring." "Great knowledge, if it be without vanity, is the most severe bridle of the tongue. For so have I heard that all the noises and pratings of the pool, the croaking of frogs and toads, is hushed and appeased upon the instant of bringing upon them the light of a candle or torch. Every beam of reason and ray of knowledge checks the dissolutions of the tongue." When it breaks out in trivialities and vanities, these "are like flies and gnats upon the margin of a pool; they do not sting like an asp or bite deep as a bear, yet they can vex a man into a fever of impatience, and make him incapable of rest and counsel."

Ver. 10. *Eastern Swearing and Offensive Language.*—Oaths may be classified as of two kinds—in one the name of God is used, in the other that of some other object; in both cases for the same purpose. Though it is common for people in the East at the present day to use the name of God in their oaths, yet they more frequently swear by something else—as by some person or themselves, or some part of themselves, as the head or hand, or by some animal or inanimate thing. Nothing is more common than the use of such oaths. They not only employ them to confirm what they say, but to add, as it seems, strength to their expressions. (See Matt. xxvi. 74.) But beyond this they employ them with no purpose whatever—even the most solemn forms—in speaking to their animals, or in soliloquising, until, to those who can understand the language they speak, nothing is more wearisome or painful. They use them in all companies, and on all occasions—both men and women, old and young. There seems to be among them an utter perversion of conscience as to the moral intent or obligation of an oath. Aside from the positive sin of thus employing an oath, this *deadness of conscience* is the worst feature, as it is one of the worst results of this thoughtlessly sinful practice. Surely the command of the Saviour to "swear not at all" has unusual pertinence and force in the presence of a custom at once so common and wicked. Again, the use of obscene and offensively bad language has a development among the Orientals wholly unknown to us. This also pervades all classes in the community, and is employed by both sexes. I was informed by persons long resident in the East that the use of obscene, vile language passes any ordinary conception among any cooler-blooded Western people. I am sure I have never heard such torrents of verbal abuse anywhere else as in some parts of Egypt or Turkey or Palestine. We were pursued with the vilest epithets, for example, at Hebron, or in the streets of Shechem, or of Endor, or in some of the villages in Bashan, east of the Jordan. In speaking to each other, especially when angry, they not only heap abuse on one another, but on every member of their respective families—wife, children, father, mother, living or dead, present, past, and to come; and beyond this on their religion, in terms often so aggravatingly bad as that even a dragoman will refuse to repeat it. It is in reference to this almost universal practice the Saviour speaks when He says: "Whosoever shall say to his brother *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. v. 22).

Ver. 12. *Grafting the Olive on the Fig Tree.*—The metaphor here used is one which the Roman gardeners, who were fond of horticultural paradoxes, endeavoured to realise, and, according to an old naturalist, Columella was the first who attempted to unite by inoculation or inarching trees of so opposite a character as the fig and olive. The subjoined statement by Pliny is interesting as bearing upon this subject: "After that the fig tree hath gotten some strength, and is grown to a sufficient highness to bear a graft, the branch or bough of the olive being well cleansed and made neat, and the head end thereof thwited (*sic*) and shaped sharp, howbeit not yet cut from the mother stock, must be set fast in the shank of the fig tree, where it must be kept well and surely tied with bands. For the space of three years it is suffered to grow indifferently between two mothers, or rather, by the means thereof two mother stocks are grown and united together; but in the fourth year it is cut wholly from the own mother, and is become altogether an adopted child to the fig tree wherein it is incorporate. A pretty device, I assure you, to make a fig tree bear olives, the secret whereof is not known to every man" (*Pliny*, lib. xvii., cap. 19).—*W. R. C.*

Ver. 13. *The Power of Temptation lessens as Life advances.*—The precious sago-palm, when young and tender, is covered with strong sharp thorns, which effectually guard it from injury by wild animals. As soon, however, as the tree, shooting on high, grows strong, and is no longer a tempting morsel to wild hogs and other animals, the thorns fall off. It is very often thus with young Christians. They frequently display an asperity and sharpness in their treatment of the ungodly that answers something in their case to the thorns of the sago-palm. There is a use in this. They are inexperienced in the Christian life, and especially are liable

by reason of their youth to be snared and enticed by the world's blandishments. This very roughness and angularity is a great preservative in erecting around them, as it were, a bristling fence, and cutting them off from contact with dangerous foes. But as faith and love grow, as experience is gained, and they become established in grace, their life, though not a whit less faithful, becomes less severe and forbidding. The power of many temptations which especially beset the young as the pilgrim's path is further pursued becomes necessarily lessened with the lessening heat of the calmer pulse of age. The head that once may have been turned by pride with advancing years has been tutored to "wise meekness" by long and invaluable discipline. Now that they are not in so much danger from the world as formerly the thorns fall off. There is a similar train of thought to be met with in the poet Southey's verses on the "Holly." This tree somewhat resembles the sago-palm in that its lower leaves only are armed with thorns, while those which rise out of reach are quite smooth. Unlike our palm, however, these thorns on the leaves near the ground never fall off with age, but continue to the last.—*James Neil, M.A.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOWER AND THE HIGHER LIFE.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Lusts.**—Pleasures, but viewed on their evil side. *Desires* that are ill regulated. Compare 1 Pet. ii. 11; Rom. vii. 23. Evidently James was much distressed by the strife of parties, and the personal quarrellings, in the Jewish communities. Disputing was a besetting sin of the Jewish race. **Members.**—Organs of sense and action. "The conflict within, in which the evil passion gets the mastery, causes a predisposition to contention, and produces aggression on the well-being and property of others" (*Webster*).

Ver. 2. **Desire to have.**—Covet. **Ask not.**—They grasped at things themselves, and did not wait on God for them, or ask His guidance and help in the endeavour to obtain them.

Ver. 3. **Consume it.**—"Spend it in the midst of your [selfish] pleasures." To pray for that which is but to satisfy our lower, baser nature can never be *Christian* prayer.

Ver. 4.—Omit the word "adulterers." The term is probably used metaphorically, to describe idolatry and apostasy from the worship of Jehovah. But sins of sensuality in the Christian Church caused much anxiety to the apostles. Compare Matt. xii. 39. *Plumptre* explains the feminine form thus, "In this subserviency to pleasures St. James sees that which, though united with crimes of violence, is yet essentially *effeminate*." **Will be.**—Willeth to be; wisheth to be. **Is the enemy.**—"Makes himself the."

Ver. 5.—The precise rendering is doubtful. There is no passage either in the Canonical or Apocryphal Scriptures that is here referred to. The *Revised Version* gives in the text, "Doth the spirit which He made to dwell in us long unto envying? But He giveth more grace." And in the margin two renderings: "The spirit which He made to dwell in us He yearneth for even unto jealousy"; "That spirit which He made to dwell in us yearneth *for us* even unto jealous envy." In Ellicott's Commentary *Punchard* gives two possible renderings: "Suppose ye that the Scripture saith in vain, The [Holy] Spirit that dwelleth in us jealously regards us as His own?" "Suppose ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the Spirit, which took up His abode in you, lust to envy?" *Fausset* suggests, "Does the [Holy] Spirit that God hath placed in us lust to [towards] envy?" (viz. as ye do in your worldly "wars and fightings"). *Alford* makes "to envy" mean "jealously": "The Spirit jealously desires us for His own." *Plumptre* suggests, "The Spirit which He implanted yearns tenderly over us." *Enviously* may be used in a good sense. "The strongest human affection shows itself in a jealousy which is scarcely distinguishable from envy. We grudge the transfer to another of the affection which we claim as ours."

Ver. 6. **Giveth more grace.**—The ordered thought of this and the previous verse has been given thus: "God loves us with a feeling analogous to the strongest form of jealousy, or even envy, but that jealousy does not lead Him, as it leads men, to be grudging in His gifts; rather does He bestow, as its result, a greater measure of His grace than before, or than He would do, were His attitude towards us one of strict unimpassioned justice." R.V. margin, "greater," *i.e.* than if He did not desire us jealously.

Ver. 7. **The devil.**—This is one of the texts used as proof of the personality of the devil. **Illustrate by Matt. iv. 1-11.**

Ver. 10. **Lift you up.**—Exalt (Isa. lvii. 15).

Ver. 11. **Speak not evil.**—Backbite (Rom. i. 30; 2 Cor. xii. 20). Omit "and" before "judgeth."

Ver. 12.—Read, "There is one lawgiver and judge."

Ver. 13. **Such a city.**—"This city"; the one the speaker is supposed to have in mind.

Ver. 14. **What shall be.**—"What your life shall be on the morrow." **Vanisheth away.**—*Alford*, "vanisheth as it appeared."

Ver. 15. **Ought to say.**—Lit. "instead of saying."

Ver. 16. **Boastings.**—Same word as translated "pride of life" in 1 John ii. 16. The undue self-confidence of the ungodly. "Ye glory in your braggings." Aristotle defines the term as indicating the character of the man who lays claim to what will bring him credit, when the claim is altogether false or grossly exaggerated.

Ver. 17. **Doeth it not.**—"Inconsistency is of the very essence of sin." "Supposing him not to do it." Illustrate by Pollok's figure of the sentence ever in the vision of lost souls—"Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

The Secret Causes of Social Contentions.—St. James closes the previous chapter with a description of the characteristic features of practical religious wisdom, the spirit which alone can enable a man to shape his conduct and order his relationships aright. It is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated." And he adds that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." But when he turns from things as they should be to things as they are, he becomes sadly distressed and anxious. Contentions, heart-burnings, enmities, sectarian rivalries, distinguished the Hebrew Christian communities to whom he wrote. Men were struggling for pre-eminence as teachers, each with his doctrine and interpretation. Thence came wranglings and debates, in which men easily lost their temper and self-control. St. James is very severe on the wranglers, intimating that their spirit was unworthy of regenerate persons. They could be thinking only of gratifying their lower natures. By "wars" here we are not to understand the conflicts of nations, but protracted, violent, widespread, social contentions and disputes; the conflicts caused by sectarian rivalries and disputatious characters. We can form some idea of the condition of the Hebrew Christian Churches by remembering what commotions were made in the Churches St. Paul founded by the visits of the bigoted Jewish teachers. The element of contention is one in which the Christian spirit cannot flourish; and the mischief of it may clearly be seen in the roots out of which it usually springs, and by which it is sustained. According to St. James, the secret causes of failing to gain and keep the spirit of peace in Christian communities are three: (1) selfish desires; (2) selfish efforts; (3) selfish prayers.

I. **One secret of contention is our selfish desires.**—"Whence come wars and whence *come* fightings among you? *come they* not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?" The Revised Version makes a useful alteration in putting "pleasures" in place of "lusts," because the word "lusts" has come to have almost exclusive reference to sensual passions, and St. James intended to include all forms of self-pleasing. St. Peter writes of the "fleshly lusts which war against the soul." And St. Paul saw "another law" in his members, "warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members." And our Divine Lord taught that "out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man." It is not wrong to have desires. It is wrong not to have them in proper control. Man is a being of desires. In the restlessness of his wantings lies the possibility of his improvements. But we need to distinguish carefully between the natural

desires which, when duly met, bring to men healthy, satisfying, and educating pleasures, and those unnatural, morbid, exaggerated desires which follow upon men's loss of self-restraint through giving way to self-willedness and sin. But St. James only hints at these general considerations. In relation to quarrellings, contentions, and wars, he points out that it is not so much the unrestrainedness of the desires, as the *selfishness* of the desires, that is the root and cause of evil. The very essence of Christianity is seen in its Founder, who never, in any sense, got, or tried to get, anything for Himself: who "was rich, yet for our sakes became poor"; who "gave His life a ransom for us"; "who thought it not a thing to be held fast, the being equal with God; but emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, that He might serve and save others." Or to express it in the forms of our text, His desires were wholly unselfish, and so never did cause contentions, and never could. No matter where you may find disputings and conflicts—in families, businesses, society, churches, or nations—you will almost always discover that somebody wants something altogether for himself, and persists in pressing his want against the interests of everybody else. That spirit may be met and rebuked from the merely moral and social standpoints; but we meet and rebuke it from the Christian standpoint. It is essentially un-Christian—altogether unworthy of any one who bears the Christ-name. It is well, however, for us to clearly understand that becoming a Christian never crushes down a man's desires, unless they are postively wrong. It turns them into a new direction, but keeps, and even augments, their force. This consideration comes in to tone all personal wishes—"Will my gaining these things limit or hinder or injure any one else? It is more important that others should be helped and cheered and blessed than that I should be." When that unselfish spirit is upon all our longings and desires, it is absolutely certain that we shall not be in any sphere of life the cause of contention and conflict. When even our natural and proper desires, even for personal pleasure, are put into the holy restraints of a Christ-like unselfishness, we become peacemakers wherever we go. Or as St. James puts it, so long as there is a war of desires within us, we shall be a cause of war in the spheres around us. Subdue the warfare within us, bring the desires into the obedience of Christ, tone them with the spirit of Christ, and they may not only shut the doors of the temple of Janus, they may wall them up for ever. The world's peace will have come.

II. **Another secret of contention is our selfish efforts.**—Not only the wants are selfish, but there is a wrong and self-trusting character about the ways in which we seek to supply the wants. There is a self-reliant pushing and striving and overriding or driving aside of others which is a most fruitful source of bickerings and disputes. When a man wants something, means to get it by his own efforts, and to master everybody and everything that stands in his way, he is sure to make commotion and heart-burning wherever he goes. St. James expresses this selfish effort of men to force through their inordinate, unrestrained, and self-interested desires in very strong language. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet [are jealous], and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; ye have not, because ye ask not." "When desire becomes the master-passion of a man's soul, it hurries him on to crimes from which he would at first have shrunk," as may be illustrated in the cases of David, Judas Iscariot, and Ananias with Sapphira. In saying, "Ye kill," St. James may mean only, "Ye would even go so far as that to gain your ends." And we can but be reminded how true it is that in the zeal of the sectarian bigot and the heresy-monger (persons whom St. James has in mind) reputations have often been killed, lives embittered, and worse than death endured. *Dean Plumptre* says, "There seems, at first, something almost incredible in the thought, that the

believers to whom St. James wrote could be guilty of such crimes; but Jewish society was at that time rife with atrocities of like nature, and men, nominally disciples of Christ, might then, as in later times, sink to its level." According to tradition, St. James himself fell a victim to the passions he thus assails, probably at the hands of a zealot mob. Readers of Josephus are familiar with the bands of zealots and sicarii, who were prominent in the tumults preceding the final siege of Jerusalem. Endeavouring to gain the application of St. James's teaching to those who live in quieter times, yet are in peril of the same temptations, we may see that he reproves our striving to get what we want in our own self-strength, without any reference of the matter to God, and without dependence for help upon God. He pictures the man of unrestrained desires pushing about, and pushing other people about, but failing to gain what he wants. "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Striving as earnest endeavour is quite right. We ought to do what we do "with both hands earnestly." But it must not be self-reliant striving, if we mean it to be Christian. It must be energy, enterprise, perseverance, resoluteness after prayer, and in the spirit of prayer, which keeps us dependent on God, and within His holy restrainings and inspirings.

III. **Yet another secret of contention is our selfish prayers.**—"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." A self-centred purpose spoils prayer. We may ask for things that we need, but we may not ask for the supply of our mere self-indulgences. The desire must be right, and in right restraint, if we present it in prayer at all. The desire must be right in a wide and not in a narrow, selfish sense, if God is to answer it at all.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 1. *The Soldiers of the Devil's Army.*—The desires of various sorts of pleasures are, like soldiers of the devil's army, posted and picketed all over us, in the hope of winning our members, and so ourselves, back to his allegiance, which we have renounced in our baptism.—*Bishop Moberly.*

The Sources of War.—One great source of war is the love of excitement, of emotion, of strong interests. Illustrate from love of the chase. Another is the passion for superiority, for triumph, for power. There is a predominance of this passion in rulers. Another is admiration of the brilliant qualities displayed in war. This prevents our receiving a due impression of its crimes and miseries. Another is false patriotism. And another is the impressions we receive in early life. The community possesses indisputable right to resort to war of defence, when all other means have failed for securing its continued existence. The earth holds not a more abandoned monster than the sovereign who, entrusted with the dearest interests of a people, commits them to the dreadful hazards of war, that he may extend his prostituted power, and fill the earth with his worthless name. Therefore we should teach true sentiments as to the honour of kings and the glory of nations.—*W. E. Channing, D.D.*

The Christian View of Public War.—The text does not directly refer to national wars, but to the conflicts and contentions that arise among Christians and in Christian Churches. Yet it expresses a principle which is operating in every sphere—the small spheres of the individual, the family, the Church, and the larger sphere of nations. War can never on both sides be right. In the terrible scenes of war we may see the workings of human lust, and thereby learn to trace aright the evil

workings of lust everywhere. War usually is the expression of one man's sin. It is the truly awful result of some human lust, some self-pleasing, some self-aggrandisement. A fuller discernment of the causes out of which all wars and fightings spring prepares the way for the working of the Christian spirit, which, dethroning lust, and enthroning God, and in Him goodness, moral excellence, and brotherhood, hastens on the time when nations shall learn war no more. It is important that there should be given to men vivid, forcible illustrations of the fearful majesty of power lying in human sin. God writes the evil of sin in famine, earthquake, disease, and death, But it seems as though man would not read God's writing; so he writes for himself in soldiers' blood, and widows' wail, and orphans' tear, and wasted lands, and rifled treasuries, and ruined commerce, and trodden harvests, and broken hearts, the evil of sin. Let those who watch man writing read correctly, and learn the abominableness of human lust and sin, and hail the coming of Him who kills sin at its root—kills the lust—and kills with it every leaf and flower and fruit of war—social, ecclesiastical, national—and reigns at last as "Prince of peace."

Vers. 1, 2. *The Root-cause of War.*—St. James wrote his epistle during those years of national decline and social anarchy that immediately preceded the final destruction of the Holy City. There was much sectarian strife, bitter party feeling, and there was even murderous violence, and the spirit of the times seems to have seriously affected the Christian communities. Internal conflicts and sectarian rivalries seriously threatened the integrity of the Jewish nation. Self-seeking and personal strife were imperilling the Christian Churches. The first bishop of Jerusalem puts his hand to the work of staying this strife. He arrests the men that love and seek war, and bids them think—bids them see the essential evil of war—all kinds of war—in the vileness of the root out of which it all springs. He lifts off and puts away at once all the false *glamour* of war; he does not even stop to impress his readers with details of the shuddering horrors of battle-fields and soldiers' hospitals; he goes right to the very heart of the matter; compels us to see the root-wrong, the lusting, the coveting, out of which all contention, all war, comes. A great modern writer says: "That man, born of woman, bound by ties of brotherhood to man, and commanded by an inward law and the voice of God to love and to do good, should, through selfishness, pride, revenge, inflict these agonies, shed these torrents of blood—here is an evil which combines with exquisite suffering, fiendish guilt. All other evils fade before it."

I. **The root-principle of war stated.**—It is lusting. It is covetousness. It is the desire—the violent, unrestrained desire—to have for self. It is the exclusion of all love for, all thought of, or care concerning, *others.* It is the determination to get, whoever may have to suffer through our getting; to push roughly aside all who stand in the way of our acquisition. It is the wilful forgetfulness that other people have their rights as well as we. Surely all this spirit is of the earth, earthy. It is the foul blossoming of human corruption. All such lustings are of their father the devil. His stamp is on them all. St. James strikes right home, past all men's delusions and excuses, to the inmost source of all contentions and bickerings and wars. He is true if his principle be applied to family life. What broke up Isaac's home, in the olden days, and set brothers at enmity, but Jacob's desire to have for self? What broke up David's family life but the envy of his sons? Try all cases of family warfare that have come within your observation. Down at the bottom there is always found to lie somebody's grasping for self. He is true if his principle be applied to Church life. These bad contentions that distress Churches

always follow upon some one's pressing his own will, his own interests, his own party, before the general well-being. Nobody ever fights in a Christian Church who really wants to obtain the greatest good for the whole. It is always a class, a section, or an individual, seeking its own things. What makes business life so full of struggle in our day? The same thing—the desire to have. Aggravation at the prosperity of another, if in any sense it can be supposed to cross and check our own.

II. **The root-principle of war is absolutely opposed to the root-principle of Christianity.**—The one principle is—Lusting to possess; the other principle is—Longing to give away. And you can never make these two principles dwell together in peace. The one is—Get for self, no matter who goes down through the getting; the other is—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Which is the corrupt and devilish principle? Which is radiant with the sweet light of God, and Christ, and heaven, and peace? The unselfish, Christ-like care for others carries its healing balm, its peace-preserving virtues, into every family, stilling all tumult, knitting heart to heart, and life to life, until the earth-home bears a suggestion of the many-mansioned home above, where all is peace, because each serves the other. It is the care for the whole that settles the stormy strife of Churches, and ensures that atmosphere of peace in which alone noble Christian work can ever be done.

Ver. 3. *Our Failures in Prayer.*—R.V. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend *it* in your pleasures." St. James gives, sharply and suggestively, the explanation of much that is lacking in Christian life. We fail to obtain so many things that we ask for. We fret over the lack; but we often fail to see the reasons for the lack, and fail to see that the reasons may lie altogether in ourselves. Even when we do not err by failing to ask, we may err, and make such answer as we wish to obtain impossible, by *asking amiss.* What then may possibly be wrong about even our Christian prayers, which may suffice to explain our failure to receive Divine benedictions? 1. They are wrong if offered in the *mere routine of habit.* We have prayed morning and night ever since we prayed at our mother's knee, and we may have come to utter a mere formula; to go through a routine of words which mean nothing in particular, and which there is no particular reason for God to take notice of. The daily prayer habit is not indeed without a value of its own; but it has no precise value as *request* that calls for Divine attention. All it wants, and all it asks, from God is just a smile as He passes. When daily prayer is at its best, it is little more than a daily committing of ourselves to the Divine keeping and care. But if it ceased to be a mere routine of habit, if it came to be a reality of supplication and intercession, might we not get free of one form of "asking amiss," and find that, asking aright, we received, and life became altogether fuller of precise daily Divine benedictions? 2. They are wrong if offered *insincerely.* Prayers are always made worthless and ineffective, when there is self-consciousness in them; when our real aim is to make a show of our piety, or to be seen of men. Our Lord severely reproved all prayer that had in it the characteristic Pharisaic taint. When a man prays in order to show his piety, *that* is what God hears him pray, and not the things he seems to ask for; and the answer to his prayer is only this—praise and reward for his show of piety; and God never can give *that*, so the insincere man "asks and receives not, because he asks amiss." Beware then of all "beautiful prayers"! Beware of your own "beautiful prayers"; for they only mean that you want God to praise you, and it would be no blessing to you if He did.

Beware of other people's beautiful prayers; for they only mean that they want you and God together to praise and admire them. And they who pray them, and you who hear them, are best blessed when, asking in that style, you receive not. 3. They are wrong if offered *conventionally*. This is very different from insincerely. There is grave danger of our asking for things so often that we cease to put any mind into the asking. They become the proper things to say, so they are said, but have no practical inspiring power in them; they have become no more than pious sentiments conventionally uttered. *Mark Guy Pearse*, in his *Dan'l Quorm*, puts this peril of our praying in such a crisp and suggestive way, that the passage may be given by way of illustration. Quaint Dan'l Quorm is represented as saying: "I happened once to be stayin' with a gentleman—a long way from here—a very religious kind of a man he was, and in the mornin' he began the day with a long family prayer that we might be kep' from sin, and might have a Christ-like spirit, and the 'mind that was also in Christ Jesus,' and that we might have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. A beautiful prayer it was, and thinks I, What a good kind of man you must be! But about an hour after I happened to be comin' along the farm, and I heard him hollerin', and scoldin', and goin' on, findin' fault with everybody and everythin'. And when I came into the house with 'en he began again. Nothing was right, and he was so impatient and so quick-tempered. 'Tis very provokin' to be annoyed in this way, Dan'l. I don't know what servants in these days be good for but to worry and vex one, with their idle, slovenly ways.' I didn't say nothing for a minute or two. And then I says, 'You must be very much disappointed, sir.' 'How so, Dan'l? Disappointed?' 'I thought you were expecting to receive a very valuable present this morning, sir, and I see it hasn't come.' 'Present, Dan'l'; and he scratched his head, as much as to say, 'Whatever can the man be talkin' about?' 'I certainly heard you speakin' of it, sir,' I says, quite coolly. 'Heard me speak of a valuable present. Why, Dan'l, you must be dreamin'. I've never thought of such a thing.' 'Perhaps not, sir; but you've talked about it; and I hoped it would come whilst I was here, for I should dearly like to see it.' He was gettin' angry with me now, so I thought I would explain. 'You know, sir, this mornin' you prayed for a Christ-like spirit, and the mind that was in Jesus, and the love of God shed abroad in your heart.' 'Oh, that's what you mean, is it!' And he spoke as if that weren't anything at all. 'Now, sir, wouldn't you rather be surprised if your prayer was to be answered? If you were to feel a nice, gentle, lovin' kind of a spirit comin' down upon you, all patient and forgivin' and kind? Why, sir, wouldn't you come to be quite frightened like; and you'd come in, and sit down all in a faint, and reckon you must be a-goin' to die, because you felt so heavenly-minded?' He didn't like it very much," said Dan'l, "but I delivered my testimony, and learnt a lesson for myself too. We should stare very often if the Lord was to answer our prayers." 4. Our prayers are also wrong if they are offered with ulterior aims. St. James was evidently thinking of cases in which men asked for what was very necessary in the endeavour to live the Christian life, meet the Christian obligations, and render the Christian service; but they did not intend to use what they might gain in answer in these spheres. They purposed to spend it on their own pleasures. The great Heart-Searcher, to whom our prayers are addressed, is in no way deceived, and makes no mistakes. We cannot have from Him what we intend to use for other things than those we ask them for. The prodigal son asked for his portion, and the father supposed he was going to

set up in business for himself. That prodigal had an ulterior aim; he meant to see a bit of life, and enjoy himself in the indulgence of his youthful passions; and his prayer to his father had better not have been answered. God never answers, save in judgment, the prayer of a divided purpose. 5. It is but dealing with a familiar point, which gains full treatment elsewhere, to add that prayer is wrong if offered without attendant watching for the answers. Nothing could be more humiliating to a Christian man than for him to be shown the record of the many petitions that he had offered, of which he had thought no more after they were offered. He does not know whether God answered them or not; he never took the trouble to notice. Very possibly he has had many and many a blessing in his life, which he never thought of as being what it really was, a gracious answer to his prayers. We have not. We wish we had. But why do we lack? Why do we fail to obtain the temporal and spiritual blessings that would be the enrichment of our lives? It is all explained. St. James says that two things will sufficiently explain it all. "We ask not"; or else, "We ask amiss." If the lack and failure are explained, the remedy is suggested in the explanation. It also is twofold. Pray; and pray aright. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Ver. 4. *The Marriage Figure of Unfaithfulness to God.*—The prophetical books make constant use of the marriage figure. The nation of Israel is thought of as bound to Jehovah with bonds as close as those with which a wife is bound to her husband. The bond is so suitable to represent the union of the nation with Jehovah, because it rests upon mutual affection; upon the love of the husband for the wife as well as that of the wife for the husband. In the East there is an almost exaggerated jealousy characteristic of husbands, which is illustrated in the case of an Eastern merchant who, on return after a six months' absence from home, offered public thanksgivings because his wife had never once left the house while he was away.

I. **The tie binding the soul to God is like that binding wife to husband.**—It implies a gracious selection and calling on the part of God. A loving response on the part of the soul. Mutual pledges taken; a lifelong covenant entered into. A tie which should become closer day by day as each discovers the worth and goodness of the other.

II. **The peril of breaking the tie binding the soul to God is like the peril of breaking the tie binding the wife to the husband.**—It is the attraction of some other love. In the case of man and woman, either may be drawn aside into heart, or life, unfaithfulness. We can only think of man as possibly unfaithful to God; never of God as unfaithful to man. The *world* is the comprehensive term that gathers up the things that draw men away from God. And we can think of the various forms in which the world presents its attractions. Friendship, implying the going out of our heart to the world, is enmity with God, just as when a wife takes up with another love her own husband becomes distasteful to her.

III. **The consequences of breaking the tie binding us to God are like the consequences of breaking the tie binding the wife to the husband.**—The husband is dishonoured. The home is broken up. The wife is ruined. There are natural penalties that fall on the unfaithful; and the just judgments of God are added to the natural penalties.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 5—10.

Self-humbling a Secret of Right Living.—Self-assurance nourishes all sorts of evil in us, and gives its chance to every kind of temptation that assails us. Take off our allegiance from God, fix it on self, and in St. James's language we become spiritual adulterers and adulteresses. (The prophet Hosea uses similar figures: see chap. ii.) Then if that over-magnifying of the self is the cause of wrong relations with God, and wrong relations with our fellow-men, clearly what is necessary, and what for ourselves may be the duty of the hour, is humbling the self, "mortifying our members which are upon the earth"; or as St. Peter puts it, "Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time."

I. **Humbling self may be our present duty.**—In a general sense it is the Christian's duty at all times; but it also becomes a special duty at particular times and seasons, such as (1) accession of power to our bodily passions; (2) opportunity of self-aggrandisement; (3) prevailing sentiments unduly exalting man; (4) influence of public teachings that tend to nourish man's pride; (5) circumstances specially exciting unworthy and perilous feelings. It is said that "a man's self is his greatest enemy." He who has conquered himself need fear no other foe. But this humbling the self is precisely the duty which men shrink from recognising, and which, when they recognise, they fail to fulfil. Even those who call themselves Christians are often singularly weak in this respect. Getting the self to take and keep its right place has never come to them as a first demand made by Him whom they call Lord and Master.

II. **In humbling self we have a most serious work to do.**—St. James gives us some idea of the things which it may involve, and so impresses its seriousness. 1. It may require a resolute mastery of our wills, a forcible compelling ourselves to yield to God's ordering of life for us. That seems to be suggested by the expression, "Be subject therefore unto God." 2. It may include determinedly putting aside self-interests in order to secure time for communion with God and soul-culture. This seems to be indicated in the counsel, "Draw nigh to God." 3. It is almost certain to require some resolute dealing with our conduct in life. There may be self-seeking things in the actual doing which must at once be given up, or changed in their characters. This seems to be suggested by the strong demand, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." And—4. It may very possibly be necessary to secure outward and bodily helps to self-humbling, self-mortification. Because men have gone to extremes of abusing themselves in misdirected efforts to secure self-abasement, we need not fear to look at the reasonable and practical demand of St. James. Through the body, and well-ordered discipline of the body, we can get at, and wisely influence, the self of passion and lust and temper and habit. If we are to purify our hearts from their self-trustings, it may greatly help us to "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; to let our laughter be turned to mourning, and our joy to heaviness."

III. **In humbling self we have a great foe to resist.**—It is as if there was a spirit in this self. As if it was not ourself that we had to fight, but a separate and outward foe. Whatever view may be taken of the personality of the evil spirit, the evil self is personified, thought of as active, and as a foe to be resisted. Compare St. Paul's expression, "the motions of sins in our members." The devil may also be taken as personifying all those conditions and relationships of life which appeal to, influence, and strengthen the self. Then St. James's advice, "Resist the devil," will be seen to mean this—Do not mistake by assuming that the struggle with self is to be carried on only in the range of feeling and thought, the sphere of the inner life. There is also an outward sphere, a conflict with

forces of evil that are ever at work strengthening the self. He then who would humble himself must fight against "principalities and powers."

IV. **In humbling self we have a great Helper to rely on.**—"But He giveth more grace." "He will draw nigh to you. "He shall exalt you." The idea is this—You are trying to exalt yourselves in your self-confidence. Better "humble yourselves," and let God exalt you, make you stand, in the strength of His grace. He can. He does. He will. What you win in God's exalting you is altogether better than anything you can win by exalting the self.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 5. *Thinking Enviously.*—"Doth the spirit which He made to dwell in us long unto envying?" There is a remarkable difference in the rendering of this passage given in the R.V. margin—"The spirit which He made to dwell in us He yearneth for even unto jealous envy." This rendering connects the passage with the previous reference to the marriage tie. The two ideas suggested by the different renderings are: 1. There is grave danger to the soul when it longs for worldly pleasures even unto envying those who are allowed to enjoy them. 2. God, regarding the soul of man as bound to Him with the closest ties, is profoundly jealous of the relation—"yearneth for us even unto jealous envy," lest any one, or anything, should take our love from Him. For the Old Testament figures, see Jer. iii. 1-11; Ezek. xvi.; Hos. ii. 3. The *spirit* is the spirit in man, not the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 6. *Grace unto Sufficiency.*—"But He giveth more grace"—greater grace. *Dean Plumptre* brings out effectively the point of this sentence: "Following the explanation already given, the sequence of thought seems to run thus: God loves us with a feeling analogous to the strongest form of jealousy, or even envy, but that jealousy does not lead Him, as it leads men, to be grudging in His gifts; rather does He bestow, as its result, a greater measure of His grace than before, or than He would do, were His attitude towards us one of strict, impassioned justice." The term "more grace" suggests how inexhaustible the stores of grace are, so that we never can lack any good thing. There is always *more* available. And it further suggests that no limitations are put upon the supply of the grace by God. He never wearies of giving. He is always ready to bestow *more*; "to make all grace abound unto all sufficiency."

Humility.

I. **Humility has been well termed "the cradle of all other graces."**—In humility they are born. All attainment has been achieved by the acknowledgment that we have not yet attained. The sense of need is the mother of discovery. Nothing is so barren as self-satisfaction. Our Lord's teaching is full of the need of humility. In various terms He insists upon it, as the elementary stage in the life of Christian experience. God giveth grace to the humble, because the humble are a receptacle for His presence.

II. **Some considerations which ought to excite humility.**—1. *The fact that we are God's creatures, that all we possess is from Him, and held by us only for a time.*—Riches, intellect, bodily strength, social status, are God's gifts. May be soon taken from us. Only benefit us if rightly used. 2. *The fact that we are sinful.* Whatsoever good qualities we may possess, by the bounty of God, are more than counterbalanced by the evil which is our own. 3. *The exceeding foolishness of pride, and the serious consequences which may result from it.* How often,

because of some fancied slight, or severe remark, will people nurture in their hearts feelings which must eventually cut them off from intercourse with God.

III. **The more prevalent forms of sin which are opposed to humility are** —1. *A refusal to accept a rebuke when we are perfectly conscious that we have deserved it.* If honestly seeking to grow in grace, we ought to welcome rebuke if it has the effect of checking some fault of which we are guilty. 2. *Exaggerated estimate of our own powers.* This is seen in the scornful look, the contemptuous expression, the constant talking about oneself, in the apparent belief in the infallibility of one's own opinion. How does God view such pride? 3. *A habit of judging the character and conduct of others.* The secret motive of this habit is a craving after praise and flattery. It hinders spiritual progress.

IV. **In cultivating humility beware of false humility and undue self-depreciation.**—It is not humility to profess not to be what we are, or not to possess that which we know that we do possess. Humility does not consist in refusing to acknowledge that we have talents, but in refusing to boast of such talents as if they were self-derived.

V. **Consider the blessings which accompany humility.**—1. *Through humility comes exaltation*, real and abiding—exaltation by the mighty hand of God. "In due time." The depth of our Lord's humiliation was the measure of the height to which He was exalted. 2. *It is through humility that we find strength in God.* "Casting all care upon Him." 3. *If humility be the cradle of the graces, it is also their preservation.* The more we grow in grace, the more humble we shall become, because the more we shall feel that all things are of God.

VI. **As a practical lesson learn to be humble.**—Receive with cheerfulness and readiness, even if not with joy, the humiliations which come to you in every-day life. Cease to resent injuries, to stand upon your rights, to obtrude yourself. Let the cross unite you to the Crucified.—*Canon Vernon Hutton.*

Ver. 7. *The Foe, the Fight, and the Flight.*—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The soul is a citadel which no enemy can storm, a stronghold which cannot be entered but by its own consent. Through the tremendous power of volition it can waive even incarnate Deity from its threshold, and spurn the salvation which He brings. Christian life is a contest, a fight.

I. **The foe.**—"The devil." My conception of the devil is a great, unconscienced intellect under the sway of a moral nature thoroughly unholy. He was once an archangel, but fell, and from the beginning has been the deadly foe of our race. 1. He is a *personal foe.* We must not allow the audacious cavillings of scepticism to neutralise the solemn asseverations of inspiration upon this point. The devil "tempted" Jesus Christ; the devil "entered into" Judas; the devil "desired to have" Peter; the devil "hindered" Paul. Not only Jesus Christ and His apostles, but all the noble and heroic spirits of the past, who have done most to elevate and bless the world, have been firm believers in the personality of the devil. And it is a singular fact that the Churches which most firmly believe and teach that doctrine are not only the most prosperous and aggressive, but the only ones that are doing anything worth speaking of for the evangelisation of the world. The fact is, you cannot run a gospel Church without a devil, and the bad place to which the old fellow belongs. Show me a man who does not believe in the devil, and I will show you a man who has but little knowledge of God so far as saving faith and the blessings of salvation are concerned. 2. He is a *powerful foe.* Indicated in Scripture: (1) By his names. He is called "Apollyon," "Prince of this world," "Beelzebub,"

"Prince of the power of the air," "God of this world." (2) By the *creatures used to represent him.* The *serpent*, whose deadly fangs poison, and whose dreadful coil means death. The roaring *lion*, the terror and king of the forest. The old *dragon*, which, to the Oriental mind, was an incarnation of almost superhuman strength. (3) By the *works attributed to him.* He early accomplished the moral ruin of the race, brought death into the world with all our woe, bound man helplessly to his degrading service, blotting out every ray of light and hope of self-recovery. He is the arch-rebel in God's kingdom—the leader of the hosts of sin, in earth and hell. (4) By the *Divine intervention which was necessary* to break his power and rescue man from his grasp, etc. His power is all the more dreadful and dangerous because of *His vast experience.* He is an old foe. He was here before man came, and here, perhaps, because he saw him coming. *His malice and deception.* He secretes the sorrow and fetters he carries for his victims under the winsome drapery of some pleasure or profit. He uses "wiles," "depths," "darts," "snares," "all deceivableness of unrighteousness," frequently putting on the dissembling gloss of an angel of light.

II. **The fight.**—"Resist the devil." You may plead with man, you may "reason" with God, but you must "resist the devil." Jesus Christ, our elder Brother, has fought and conquered this foe; and in clearing the way for our fight, Jesus tells him, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." "No farther." That is, "those that fight under My banner shall whip you too." But in order to triumph in this great conflict, we must fight according to the prize rules of our great Captain. 1. Negative. *Quit the enemy's service.* The fight cannot even begin until you reach this point. 2. Positive. *Enlist in God's service.* God's veterans are all volunteers. No conscript ever drew blood on this foe; nor was any man ever scolded into this fight, or thrown into it on the horns of a dilemma. The pressure of consciousness and environment through Divine grace must make us willing. 3. Preparative. "*Put on the whole armour of God.*" God's veterans not only enlist, they also get ready for battle. Spiritual cripples are never pitted against this foe. All who face him stand and dress for the fight. "Put on." "And having done all" (that is, completely routed the foe, they are not even weary enough to sit down, but prefer), "to stand." They are "more than conquerors."

III. **The flight.**—He will flee from you. 1. *When will he "flee"?* When he sees you ready for battle and *full of fight.* The devil laughs in his sleeve when he sees the livery of heaven on a coward, or on a person who professes to "resist" him, but who at heart is in sympathy with him and his work. But nothing so completely routs him as heroic resistance. "He will flee from you." Attack a courageous foe, and "he will flee" at you, not "from you." Herein is seen the devil's cowardice. Only cowards run. Manly resistance routs the old deceiver so quickly that he is obliged to drop some of the fetters wherewith he had hoped to bind his victim, until finally in his approaches he will leave his fetters behind; and though he may still continue to annoy us, he will have little hope of bringing us into serious bondage. 2. How often will he "flee"? *Every time he is manfully "resisted."* He knows we are creatures of varying moods, and that his defeat to-day may end in ours to-morrow. The promise, "He will flee," has two glorious meanings: 1. *Temporary flight.* "He will flee," to return again, to annoy, vex, trouble. But in spite of his return the Christian may still retain the victory, and every time force him to "flee." 2. *Eternal flight.* This takes place in the valley of the shadow of death, and, blessed be God! involves a double flight. The enemy will "flee" from the departing spirit as a hopeless case, and the emancipated soul shall soar and mount upward to the society of the redeemed

and the mansions of the blessed," and so shall ever be with the Lord."—*Thomas Kelly, D.D.*

Ver. 8. *On the Reality of Man's Intercourse with his Maker.*—There is one sense in which God cannot draw more "nigh" to any man than He is already. The fact of the omnipresence of Deity lies at the foundation of all religion. It is impossible to express by language the closeness of the relation existing between the Creator and the creation. His power gives energy to every cause, to every force. Yet how remarkable is the unbroken silence in which God the Lord dwells among men. In the sphere of sense there is no personal revelation—not to the wicked, not even to the good. Neither in the world, nor in the sanctuary, nor in solitude is the silence ever broken to the suppliant. How then can we "draw nigh to God," so that He will "draw nigh to us"?

I. **In the study and belief of His revelation.**—1. The condition of God's spiritual action in the souls of men is honest attention to truth. The causes which render it difficult to attend earnestly to the study of the word of God are such as, earthly interests, the cares of business, love of pleasure, love of excitement, pleasures of the imagination, idle reading, moral repulsion. Much of God's providence has for its object to produce the attention necessary for salvation. 2. To bring the mind into earnest contact with those writings which express His mind is to "draw nigh to God." It is not, however, essential to master the whole breadth of the revelation in order to attain the assurance that in the Bible we are conversing with the living God.

II. **In prayer and thanksgiving.**—God can communicate without words. A quiet secrecy marks God's revelations to men. He diffuses over the soul a spiritual sense of His presence. There is no intercourse so real as that of mind with mind, and heart with heart.

III. **In the practice of obedience.**—When the soul has received the blessing of acceptance with God in Christ, it also receives into itself the principle of a loving and healthful obedience which brings it into conscious union with the Most High.—*Edward White.*

Ver. 10. *Humility before God.*—The expression used here, and also in 1 Pet. v. 6, is "Humble yourselves," and not merely "Be humble." It is in harmony with the passage that the meaning should be—Deal resolutely with yourselves, so as to keep down all risings of pride and self-confidence. The suggestion is—Be watchful and determined in all necessary self-discipline. But it is the resolute effort to keep ourselves in right attitudes before God, and right relations with Him, which secures a humility which is not humiliation, and which puts us into right relations with our fellow-men. "Humble yourselves *in the sight of the Lord.*" Two things may be illustrated and enforced: 1. *The effect of an attitude of humility before God on our daily life.* Humility before men too easily degenerates into weakness. It may became such humility as is caricatured in Uriah Heep. But humility before God is found to put a gracious tone upon the relationships of life. It prevents our manifesting the restlessness and self-assertion which so greatly disturb ordinary relations. It gives us a principle for life-guidance; it keeps near us the sense of a *Presence*; and it provides us with a consciousness of a strength and efficiency, which make us master of circumstances. The humble man before God is the strong, wise man before life's duties and claims. 2. *The influence of humility before God in securing Divine benedictions.* "He shall exalt you." It is not merely that God rewards the trustfulness of humility with actual blessings; it is also that to the humble soul God gives *Himself*, and the man is no longer mere man,

but exalted to be, what Christ was (yet within human limitations), man and God with him.

God's Ways with Humble Souls.—God protects the humble and delivers him; He loves and consoles him; He inclines Himself towards the humble man, He bestows on him exceeding grace, and after his humiliation he lifts him up to glory; He reveals His secrets to the humble, and sweetly draws and leads him to Himself.—*Thomas à Kempis.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11, 12.

Criticising Persons.—Again and again we are reminded how thoroughly St. James was imbued with the spirit and the teachings of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. This paragraph presents a fresh instance. It is an evident echo of our Lord's familiar words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." St. James does not, however, take precisely the same point of view. To him the habit of thinking and speaking evil of brethren is a sign of triumphant self-conceit, which sets a man above everybody else, and even above the law.

I. **Criticism is a power of human nature with a mission of blessing.**—If everybody was merely receptive, the world would make no progress, and evil would have unchecked facilities. There must be those among us who can see the other side, take things to pieces, discover and show up faults. They may not be pleasant people; but they are most necessary ones. Art, science, and religion would fare ill without them.

II. **Criticism can be exercised rightly about things, and about the actions of persons.**—We can criticise a picture, a statue, an animal. And we may criticise the actions of corporate bodies, societies, churches, nations. It may even come to be our immediate duty to criticise the *actions* of individuals, and to say stern and severe things about them. And when it is our duty, we may not, under any plea, hesitate to say the seemingly evil things that have to be said.

III. **Criticism must be put into the strictest limitations when it is exercised about persons.**—And especially about fellow-Christians, over whose reputations we ought ever to be most jealous. The distinction between criticising the actions of persons and criticising persons is not usually set forth. It may be right to say, "The man has done a wrong thing"; but we have no right to say, "The man is a bad man." It is that evil-speaking of *persons* that both our Lord and St. James reprove. Judging persons is God's reserved and exclusive right. It is breaking the law to exercise a power which we are forbidden to exercise.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 11. *The Mischief wrought by Evil-speaking.*—"Speak not one against another, brethren." One of the most painful signs of human depravity is the almost universal disposition to think evil and to speak evil of others. There is indeed something worse than that—we actually find *pleasure* in thinking and speaking the evil. It is often a most humbling self-revelation to find ourselves actually pleased at hearing something to the detriment of another. The bad spirit in us is sadly nourished by the daily reading in the newspapers of men's wrong-doings. Our minds are degraded by being constantly filled with stories of the vices and crimes of men. We become interested in evil rather than in good.

I. **Mischief is wrought by evil-**

speaking in the evil-speaker.—Our Lord put this among the things that coming out of a man defile the man. It is always a moral mischief to allow an evil disposition to gain expression. It strengthens itself by expression. What we have to do with all sinful motions in our members, and all evil tendencies, is to stifle and silence them. This is emphatically the case with the disposition to see evil in our brother, and to speak of the evil. It is far better to say nothing about our brother if we cannot say something good. The habit of seeing and dwelling on the evil so grows on a man that by-and-by he gets a jaundiced vision, and can see nothing but the evil; and then he finds his spirit soured, and his power of enjoying human friendship taken away. Nobody wants the disagreeable man, for he sees good in nobody.

II. **Mischief is wrought by evil-speaking for those evil spoken of.**—Here the way in which the ill word starts reports that grow into ruinous slanders needs to be considered. But this is very familiar. It is fresher to trace the mischief done to the heart of the man who is spoken evil of. If the evil is true, reporting it only hardens the man, and puts hindrances in the way of his recovery. If the evil is untrue, the man is embittered by the sense of injury done to him, and broken off from helpful human fellowships. It may be added that too often an evil report has actually ruined a man's life-prospects.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—17.

Self-confidence in Our Life-plans.—St. James has still in mind the same wrong mood of self-reliance and self-assertion. It is altogether unbecoming to those who have professed to make full surrender of their hearts and wills and lives to Christ. Its evil influence is seen in the relations and associations of Christians. This St. James has already shown. Now he shows that it will make the Christian professor look wrongly at his own life, take it out of the hand of God, and try to manage it himself. It leads him to say what he will do, and what he will not do, without any acts of loving dependence upon God—without any thought that his "times are altogether in God's hands," and that he has no "to-morrow" until God gives it to him, and then he must call it "to-day." St. James's teaching recalls to mind our Lord's parable of the rich fool, who made his plans for many a year, and died the very night after he had made his resolves (Luke xii. 16).

I. **Human life is in a sense in human control.**—"The earth hath He given to the sons of men." Every man has a right to anticipate that he will live through to old age; and every man ought to look upon the life given to him as the scene on which he is to put his impress, and in which he is to show his energy, ministering to his generation. Every man ought to have (1) a consciousness of power; (2) a noble aim; (3) a well-formed plan; and (4) a persistent energy in carrying through his plan. Life is, to every man, very much what he chooses to make of it. It is true that he is surrounded by forces that are wholly beyond his control, and that keep him in limitations; but it is also true that he is entrusted with forces, which he is able to control and use in order to carry through plans and purposes which he may form. To each individual whom God sets forth in His world, He repeats the command given to the first man whom He made—"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." It does not honour God to detract from the dignity and independence of the creature that He was pleased to make in His own image. And we may be sure that all advanced truths of revelation are

perfectly consistent with the primary truths of nature. To a great extent, then, human life is in human control. A man may properly think over and decide what he shall do with it, where he shall bestow all his fruits and his goods. The business man is doing quite right when he anticipates the markets, and plans his productions accordingly—when he says to himself, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain." The *thing* planned is not wrong. The *spirit* of the planning may be altogether wrong. And it is the self-seeking, self-confident spirit in the planning with which St. James alone has to deal in this passage.

II. **Human life is, in a sense, not in human control.**—There is an overruling plan for every life which God makes, and holds as His own secret, so that it shall not, unnecessarily, interfere with man's free experiment. It includes the length, the spheres, the bodily and mental powers, the circumstances, and the issues. Every life that has ever been lived was a Divinely shaped "puzzle-piece," and fitted in precisely to its place in the making of the great picture of humanity. All true life has a Divine plan, does God's work, and submits to His leading. As *Dr. Bushnell* so skilfully puts it, "God has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him, visibly or invisibly, for some exact thing, which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished." "There is a definite and proper end, or issue, for every man's existence,—an end which, to the heart of God, is the good intended for him, or for which he was intended; that which he is privileged to become, called to become, ought to become; that which God will assist him to become, and which he cannot miss, save by his own fault. Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God—a Divine biography marked out, which it enters into life to live. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, an experience led on by God and unfolded by His secret nurture, as the trees and the flowers, by the secret nurture of the world; a drama cast in the mould of a perfect art, with no part wanting; a Divine study for the man himself, and for others; a study that shall for ever unfold, in wondrous beauty, the love and faithfulness of God; great in its conception, great in the Divine skill with which it is shaped; above all, great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares." How human life can thus be, in a sense, within our own control, and, in a sense, altogether beyond our control, we may learn from family life. Parents fashion life-plans for their children, and move steadily towards their outworking, overcoming, within the limits of their power, all hindrances that come in their way. But under the parental control the children move to and fro quite freely, working out their own little plans, so mysteriously influenced by the parents that their little plans all bear towards the working out of the parents' great ones. Lives go wrong when strong wilfulness in children forces their plan against the parental. So long as man keeps the child-spirit towards God, he is fully content that thus his life should be, and yet should *not* be, in his own control.

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will."

III. **Human life is in the Divine control.**—"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." St. James puts this truth into one particular: the uncertainty of the length of life to man; the control of the length of life which God has. There is always this reminder of God whenever man tries to plan the future. He cannot be sure that he will live to carry out his plan. "Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee." Let any man sit down to make a plan for to-morrow, for next year, and there must come into his soul this reminder of the Divine control

over our "morrows." "What is your life? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

"To-morrow, Lord, is Thine,
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand;
And if its sun arise and shine,
It shines by Thy command."

IV. **Within Divine control life is within human control.**—And this is the precise attitude and relation in which the Christian stands. The Divine control he is fully assured of, and in it he greatly rejoices. But it in no way interferes with his sense of personal responsibility, with his energy and enterprise. He plans, as other men plan; he looks forward, as other men look forward; he works toward an aim, as other men work toward an aim. But there is a cherished mood of humility, submission, and dependence in him which the worldly man knows nothing of. When that mood finds expression in words, it says, "If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that." What is wrong is (1) the vauntings of self-confidence, as if we had full control of our lives, which we have not; and, on the other hand (2) the fatalism—whatever pietistic form it may take—which leads us to think or to say we have no control of our lives, and therefore it is of no use to plan, or to anticipate and provide for the future. True religion ennobles a man's manliness—it never enfeebles or crushes it. In everything that is manly the Christian's sense of God should make him more manly. And it is manly and Christian to grip life with a strong hand. Life is entrusted to us that we may spend it in working out *God's* plan, through working out *our own*; and "man is immortal till his work is done." "Find out the plan of God in your generation, and then beware lest you cross that plan, or fail to find your own place in it" (*Prince Albert*). "Our work is but a segment in the great sphere of God's eternal work; and if we have eyes to see, we may read in that portion of His work which belongs to us our name and the date of the present year" (*Pastor Monod*).

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 13. *Over-confidence a Sign of Selfishness.*—"We will." The man says "I will" who is determined to *get for himself*. It is that getting for self which puts all the strength into the "I will." Notice how differently men speak when the matter concerns some one else. If they are asked to do a kind deed, how cautious they become, what qualifications they put upon their promises: they will try; they will see if they can find the means and opportunity; but there never is the "We will" of self-centredness. It is true that there must be more strength and energy put into our own concerns, and it is the excess of confidence, not the confidence within wise limitations, which St. James reproves. What is called "success in life" is often the response to self-willed energy.

I. **The over-confident man chiefly thinks about himself.**—He would never be over-confident if he did not. It is just that circling of all his interests about himself, just that self-satisfaction, which makes him so confident. The man may be best seen in the boy. The boasting, bragging boy is self-centred, conceited, always talking about himself, and telling what he is going to do. And such a boy is usually left alone by his comrades, to enjoy the *self* of which he makes so much.

II. **The over-confident man chiefly plans for himself.**—The particular impulse to undue confidence is self-interest. This man is going to buy and sell and get gain for himself, and

that accounts for the determination, the decided resolve, the "I will." See what other considerations come in when a man plans for others. The best for them puts limitations on his positiveness. He *knows* what he would like, but he is not so sure what they would like. And he is strangely alive to hindrances and difficulties when he plans for others, which he never allows to disturb him when he plans for himself.

III. **The over-confident man does not take God into his thought.**—To do so at once puts limits on self-will; because if God is taken into account, our will must be ever kept in harmony with His will.

Plan-making.—With that absolute confidence in every truth that was true, though it might seem to conflict with some other truth, which was characteristic of the great Teacher, He both commended and condemned "forethought." Wise attention to the responsibilities of the future, and careful preparation to meet them worthily, our Lord commended, when He spoke of the king taking serious counsel as to his ability to meet the advancing enemy. Worryful restlessness and fear, that people the future with nothing but ghostly shapes of disaster and woe, He condemned in His paradoxical way, by bidding His disciples even "take no thought for the morrow."

I. **The duty of making plans.**—We cannot be intelligent and moral beings without recognising the duty of making plans. It is essential to developed manhood that it should have an aim in life. A man, to be a man, must have something to live for—something that he means to attain, or means to win. If he has, he cannot but order and shape his life so as to secure his aim; and that is making a plan. The duty is seen if we realise what the human life is that has no plan. What sort of a man is that who never makes any—who never sees beyond the place of his next foot-fall—who is satisfied if he is fed, and clothed, and gets a little pocket-money for his self-indulgences? Do you call that a man made in the image of God? There are very many around us who are in that way simply drifting down into eternity. They need to be shaken and aroused. They need to be told that they have a future. The uncertainty of life is not the supreme thing for them to take into account. They need to say to themselves, and in a very resolute way, "I have got to live, and I must plan to make the very best of my life." Let no man think it is pious to imagine that he is going to die, and then let the imagination relax his moral muscles, and make his hands hang down. It is the duty of every man to make plans, to cover his life with plans—to use his judgment and his business ability, and so to make the best of both worlds, but first of this. If a man has not done nobly and well with the trust of this life which God has committed to him, how can he expect, or how can he be fitted for, the higher trusts of the life to come?

II. **The revelation of men's characters in their plan-making.**—When imagination overmasters judgment, a man's plans are but baseless, dreamy, hopeless "castles in the air." When a man has gained but little self-restraint or skill in self-management, he plans so foolishly, and has so little power to carry out his plans, that he is constantly making plans, each new one as practically hopeless as those he made before. When a man is over-confident of himself, his plans are so absurdly big that no giant could ever carry them through. Men can always be searched through and through, if you can only get them to tell you their idea and hope for the future. Religion, because it tones and harmonises all a man's faculties, and because it cultures the noblest elements of human character, helps a man to make sober, wise, reasonable, and workable life-plans. Religion does not crush the ambition that aims at high things. It

inspires to really higher things than the man of the world can imagine, but it delivers from the self-interest and self-seeking and self-confidence which make the ambition seek unreasonable things, unworthy things, and things that can only be attained at the disadvantage and suffering of others. It is a matter worth taking into serious account that we are all disclosed to men, and to God, by the plans we have made for our lives.

III. **The cherished spirit that ought to be behind all plan-making.**—St. James tells us what that spirit should be. He does not mean that always and everywhere we should be qualifying our speech by inserting the sentence, "If the Lord will." The man he introduces is making his plans by himself, he is talking them over to himself; he is not telling other people about them. He speaks thus in his heart; and "as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is." And the advice given is for the same private sphere. When a man is making his plans, he should be saying to himself, "If the Lord will." This should represent the spirit that he cherishes—the spirit which gives character and tone to all his schemes. Is such a spirit in any sense at all unmanly? Nay, it is essential to truest manliness, if man is a creature, if man is a son, if man is a servant. To take life masterfully into our own hands, and say, "It shall be just as I wish," is not to be a man at all; it is to make claim to be an independent being—a god—which man is not. But that spirit which ought to be behind all our plan-making is not easy to gain or easy to maintain. It has its rootage in right relations with God. It gains its support in our constantly keeping up those right relations.

IV. **The influence of that spirit on the outworking and the issue of our life-plans.**—When a man's self-will is in his plans, he will put forth a tremendous energy, and resolutely persevere. Does not the spirit of dependence on God pluck away a man's energy, and make his efforts fitful and uncertain? Such a question may be asked, and with some reasonableness, for Christians are sometimes very inefficient in the business of life, and in its battle. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." But this is a matter of weakness of natural disposition, and is not to be charged to the influence of Christian principle. What is true is, that the cherished spirit of dependence at once inspires energy and tones it. It does give a man a calmness and a self-restraint which qualify the intensities and extravagances of human energy; but it knits the whole forces of a man's nature together in such a way as to give the man the highest power for the life-struggle.

Vers. 13-15. *Negative and Positive Christian Duties.*—The instruction here lies before us in a twofold form—the persuasive and the hortatory, the negative and the positive, what we are *not* to think and feel and do, and what we *are* to think and feel and do. 1. Here is dissuasion from presumption—from thoughtless, reckless confidence in the immediate future, in the year that is thought about, and in the self that is to make it so and so. The whole spirit of the persons here instructed and warned is full of presumptuousness, inconsiderateness, headstrong wilfulness. It is as if they had absolute control over events, over other men, over themselves, almost over God. It is not the *self* that is objected to, but the self *alone*—the self self-poised, self-nourished, self-directed, self-sustained: let it have direction from heaven, and inspiration of God, and secret nourishment from the fountain of His all-sufficiency, and the *self* is then the best thing in the world. 2. The spirit here condemned is a *spirit of worldliness.* What is worldliness? It is buying and selling and getting gain, and spending the strength of life and its years *in that.* But it is not the act; it is the motive in the act, the principle that

rules it, the end that is sought by it, that makes it evil. To be unworldly is to be unsordid, unslippery, unselfish. It is to be honest, true, tender, generous, spiritual, devout. Look now at the positive side. 1. A distinct realisation and acknowledgment of God. "If the Lord will," we ought to say—then of course there *is* a Lord God to will, and work, direct, watch, and keep. 2. The Lord has a will in everything that enters into a man's life. There is no difficulty in understanding the will of God in the greatest things; there is in the smaller and seemingly unimportant things. What are we to do? Acknowledge God; ascertain His will concerning yourself, as far as you can; walk in the light of it, do it faithfully, and all else will unfold. Keep and cultivate the spirit of devoutness, of dependence, of submissiveness, of obedience, of *godliness.—Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*

Ver. 14. "*What is your life?*"—Various answers are given to this question by men according to their disposition, experience, state of mind at the time, and degree of faith. The Bible images and conceptions of life are "sleep," "flood," "grass," "tale told," "flower," "vapour." The materialist, the philosopher, Voltaire, man who has lost and wept, man who has sinned deeply, and the Christian, would each give a different answer to this question. Our views of life change with changing time. Two mistakes are often made: the one in making too much of life, as if it were everything; the other in making too little of life, as if it were nothing.

I. **Some considerations which make us think that life is small and mean.**—1. *Common and valueless thing, because it seems to exist in such quantities.* Valuable things are rare. Look at multitudes in great cities, in China—the infant mortality which seems to imply that life is a very cheap thing. 2. *Its shortness.* Things that do not last long are not regarded as worth much. Life is done before almost anything is completed. 3. *The way it deceives men.* Its appearances and promises are fallacious. An illusion, if not a delusion. The whole of life seems to be constructed on the principle of luring men on by the hope of one thing, and then giving them either nothing or something else. 4. *For the great mass of people life escapes being an illusion only because it is so complete a drudgery.* They wear harness almost without intermission. They are in the track, and round they must go. 5. *If life were of value, surely men would have found out by this time that it is so.* Yes; but life is allowed to slip through the impassive hands of men.

II. **Some considerations which compel us to feel that life is great.**—To triflers only is life a trifle. 1. *Life is great in its moral significance.* Even the confusion of his nature, his self-contradiction, his waywardness, his resolute set towards evil, do not take from the greatness of the nature and the significance of the life. 2. *Can human life be small when God once passed through it?* A thing is sacred by its associations. The Almighty once wore this human life as a garment. 3. *Think of the Holy Ghost's mission.* A really Divine personal force in the place of human life transfigured; it gives infinite meaning. 4. *Life is much to me, because it is mine.* The only thing that is. My section cut out of the mass of ages. My handwriting on the huge scroll of time. My probation. This makes it of supreme value to me. 5. *Life is great when we realise that it is passed on the edge of eternity.* We have now all the significance that belongs to the spiritual and everlasting sphere, because we are, even now, all our life touching it. Surely this makes life an awful thing. "We should not always be thinking of death." It depends entirely how we think of it. We should think of it, not to unman us, but to force us to be real. The sense of the possible nearness of death should make us collected and awed. What is my life? What do I wish it to be? Is Christ in it? is God in it? is hope in it? Is there eternal power in it?

It is a vapour, a cloud. But there are different kinds of clouds. Let our life not be like those clouds which are chilled and fall to earth, but like those which soar upwards in the glory of the everlasting sun.—*John F. Ewing, M.A.*

An Emblem of the Uncertainty of Life.—"For ye are a vapour." The point of the illustration lies in the transient character of vapour, steam, or mist—the breath of the mouth, the smoke from the chimney, the steam from the engine. It is palpable, but only for a while, and even while it is with us it is going, and soon it is gone. Uncertain in its going, for it is entirely dependent on the state of the atmosphere around. Life is like a vapour. It is here; but you cannot imprison and keep it. It is going even while it is here, and its time of going depends on so many things over which we have no control. If a man duly estimates the transient and uncertain character of human life, he cannot presume on any future, and make any absolute decisions as to what he *will do* and what he *will not*. For the figure see Job vii. 7; Ps. cii. 3; Wisd. v. 9-16.

Life a Vapour.—We are not sure of life itself, since it is but as a *vapour*, something in appearance, but nothing solid or certain; it is easily scattered and gone. We can fix the hour and minute of the sun's rising and setting to-morrow, but we cannot fix the certain time of a vapour's being scattered. Such is our life: "it appear but for a little time, and then vanisheth away"; it vanisheth as to this world, but there is a life that will continue in the other world; and since this life is so uncertain, it concerns us all to prepare and lay up in store for that to come.—*Matthew Henry.*

Human Life transitory.

I. **How men make the mistake of regarding their life as something solid and stable.**—1. They calculate upon the certain continuance of their strength. 2. They reckon on an indefinite prolonging of life. They think the next life will much resemble this.

II. **The fact that human life is but a vapour.**—1. The uncertainty of life. 2. The universal certainty of death.

III. **How we may rectify these errors in ourselves.**—We should—1. Understand the reality of the case. 2. Become entirely reconciled to it. 3. Accommodate all our views, feelings, and plans to it.—*Dr. Kirk.*

Lessons from Mist or Vapour.

I. Our first lesson is drawn from **the ephemeral nature of vapour.**

> "Like mist on the mountain, like waves of the sea,
> So quickly the years of our pilgrimage flee."

The time allotted to us here is none too long to fulfil the duties assigned us, and make preparation for the life which lies beyond. It is strange, indeed, that men should be so careless of the fact, even while they are profoundly convinced that there is a future for the soul, and that beyond the mists of this life there shall open an eternal day. It is not strange that those who are overwhelmed with the cares and pressing engagements and hard conflicts of this life should at times permit these things to dim their views of God, of coming judgment, and the heaven of the redeemed. But certain it is that the fact of these obscuring earth-born mists does not blot out the more substantial facts of God and eternity. This life hides heaven, but it comes out again with the vanishing mist. The vapour vanishes, but the day remains. Let us so live that we shall remain within the precincts of eternal day. It is the duty of man to think of his life in this its larger outlook. Our life is a vapour, but there are possibilities within it of which we never yet have dreamed.

II. The mist teaches that our brief life **should be a life of blessing.** The mist is one of the nutritive forces of nature. Our life may be a vapour in the benevolent phase of the figure of the text. Life is brief, but it may be

a benediction. And God is best glorified by an honest endeavour on the part of every man to bring and keep a blessing within the world.

III. Our third lesson comes to us from **the obedience of the mist to the will and law of the Creator.** See Job xxxvii. 27, 28; Ps. cxxxv. 7, cxlviii. 7, 8. We may well be *shamed* into our duty by the obedience to Divine law which is stamped everywhere upon the creatures of inanimate nature. From cloud, rain, and dew, from vapour of water, from mist, we expect, always expect, expect without deviation, qualification, or delay, most implicit discharge of the functions which the almighty Creator has imposed upon them. They never fail the hand that made them. They never go counter to the will whose force set them originally in play.

IV. Our last lesson comes from **the use of mist as a symbol of judgment upon the wicked.** See Acts xiii. 11; 2 Pet. ii. 17. In the one of these cases the judgment appears to have been a physical, in the other a spiritual one. The figurative expression "mist" is an apt symbol of that soul out of whose horizon the vision of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings has been permitted to drop away. If it be but a momentary mist—"a vapour that appeareth for a little while"—even thus it is sad enough, for a life without the presence of Christ to brighten and bless it must be a hopeless one. The rejection of Christ, the doubt of unbelief, is a mist of darkness which can only deepen the misery of man's estate. It brings to him in this life restlessness, hopelessness, and despair. Let us devoutly hope that upon none of us shall this mist of darkness settle in the coming eternity. It is sometimes the case in Christian experience that there comes a glimpse of the horror of this mist of darkness in the form of spiritual fears and doubts. These do not cover the fundamental points of faith, but simply obscure the individual's hope as to his own interest in these great facts. Such may take this comfort. Mists love the lowlands. Forsake the lowlands of unbelief. Go higher! on wings of faith mount nearer to the throne, nearer to that hill whose healing cross is the central point of human hopes. As you draw near in reverent trust, there shall fall for you the light that, if it do not disperse all mists in this weary and wicked world of ours, shall at least lift your spirit out of them, and give you that sunshine which God appoints for His own. —*H. C. McCook, D.D.*

Ver. 15. *The Saying, "If God will." "Deo Volente."*—In the same way as Jews, with an over-literalness, put little boxes, containing the words of the law, on their foreheads and on their arms, so have Christians, with an over-literalness, put D.V. into their writings, and even into bills of services and meetings. No such formal obedience of St. James's injunction is either necessary or expected. And that over-literalness is in peril of nourishing a hypocritical or a pietistic sensationalism. Too often it comes to represent the "Stand by, I am holier than thou" kind of feeling, which most seriously injures our Christian relations. The spirit of dependence on God, and of entire submission to His will, is a spirit which must be cherished, but which, if cherished, will find its fitting expression in the tone and temper of all our words and intercourse, and never need gain any forced and precise utterance in a mere sentence. When it is the mood of the soul, all who have to do with us *feel it*; and that is better for them than merely hearing it; and certainly far better for us.

Acknowledging God's Will.—The Jews began nothing without an *if God* or *if* THE NAME (meaning God) *will.* And it was a saying of Ben Syra, a distinguished Jew, "Let a man never say he will do anything before he says, 'If God will.'" So Cyrus, king of Persia, when, under the pretence of hunting, he designed an expedition into Armenia, upon which a hare

started and was seized by an eagle, said to his friends, "This will be a good or prosperous hunting to us, *if God will.*" So Socrates says, "But I will do this, and come unto thee to-morrow, if God will" (Xenophon's *Cyropedia*, lib. ii., cap. 25; *Plato in Alcibiade*, p. 135). And it is reported of the Turks that they submit everything to the Divine will, as the success of war, or a journey, or anything of the least moment they desire to be done; and never promise themselves or others anything but under this condition, *Inshallah*, that is, "If God will."—*Ingram Cobbin, M.A.*

Ver. 17. *The Responsibility of Knowledge.*—It is a noble saying of Lotze, "We do not honour God by elaborating proofs of His existence." We are still elaborating the proofs. Preaching is apologetic rather than declarative. The best way of honouring Jesus Christ is to believe His word, trust His grace, mark the triumphs of His saving power, and, for ourselves, to act on the facts we know. The text has two things—an exhortation and a statement.

I. **The exhortation.**—*Act on what you know.* We all know more than we live up to. We see Christianity very much more clearly in our intelligence than others witness it in our lives. We understand Jesus Christ better than we live Him. Our practice lags lumberingly behind our knowledge. Conscience is always ahead of conduct; knowing, of doing. In almost no respect do we practise, in morals, all we know. Now it is remarkable that, notwithstanding this state of things, our efforts are bent on increasing our knowledge rather than on improving our conduct. Men want to know all about Christianity before practising the A B C's. I find myself seeking to expound Christianity to your intelligence, when, just now, the far more urgent matter is to get the elements of Christianity, which all understand, into your conduct. It is just so that the wide discrepancy between our knowledge and our practice has obtained. We have pushed, and are still pushing, our knowledge of Christian teaching at the expense of our practice of Christian teaching. It is far more important to a well-rounded character to blot out this discrepancy than to push our intellectual comprehension of Jesus. The greater need is to practise, to act on what we know, not to know more. Besides, our present course ignores two important facts: (1) The very end of knowledge is to be enacted; and (2) to practise what we know is the very best way of extending our knowledge. He "that willeth to *do* . . . shall *understand.*" Those people who insist on understanding all of Christian teaching before practising any of it never understand any of it profoundly. Jesus said His teaching had to be lived before it could fully certify itself. The exhortation of the text is a ringing one, and comes to our time with peculiar aptness and force—*Act on what you know!* It is an exhortation to Churches, as well as to individuals, and to the Church at large. Churches are still busy at work purging and elaborating and refining their creeds. Thus is Christianity of the head continually refined, while Christianity of the heart and conduct remains, on an average, below par. The demand of the hour upon the Church is, Bring up the rear; bring conduct up to conscience, practice up to profession; bring deeds up to knowledge. It is safe to say that if the Church should devote a generation to the effort to bring its life up to present statements of belief and knowledge, we might bring in the millennium.

II. There is here not only the exhortation, Act on what you know—but the statement, **If you do not, it is sin.** Knowledge entails immediate responsibility, failure to meet which is sin. A man whose conduct falls short of his knowledge of what is right is a sinner. So a Church. To defer the doing of what we know of Christian teaching—a right thing—is to do a wrong thing; and, moreover, our omissions of known duty unfit us more and more for new duties—indeed, for

all duties: the movements of the soul are clogged by disuse. "Ignorance of the law excuseth no man." The text refers only to those who know to do good, but who do it not. These are sinners, whether they are unsaved and neglect the salvation of which they are well informed, or Christians whose profession is one thing and whose practice is another, or Churches who spend their time expelling heretics while the poor and vicious and godless surge past their doors unpitied and unsought.—*E. M. Poteat.*

Knowing with Doing.—In the *Beautiful Legend* there is a strife between the call of duty to give out a dole of bread to the hungry, and the temptation to linger in religious ecstasy over a vision of Christ. But the true brother knew "to do good," and did it; and, returning at the end of his work, found his cell full of the radiant presence of the Lord, and heard the words of gracious approval—

"Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled."

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 7. *Temptation.*—When the devil tempts a man to commit any wickedness, he does, as it were, lay a long train of sins; and if the first temptation take, they give fire one to another. Let us, then, resist the beginning of sin; because then we have the most power, and sin hath the least.—*Tillotson.*

Two Great Proverbs.—There are two great proverbs, one among the Turks, and the other among the Spaniards, both of which contain much that is true. "A busy man is troubled with but one devil; but the idle man with a thousand." "Men are usually tempted by the devil; but the idle man positively tempts the devil." How much corrupting company, how many temptations to do wrong, how many seasons of danger to your character, and danger to the peace of your friends, may you escape by regarding the admonition, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you."

Vers. 14, 15.—*Providence acknowledged.*—With all our wish to inquire into the future, a thoughtful mind will not fail to acknowledge the wisdom and love of God in keeping it back from us. "What little child," says the author of *Recreations of a Country Parson*, in an essay on the "Art of Putting Things"—"what little child would have heart to begin the alphabet, if, before he did so, you put clearly before him all the school and college work of which it is the beginning? The poor little thing would knock up at once, wearied out by your want of skill in putting things. And so it is that Providence, kindly and gradually putting things, wiles us onward, still keeping hope and heart through the trials and cares of life. Ah! if we had had it put to us at the outset how much we should have to go through to reach even our present stage of life, we should have been ready to think it the best plan to sit down and die at once; but, in compassion for human weakness, the great Director and Shower of events practises *the art of putting things.*"

CHAPTER V.

RULES FOR DAILY CONDUCT.

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Rich men.**—Always in Scripture, the men who are proud of their riches, centred in their riches, and are nothing but rich. The good man, who happens to have the trust of wealth, and is trying to use it faithfully, should not be thought of as addressed in Scripture reproofs. **Howl.**—Only used here in the New Testament, but found in Isa. xiii. 6, xiv. 31, xv. 3; "weep with howling," a desperate form of distress. Illustrate by the woes that came on the rich in connection with the siege of Jerusalem. **Shall come.**—Better, "are now actually coming."

Ver. 3. **Cankered.**—Rusted; used generally of the tarnish that comes over all metals

exposed to the action of the air. **Witness against you.**—"For a witness to you," not testimony against, but warning lest. **For the last.**—Better, "in the last." Evidently in mind is the speedy fulfilment of our Lord's predictions.

Ver. 4. **Of the Lord of sabaoth.**—*Κυρίου Σαβαώθ.* Lord of hosts, especially characteristic name found in Malachi.

Ver. 5. **Lived in pleasure.**—Better, "ye lived luxuriously and spent wantonly." **As in.**—Better, "in." "The 'rich men' of Judæa, in their pampered luxury, were but fattening themselves, all unconscious of their doom, as beasts are fattened for the slaughter" (*Plumptre*).

Ver. 6. **The just.**—Not specifically "the Just One," but generally "pious, righteous men."

Ver. 7. Margin, "suffer with long patience." St. James inculcates a systematic course of action. **Early and latter rain.**—*Early* rain fell from October to February, *latter* from March to end of April.

Ver. 9. **Grudge not.**—A caution against an impatient, querulous temper. "Complain not." "Groan not."

Ver. 11. **Endure.**—Some prefer "endured." **Pitiful.**—Large-hearted; tender-hearted. The word used, *πολύσπλαγχνος*, is peculiar, and it is thought may have been coined by St. James.

Ver. 13. **Merry.**—Of good cheer, gladsome at heart. **Psalm.**—The word suggests a composition fitted to an accompaniment of music.

Ver. 14. **Call for.**—Summon to him. **Elders.**—Officers usual in synagogues, and probably also found in the Jewish Christian congregations. Not priests, or even ministers. **Anointing him with oil.**—Clearly not as a religious ceremony, but as an agency for the recovery of health. It is also suggested that the use of oil in the toilet was a recognised sign of recovery to health. Compare our Lord's saying to the maiden *Arise!* as if she was actually restored to life and health.

Ver. 15. **Prayer of faith.**—The only kind of prayer that ever is acceptable to God: chap. i. 6. The prayer that is answered in the restoration of a sick member in no way differs from the prayers for ordinary blessings. Christian prayer is "the prayer of faith." **Sins.**—Here specially thought of as the immediate cause of his sickness. The sin of a Christian man, which has brought on him a penalty of suffering. Not *all* his sins, or the sins of *any* sick man. The reference of the text is strictly limited.

Ver. 16. **Faults.**—Referring to the immediate case of which St. James is treating. The occasions of sickness are often *faults* rather than *wilful sins*; the word used would be better rendered, "transgressions." **One to another.**—On the assumption that "all ye are brethren," pledged to mutual helpfulness. By mutual confidence in one another we learn how, appropriately, to pray for each other. **Availeth much.**—As the term "effectual fervent" is given in the participle *ἐνεργουμένη* (working), it is suggested to render, "A righteous man's supplication is of great weight in its working."

Ver. 17. **Prayed earnestly.**—Margin, "prayed in his prayer."

Ver. 19. **Err.**—Or, "be led astray." **Convert.**—Turn him round, and bring him back.

Ver. 20. **Hide a multitude of sins.**—Compare LXX. on Prov. x. 12: "Friendship covers all those that are not contentious." See 1 Pet. iv. 8. It is clear that the sins St. James has in mind are those of the object of the action, not of the *agent*.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

Rich Men that are Only Rich.—This passage seems to have the character of an "aside" or "parenthesis." It is difficult to conceive that persons of such character, worthy of such severe condemnation, could have been members of the Jewish Christian Churches. It is more reasonable to think that St. James sends this severe message to such as were persecuting the members of the Churches, and riding over them in the masterfulness of their pride, and that he designed to comfort the persecuted and distressed by the assurance that God was surely dealing with their persecutors, and that there could be no reason for envying their lot. The message is but an echo of our Lord's saying, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation" (Luke vi. 24). It is important to make a careful distinction between persons who are rich and persons who are *only* rich. It is not wrong to be rich. It is not necessarily a hindrance to Christian life to be rich. A man may just as sincerely and acceptably lay his riches upon the altar of service as anything else that he has. But it is wrong to be a rich man and nothing else. It is wrong when that is

all you can say about the man. It is woful wrong when you are compelled to say that he is a bad rich man. This message should not be taken as sent to *all* rich men—only to *such* rich men as St. James describes. This distinction and qualification needs to be kept in mind in treating all the New Testament references to rich men. With some care the circumstances of the rich Jews, in the time immediately preceding the final fall of Jerusalem, should be presented.

I. **Riches with troubles.**—In the best of times to increase riches is to increase anxieties and troubles; and when hard times come, their strain is always felt most severely by the rich. For one thing, as riches increase, wants are multiplied, indulgences become necessities, and there is so much to give up, when banks break, ships founder, and speculations fail. The poor may feel the strain of troublous times first, but they do not feel it worst. It is but a little step from their usual limitations down into poverty; but it is a big step from the mansion to the workhouse. St. James sees, in the swiftly advancing miseries that were coming on the Jewish nation, the just judgment of God on men who were rich, and nothing else; at least, nothing else that was good. If a man is only rich, he can lose everything in a time of national calamity. If a man has character, and is rich in that way, all the woes of the world cannot take his riches away. *Ward Beecher* says: "No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor according to what he *is*, not according to what he *has*." We envy the rich; but perhaps we should not if we clearly saw that we must take riches with trouble. That truth may be borne in upon us by watching the faces of the carriage-folk in Hyde Park. It is a most rare thing to see a sunny face in middle-aged man or woman; discontent, weariness, envy, bad temper, well-nigh everywhere, so plainly revealing that, for them with all their riches, life is a failure and a bore. If it is thus when a country is peaceful and plenty abounds, what must be the troubles of the rich when Roman armies encircle the city, and drought and famine and pestilence stalk around? Riches can do so little to alleviate misery then; and a gaunt, famished crowd have no respect for any, but grasp and steal wherever they can. *Bishop Wordsworth* vigorously paraphrases vers. 2, 3: "Your wealth is mouldering in corruption, and your garments, stored up in vain superfluity, are become moth-eaten: although they may still glitter brightly in your eyes, and may dazzle men by their brilliance, yet they are in fact already cankered; they are loathsome in God's sight; the Divine anger has breathed upon them and blighted them; they are already withered and blasted." When the rich man has character, then only is he prepared for the trouble-times of life; then only has he the "treasure in heaven, which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."

II. **Riches with injustice.**—"Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth." It is making wholly wrong use of this passage to compel it to support modern socialistic schemes, which are based on the false assumption, that all employers of labour deal unfairly with their labourers. It would be as true to say that all labourers deal unfairly with their employers; and that is manifestly false. There are cases. Deal with the cases; but do not attempt to base a general law upon isolated cases. Oppressing the hireling in his wages was, however, a characteristic Jewish sin. "The grasping avarice that characterised the latter days of Judaism showed itself in this form of oppression among others." And it should be recognised that the possession of riches easily becomes, or supports, a temptation to deal unjustly with the poor. Injustice may take form as (1) failure to consider their due claims; (2) reserve of the payments due to them through indifference or wilfulness; (3) inattention to the things necessary to their

physical, sanitary, and moral well-being. Happy is that man in the possession of riches who, having a sensitive conscience, finds it brings him no accusations of injustice.

III. **Riches with self-indulgence.**—"Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." The sentence is a severe one, and forcibly presents to us the self-centredness of the rich, pampering his appetite—every sort of appetite—clothing in scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, like Dives. St. James, with the licence of poetic imagination, pictures them dressing themselves for death, fattening themselves for the day of slaughter. This self-indulgence is the supreme peril of the rich. They have no call to the exercise of self-restraint, and every moral fibre becomes relaxed. Self-indulgent people easily do wrong things.

IV. **Riches with violence.**—"Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous *one*." Not Christ. St. James is speaking in a poetic vein, and giving point to his accusation by compelling them to think of some *one case*. Reference is directly to some cases of persecution, in connection with the Jewish Christian Church, which had aroused St. James's indignation. Of this all may be assured who suffer wrong in any way from the masterfulness and injustice of unprincipled rich men—"Their cry enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." "He is the avenger of all such."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 1-3. *The Poverty of Riches.*—It is important to recognise that the rich man denounced in Scripture is never the man who merely has possessions. They may come to him by the accident of birth, or as the natural result of business ability. There is nothing wrong, or necessarily mischievous, in possession; and wealth is just as truly a trust from God, to be used in helpful ministries, as is any personal talent. But, like everything else frail man deals with, riches may be misused. They may come to be trusted in; they may take the soul's confidence from God. They may spoil a man's relations with his fellow-man. They may seriously deteriorate a man's personal character. The peril of riches lies in their persuasion of the man to *trust in them*, and in their attraction of the man to seek them at any cost or sacrifice. "They that *will be* rich fall into temptation and a snare." Because riches so easily entice, persuade, and tempt, it is necessary to point out what a side of poverty there is even to great riches. Its purchasing power is the real test of the value of wealth. It is thus we estimate the differing values of gold and silver and copper. A thing is reckoned of no value if it has in it no purchasing power.

I. **What can riches buy?**—Only what belongs to the range of *material* good. We need not think of that material good as in any narrow limitations. It includes all pleasant things meeting bodily needs and bodily desires; but it includes also all that ministers to mind, to artistic feeling, to society interests, and even to spiritual necessities. The rich man has at command whatsoever of good the material world can supply; and getting it for himself, he cannot help getting it for others to share with him. If man were only of the earth earthy, riches might secure supply of all his need.

II. **What cannot riches buy?**—It has no purchasing power in any of the *immaterial* worlds. It cannot buy love. It cannot secure the noblest form of human service—the service of love. Love is only bought with love. No coin was ever yet paid for it. True

of the love of man to man. Sublimely true of the love of God to man. It is bought "without money and without price."

Ver. 4. *Loyalty to Workpeople.*—There are peculiarities in Eastern workpeople which partly explain the need for such advice as this. Eastern workpeople have no such personal independence as characterises even the labourers of our Western lands. They are more correctly associated with our idea of slaves. They have the spiritless character, the unintelligent submission, the disposition to shirk burdens, which we connect with our notion of slaves. In Eastern countries no kind of servant or workman can be trusted alone without direct personal supervision. Overseers are always appointed, to keep them at their duty. As a natural consequence, masters readily become severe and tyrannical, indifferent to the labourers' well-being, and practically out of all sympathy with them. Moses had to legislate for their protection (Lev. xix. 13). Prophets had to denounce the sin of oppressing the labourer (Jer. xxii. 13; Mal. iii. 5). "The grasping avarice that characterised the latter days of Judaism showed itself in this form of oppression." Christianity indirectly improves the position and relations of workpeople. It does not directly interfere with social conditions. Its principle is distinctly stated in the apostolic decision, "Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." It affects workpeople by improving them, and by altering the sentiments of their masters concerning them. A worldly master sees in his workpeople only persons with whose help he is to make money. A Christian master sees in his workpeople persons for whose all-round well-being he is responsible. There are some senses in which they cannot help themselves. Yet in those things their truest well-being is bound up. Loyalty to Christ means loyalty to them; and this brings upon the Christian a burden of responsibility to them. Let the Christian master feel his loyalty to those who serve him, and cherish a right spirit towards them; these will be sure to inspire right and wise and kindly deeds. How far the individual sense of loyalty and responsibility is likely to be destroyed by modern strikes, combinations, social, or rather socialistic, movements, must be left open to individual decision.

Ver. 5. *The Moral Mischief of living delicately.*—It greatly surprises us that such intensely severe reproofs could be needed for persons in the actual membership of the early Christian Church. The R.V. renders this passage, "Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure." We might render, "Ye lived luxuriously, and spent wantonly." In this is severely reproved the misuse of the riches possessed. And riches are always misused when they are made to pamper bodily appetite. The word "delicately" is suggestive as reminding us that luxurious and wanton living as readily takes refined and artistic as coarse and animal forms. The point which may be worked out is that, no matter what may be the station, culture, or resources at command of the Christian professor, he is under absolute obligation to Christ to hold himself under all due self-restraint, and to put all his relations into wise and careful limitations. His "moderation is to be known unto all men." This means a moral bracing himself up, to secure control of himself, and control of his circumstances; and with that control the man is safe amid temptations. But any form of self-indulgence unbraces a man, loosens and weakens the moral fibre. And when a man loses his power of self-restraint and self-rule in some one thing, he can never be certain of holding his power of self-restraint in any other. And, moreover, he has opened one "gate of the city of Mansoul" to the enemy, and the city is no longer safe. It is usually on the side

of some bodily indulgence that Christian professors begin to fail. Moral mischief comes with indulgence at the table, or in drink; sometimes there is a relaxation which allows a man to be carried away by worldly pleasures or sensual attractions—the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life." The apostle gives the advice, which we may wisely apply in a variety of directions, when he bids us "keep the vessel of our body in sanctification and honour." In relation to delicacy of eating and drinking, it should be better known than it is, that highly cooked and spiced foods bear mischievously on the animal feelings which are so closely associated with the moral life.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—11.

Our Duty in the Waiting-times of Life.—Throughout his epistle St. James keeps before him the suffering and distressed condition of the Jewish Christians. There was grave fear lest they should be led to give up their faith in Christ; but there was even a greater fear lest they should come to reproach one another, and so spoil their life of kindly relations, and deteriorate their own Christian characters. The times called for the spirit of endurance. The call of the hour was to waiting-work. In every sphere of life and relationship, in those days, the Christians were called to quiet waiting. There was so little that they could *do*. They had no power of control over the social and national movements of the age. Their strength was to sit still, holding their own with a quiet persistency. Their endurance was their witness to their age. But that *waiting* is the hardest thing ever given to man to do; and it is a great help to him in the doing if he can have the inspiration of an ideal, if he can have some *great* waiting in *mind* to which he may be constantly lifting himself, and in the great effort making all lesser efforts at waiting come easier. The typical waiting then was for the "coming of the Lord." The typical waiting still is for the "coming of the Lord." It was not realised then as men imagined it, but it was realised. It is not realised now as men imagine it, but it is realised. This is the mission of that expectation of the Lord's coming which so many devout souls still cherish: it inspires endurance; it nourishes the spirit of quiet bearing of present ills; it enables a man to be patient amid the cares and disappointments of the earthly life; it uplifts with the cheer of a high hope. No doubt our Lord's great discourse on the "last things," which is recorded in Matt. xxiv., led to a general belief of His speedy return in human form, but with heavenly powers, to rectify those abuses and disorders of society, which pressed so heavily upon His disciples. It was only the *form* of His coming that was misconceived. It is only the *form* of His coming that is still misconceived. He did come to waiting souls. He does come to waiting souls. He came in providences. He came in spiritual manifestations. He came as the relieving angel "Israfil." It was, and it is, the support of our waiting moods that His disciples keep quite sure that He is always *just upon coming* to help them. That leads them on, enabling them cheerfully to bear their burdens day by day. And it is but the Christian translation of the feeling that has been cherished by God's saints in all the ages. It expressed itself in this way in the older times—"Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God." And in this way in the newer times—"Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

I. **What are the duties of Christians during their waiting-times?**—St. James does not deal with all the duties—only with such as were relative to the needs of those to whom he wrote. 1. They ought to keep from *restlessness*. That is the idea of "patience" as here commended. The restlessness that keeps

going to the door, or looking out at the window, and so takes men off from the duty of the hour. We cannot do our work well while we keep a restless state of mind. If we are expecting an arrival at our home, but are uncertain of the precise time, it altogether spoils our work for the day; it compels us to do nothing, if we suffer ourselves to become restless and anxious. In this way our hope of Christ's coming may become morally mischievous. It will, if it makes us restless and dissatisfied. We shall undervalue our present work, and think lightly of our present responsibilities; and instead of spending our strength in service, we shall spend it in worrying and restless watchings. Our Lord pointed out this danger, when He taught that the servant who expected his master's home-coming watched best by quietly waiting, fully occupied at his servant-duties, and actually *found at work* when the master entered the house. Restlessness never becomes a Christian virtue by disguising itself in pietistic forms. "Be patient unto [in respect of] the coming of the Lord." 2. St. James points out another duty of the hour. They should keep from *doubting*. Restlessness might make them neglect their work; but doubting would altogether change the character of their work. It would soon cease to be work for Christ, and come to be work for self. If the servant began to say within himself, "My lord delayeth his coming"; if he said to himself, doubtingly, "He will not come *soon*, and I question whether he means to come at all," that servant would soon begin to lose all wise restraint of himself, and "to eat and drink with the drunken." St. James bids the Jewish Christians who were tried by the seeming delay of their deliverance from present evils, "stablish," or "strengthen," their hearts. If *we* gave the advice in these days we should say, "Don't lose heart," "Don't give way to doubts and fears," "Buttress your hearts against all temptations to doubt," "Nourish your souls into such spiritual strength that you can throw off from you all poison atmospheres of doubt." Hearts are stablished and strengthened, not by trying to force a way into the mysteries of God's doing or delaying, but by meditating on what God *has* done, by realising what God *is*, and by inquiring, with a full purpose of obedience, into what God would have done by us. Three things are always at hand for the mastery of temptations to doubt: (1) the revelation of God, which contains the "exceeding great and precious promises"; (2) communion with God, which brings personal satisfactions to the soul; and (3) active service, which takes a man off from perilous broodings. Those who dwell unduly on the "coming of the Lord" are especially liable to doubt, if they are active-minded; for they are compelled to recognise that He never has come, never does come, and never will come just as men have expected Him to. Those who wait must not only wait quietly; they must wait hopefully. Our time is alway ready. He who is coming will come; He does not really tarry. 3. St. James further points out the duty of keeping kindly relations with one another while we wait. "Grudge not one against another." "Murmur not, brethren, one against another." So easily, in their waiting-times, even Christians can get to wranglings and mutual reproaches. One man has *his* explanation of the Lord's delay. Others are not able to accept his explanation. One man is sure that he can fix the day and the hour of the coming. Others remind him that he has fixed it before, and the time has gone by; and he becomes angry at the reminder. It may be comparatively easy for an individual Christian to wait patiently; it is always very hard for a number of Christians to wait patiently together. A Christian *man* is seriously strained and tested in the time when he can do nothing. A Christian *Church* gets into all sorts of contentions, misunderstandings, mutual reproaches, bickerings, and jealousies, when it is doing nothing, when it is waiting for some "coming of the Lord." An inactive Church will often have a good deal

of pietistic talk; but that may only be an insincere covering over of rankling enmities, mischievous murmurings, and mutual grudgings. It is like the servant that our Lord pictures who, because he did not keep on with his work, began to "beat his fellow-servants." That was the mistake that was made by the early Jewish Christian Churches. They had taken up this notion, that Christ was coming at once in some outward way, to redress all their wrongs, overwhelm all their enemies, and enrich them with all benedictions; and in the excitement of this sentiment, they had become restless, they were neglecting their work, and they were quarrelling among themselves. "Every doctrine is known by its fruits"; and the doctrine of the "second coming," as men usually hold it and teach it, is certainly not commended by its fruits. There is a *true* doctrine of the "second coming," but the unduly occupied ear of Christ's Church is not now open to receive it. There are waiting-times in all our lives. There have been; there will be. St. James's advice may be fitted precisely to *our* waiting-times. Keep from *restlessness*. "Be patient." Keep from *doubting*. "Stablish your hearts." Keep from *envying*. "Grudge not one against another."

II. **What are the helps to the fulfilment of duty, in their waiting-times, which are at the command of Christians?**—1. They may keep the inspiration of good examples. For other people have had to wait, and have waited well. Nay, looking around them, Christians may learn from the spheres of business and social life; and turning over the pages of their Scriptures they may find inspiring instances of heroic endurance. (1) There is the yearly example of the husbandman. "He waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain." The husbandman *worketh*. If he does not plough and clean and smooth his soil, and cast in the living seeds in their season, he will have no waiting-work to do, and nothing to wait for. It is not sufficiently impressed upon us in moral and spiritual spheres that only *workers* can be *waiters*. If a man has not worked, what has he to wait for, what has he to wait about? In all true waiting there is expectancy; but expectancy must be based upon something. The husbandman bases it upon his work. Waiting that has no work behind it, and no work in it, is dreamy sentiment, and is no good to anybody. The husbandman has to *wait*, and work while he waits, for the fruitage of his sowing. The fields must be guarded, tended, nourished, while the crops are growing. But the results of his work get beyond him. He finds himself in the midst of forces that he cannot control; and no efforts of his can possibly hurry on the results. During the months of growing, what a life of waiting-faith every farmer has to live! And what a lesson of the patience of faith comes to us as we walk the fields, and see the crops so slowly, but so surely, growing unto harvest! Our Christian work starts influences which get altogether beyond our control. We work for issues; and want them to come immediately, and they will not. We work in the upbuilding of character, but character grows and unfolds very slowly; and we can no more hurry on our results than can the farmer. God takes all good work into His keeping, and makes His rains and His sunshine nourish the growing crops, which will be reaped to the unspeakable joy of the worker some day. The husbandman may have much *anxiety*, and much trial of faith and patience, while he waits. Everything depended, in those older days, on the "early" winter rains and the "latter" spring rains; and sometimes they failed altogether, or they were insufficient, or they were excessive. The cold seasons kept the crops back. Wild storms just before harvest laid the heavy-headed stalks; prevailing damp made the grains sprout; prolonged drought burned up the grass, and dried up the seeds of the root-crops as they lay in the ground. Many and many a morning during the growing months the farmer wakes and listens anxiously for the sound

of rain, pulls the blind aside, and nourishes or crushes his hope for the day. It is hard indeed for him to see all the fruitage of his toil being hopelessly ruined, and to know that his harvest can only be a "day of grief and desperate sorrow." True, the issues are not often as the fears. Nature—God in nature—has a wonderful recovering power. Constantly we find we have to reap the harvest of *God's mercy*, instead of the harvest of *our fears*. Are not Christian waiting-times anxious times? Parents work in their boys for noble manhood; and the day comes when the boy must go out into life, and battle for himself amidst manifold evils; must soul-thrive amid stormy winds and pelting rains of temptation, and it may be amid blazing suns of success. How can we measure the parental anxiety? See how every letter from the boy is scanned! how mother reads what father cannot see! how the tone of the letter is appraised! All those years of unfolding while out of parental control bring their grave anxieties; and, full of fears, those parents often say to one another—What will the harvest be? It is but the type of all the waiting-times of Christian workers. It is part of our discipline that they shall be full of grave anxieties; and if *we* are full of concern about the issues of our work, we may realise how concerned God is about *us*, wanting the very anxieties of our waiting-times to be sanctified to us. But the husbandman keeps the *cheer* of the certain result while he waits. There stands the word; the years have rolled into centuries, and the centuries have heaped up one upon another, but the word has never been belied—"While the earth remaineth . . . seedtime and harvest shall not fail." Get the barns ready, though the cold chills, the heavy rains, or the untempered sunshine do come upon the growing crops. Get the barns ready; they will be filled, as they always have been. Earth never rolled through one of its years, without its people singing unto God their song of harvest home. Must we wait? Is it hard to wait? Does our Lord seem to delay His coming? We too may keep the cheer in our souls while we wait. He has promised. We grip His word so tight that the surge of life's storm-tossed sea can never loosen our hold. He has said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye may be also." (2) There is the example of the saints of the older days. "Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord." It is not possible now to do any more than let the great "cloud of witnesses" pass before us, in a seemingly endless panorama; and then say, after the eloquent writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, when he had set before us the long list of those who had "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible": "Time would fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens." They had their anxious waiting-times, but they waited well; and they came through to victory and their Lord's "well done, good and faithful." And (3) there is the familiar example of Job. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." He could wait for God, and wait on God. And while he waited, Job sang in his soul, and cheered his soul with the singing, of such things as the psalmist puts into poetic words, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him, justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne"; "I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope." 2. *They may keep the confidence that God has His gracious purpose in every call to endure.* The "end of the Lord"—and He always has an "end"—will be sure to justify the means. We may never think of God as acting on impulse. He has a distinct aim, a purpose of infinite wisdom and goodness, towards which He moves with infinite adaptations of His means. St. James assures us that

He is "large-hearted," "tender-hearted." He can deal graciously with all the weaknesses that we may show—all the failures from duty—in our waiting-times. He will not let them hinder the carrying through of His purpose. They shall never spoil His harvest. Wait; wait on; wait worthily. Be patient. Keep confidence. Look up, even if there be clouds in the sky. Hold fast by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though His way may seem to you to be "in the sea, and His path in the great waters." Wait on. Work while you wait. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself; and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants. . . . Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 7. *The Coming of the Lord.*—"Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming [margin, *presence*] of the Lord." Ver. 8: "For the coming of the Lord is at hand." It is perfectly clear that all the early Christian teachers had the distinct expectation of something, which they agreed to call "the coming of the Lord." It is also certain that they looked upon this coming as the fulfilment of the Lord's own promises, both in the "upper room" and at His ascension. But it is by no means clear what it was that they expected. It may indeed now be quite impossible to recover *their* precise thought, because very different thoughts have grown up round the expression "the coming of the Lord" in the course of the Christian ages. It very materially helps us toward the apprehension of the apostolic idea, if we get an answer to this question—Did Christ come to the early Church, in the manner, and at the time, the apostles expected He would? It is quite clear that they understood their Lord to mean that He would come in some material and visible manifestation, and that He would come before the apostolic age closed. The question requires the answer Yes or No, and it can be satisfied with no other answer; it will have no qualified answer that merely turns it aside or puts it from consideration. The answer may be—Yes, He did come in the apostolic age, and He did come in a formal and material manner. Then there is nothing in the historic record of those times which can, by any possibility, be identified as our Lord's coming, save the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, and final breaking up of the Jewish national and ecclesiastical systems. The answer may be—No, He did not come as apostles expected, and has not so come even yet. Then it is impossible to prevent the reasonable suggestion of devout souls, that the apostles may have misapprehended His meaning, both as to the manner, and as to the time, of His coming. And it is quite open to devout souls to suggest, that if our Lord had been understood spiritually, it would have been seen that He did fulfil His promise, and does fulfil it; but our mistaken apprehensions have prevented our recognising the fulfilment.

Ver. 10. *Examples of Christian Endurance.*—"Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord." It is questioned whether only the ancient prophets are referred to, or whether the term is intended to include the persecuted and martyred teachers of the Christian age. But even if we assume that St. James thought only of the Old Testament prophets, there is no reason why we should hesitate to include all, in prominent and official positions, who present the example of suffering and

patience. And our life is encircled with such examples. History is full of them. Imaginative literature is constantly creating fresh types of heroic sufferers. The actual experience of our lives brings us into fellowship with those who are triumphantly bearing the burdens of lifelong pain or loss or disability.

I. Examples of endurance are constantly presented to us.—Apart altogether from religious motives and helps, there is a heroic endurance in humanity. A power to bear; and even to bear for others, which ennobles man. There is never any occasion for trying to debase humanity in order to exalt religion. It may be necessary to do that in order to lay suitable foundations for a religious creed; but not to maintain revealed and spiritual religion. We can fully admire the moral greatness of man's endurance and patience, while we recognise his lost standing relations with God.

II. Examples of Christian endurance have a particular influence upon us.—Because they indicate the inspiration of the very highest motive upon which men can act. And they convince us that there can be a Divine presence with man, and a Divine power on man, which can raise him altogether beyond anything that of himself he could attain. Suffering patience with the supreme motive of doing and bearing God's holy will is an attainment which is wholly impossible save with an indwelling inspiration of God.

Ver. 11. *The End of the Lord reveals Him.*—It has often been pointed out that the final reward and restoration of Job is given after the "poetical justice" with which we are familiar in works of imagination. In actual history or biography we do not meet with such exact restorations. In a book which is the illustration of a great principle, by the use of a historical figure, and conversations in dramatic form, such an ending is befitting, and its precision of detail need not be overpressed.

I. **The Lord always has an end.**—It is this conviction which gives a man such satisfaction when he sees that his anxieties have come from God. Troubles that are manifestly of our own making are our supreme anxiety, because we can only think of God as *overruling* them. They are not His mind; He has to come into them in a gracious kind of interfering way. Job's troubles were not brought on by his own wrong-doing; they were distinctly disciplinary troubles sent by God. God never afflicts willingly. God never smites in any "acts of sovereignty." There is a distinct purpose in every Divine act, in every Divine permission. He has an end towards which He is ever working. If we are in His chastisement, it is for our profit.

II. **The Lord's end is seldom understood by the Lord's way.**—That need be no surprise to us if we are familiar with the complicated machinery involved in our manufactures. Take the process by which sheep's wool is turned into clothing; or what seems but rubbish becomes white paper. The tearings, and burnings, and boilings, and rollings can neither be understood separately, nor in their connections; and yet we can believe that each strange thing helps to accomplish the end which has been, all along, held in view. God's ways cannot but seem strange, and we had better not try to imagine the end by the help of the means.

III. **The Lord's end is always in harmony with Himself.**—It is a wisely ordered end, for He is infinitely wise. It is an end of infinite blessing—adapted to us, satisfying to us—for He *is* love.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 12, 13.

Christian Conduct fitting Occasions.—St. James closes his epistle with good advice, and indication of what is befitting conduct in the various relations of life. A positive tone of teaching properly concludes an epistle that is so full of warning and rebuke, and even denunciation. Teachings directed against evils and abuses are as necessary now as they ever were, but they should never constitute the whole of teaching; they should never be allowed to stand alone, and carry a complete impression of Christianity. They should be qualified with teachings of positive duty, and commendations of the right spirit to cherish. Christian teaching may be represented by the two related sentences—"Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." The advice of this passage is precisely adapted to the circumstances and temptations of Jewish Christians in those days. (The advice in reference to the sick is treated as a separate section, because it introduces controversial matter.)

I. **There should be the ring of truth in all ordinary conversation.**—"Swear not." Our Lord's teaching in Matt. v. 33-37 comes at once to mind. Swearing is the expression of lost self-control under the impulse of temper. Taking oaths, or supporting what one has to say with an oath, implies mutual suspicion and untrustfulness. St. James has not in mind that use of foul and blasphemous language which we now understand by swearing. Nor does he refer to the taking of legal oaths, which imply no loss of temper, and no purpose to injure a brother, but nevertheless are, from the Christian point of view, concessions to the weakness of human nature, recognitions of the fact that the naked word of sinful man is not to be trusted. St. James urges that there should be such a ring of truth in all the common conversation of a Christian, that it should never be felt necessary to buttress it with an oath. A truthful man is grieved when his simple word is not taken. And the Christian should be a truthful man. His word should be absolutely and always reliable; and to this end the Christian should cultivate discretion and self-restraint. In perplexing, anxious, persecuting times, there is peculiar call for wisdom of speech. Truthful conversation is a good sign of piety.

II. **There should be the relief of prayer in times of suffering.**—"Is any among you suffering? let him pray." The idea is that if the sufferer broods over his woes, or talks over his woes, he is sure to get more and more depressed under them. The Christian way of relief is carrying the burden to God in prayer. 1. It is cherishing the spirit of prayer, which is the spirit of submission and dependence. 2. It is getting the relief of acts of prayer, in which the Divine sympathy and help are sought. Even the severely suffering may find help in ejaculatory prayers. St. Augustine calls these "arrows of the Lord's deliverance, shot out with a sudden quickness."

III. **There should be the song of praise in times of rejoicing and success.**—The advice was, and is, especially needed, because there is always grave danger that times of rejoicing may be times of excitement, and so of unrestrainedness, that may bring disgrace on the Christian name. There are natural ways of expressing gladness. At such times we want to sing. Then let the Christian be careful what song he sings. Let it have the ring of a psalm. Let it be such a thanksgiving as turns his heart to God, and fills his thoughts with God. This need not be exaggerated into meaning that we may, in our joy-times, sing nothing but Bible psalms. St. James means this—Take care, in your times of excitement and merry-making, that you do not lose self-restraint, and dishonour your Christian profession. Bring God near, and keep God near, in your joy-times. It is counsel that is always timely. Festivals of all religions

have their moral perils; and merry-making times call for the kindly caution, "Is any cheerful? let him sing praise." The point of impression is this—In all the various circumstances and moods of Christian life, there is a spirit and a conduct that are befitting. Let every professing Christian keep that spirit, and act along that line.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 12. *The Truth-tone in Common Talk.—F. W. Robertson* concludes his sermon on "Freedom by the Truth" with the two following inferences: 1. To cultivate the love of truth. I do not mean veracity—that is another thing. Veracity is the correspondence between a proposition and a man's belief. Truth is the correspondence of the proposition with fact. The love of truth is the love of realities—the determination to rest upon facts, and not upon semblances. Take an illustration of the way in which the habit of cultivating truth is got. Two boys see a misshapen, hideous thing in the dark. One goes up to the cause of his terror, examines it, learns what it is; he knows the truth, and the truth has made him free. The other leaves it in mystery and unexplained vagueness, and is a slave for life to superstitious and indefinite terrors. Base the heart on facts. 2. See what a Christian is. Our society is divided into two classes: those who are daring, inquisitive, but restrained by no reverence, and kept back by little religion; those who may be called religious—but, with all their excellences, we cannot help feeling that the elements of their character are feminine rather than masculine, and that they have no grasp or manly breadth, that their hold is on feeling rather than on truth. See what a Christian is, drawn by the hand of Christ. He is a man on whose clear and open brow God has set the stamp of truth; one whose very eye beams bright with honour; in whose very look and bearing you may see freedom, manliness, veracity; a brave man—a noble man—frank, generous, true, with, it may be, many faults; whose freedom may take the form of impetuosity or rashness, but the form of meanness never.

Yea and Nay.—Our Lord taught us that the conversation of a sincere man can always be a simple Yea and Nay. He never needs to bolster up any statement he may make with oaths and asseverations. There is a tone in the Yea and Nay which carries conviction. We are made suspicious whenever a man feels he must support a statement with oaths. If a Christian is uncertain, he does not speak positively. If he is sure, he is satisfied with simply stating what he knows. He is true to himself, and true to his Master, and therefore true to his fellow-man. "In conversation be sincere."

Ver. 13. *Prayer in Afflictive Circumstances.*—There is a distinction indicated by St. James which is not usually recognised. In ver. 13 he says, "Is any among you afflicted?" In ver. 14 he says, "Is any sick among you?" We are wont to regard "sickness" and "affliction" as the same thing, and so we miss the precision of application. In both cases St. James recommends prayer; but for affliction he recommends personal prayer—for sickness, intercessory and sympathetic prayer. By "sickness" we understand the troubles which come as bodily disease, weakness, peril. This attracts public attention, calls for sympathy, and can be relieved by united, believing, intercessory prayer. By "affliction" we understand those distresses which come from trying and perplexing circumstances; and these are often strictly private matters, and must be kept private. We can ask no elders or Church to pray for us, or with us. All

we can do, and the thing we should do, is take such "afflictions" freely to God in private prayer.

Life's Gladness and its Outlet.—How closely our spiritual nature, as creatures of feeling, is related to the element of sound, wanting this in its distinctions for a language, as truly as it wants the language of words for intellectual discourse. Even as the poets, who are nature's best oracles, sing,—

"Music! Oh, how faint, how weak,
Language fades before thy spell!
Why should feeling ever speak,
When thou canst breathe her soul so well?"

Accordingly, as we are wont to argue the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead, from the things that are seen, finding them all images of thought and vehicles of intelligence, so we have an argument for God more impressive, in one view, because the matter of it is so deep and mysterious, from the fact that a grand harmonic, soul-interpreting law of music pervades all the objects of the material creation, and that things without life, all metals, and woods, and valleys, and mountains, and waters, are tempered with distinctions of sound, and toned to be a language to the feeling of the heart. It is as if God had made the world about us to be a grand organ of music, so that our feelings might have play in it, as our understanding has in the light of the sun and the outward colours and forms of things. . . . There is hid in the secret temper and substance of all matter a silent music, that only waits to sound, and become a voice of utterance to the otherwise unutterable feeling of our heart—a voice, if we will have it, of love and worship to the God of all.—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—16.

Christian Treatment of the Sick.—The subject treated in this passage is made difficult by our ignorance of the customs of society, and especially of religious society, in the time of St. James. Our customs so materially differ from those with which he was familiar. It is also made difficult by the development of two doctrines in the Christian Church, both of which—though they stand in marked contrast—are made to rest upon, and draw their support from, this passage: the "extreme unction" of Catholics, and the "faith-healing" of sentimental Protestants.

I. **Examine what the passage does really say.**—One ever-recurring point of St. James's teaching is, that faith is an *active* thing. It cannot rest. It must *do* something. The activity of faith covers the whole life, and concerns itself with every place and relation. This passage is found among practical directions for the guidance of Christian faith in its activity. What should be done by, and for, the afflicted, the merry, the sick? Observe that, just as the afflicted man, and the happy man, are expected to *act* for themselves, so the sick man is expected to act for himself. "Let him call for the elders of the Church." This is important, because it indicates that the man had gained the spiritual blessing intended to be wrought by his sickness, and was in a fit state of mind to receive a gracious healing, as an act of Divine favour. Compare the expression, "perceiving that he had faith to be healed." The *elders* were not preachers, not missionaries, not apostles, not priests. They are represented by the elders of the Jewish synagogues, and are to be regarded simply as agents of the Christian Church; they are the Christian Church acting; and have neither power nor authority save as standing for the Church. It should be carefully observed that the sick man was not to call for some *one* of the elders, but for the elders as a body. If there were three, then all three; if ten, then all ten. These men were to pray *over* him, when they had anointed him with oil. That is, they were to pray with such a faith that he would be restored,

as could show itself in dealing with him as if he actually were already restored. From what is known of anointing customs in daily life, one thing comes out quite clearly. Every one, when in health, used oil more or less in the daily toilet. But oil was never used when a person was laid aside in sickness. His return to the use of oil was a sign of his return to health. A very natural and simple explanation of this difficult and much misused passage can therefore be given. Anointing the body with oil was the *sign of health.* Those who were sick might not be anointed; nor those passing through a time of mourning. The ancient customs in relation to anointing may be illustrated by our customs in relation to shaving the beard. The sick man will neither trouble himself, nor be troubled, about shaving; but as soon as he begins to recover he will return to his old and cleanly habits. So the ancients would neglect daily anointing during sickness, and their return to their old ways was a sure sign that they were recovering. When St. James therefore gives these directions for the elders, what he really means may be put in this way—"By a sign which will show the sick brother *your* faith help *his* faith. Pray for him in such perfect faith that you can even anticipate the healing, and act toward him as if he were already restored." The elders were to help the sick man to rise, wash, and anoint, and act just as if he were in health again.

II. **What things in the passage require special consideration?**—The age of miracles had not then passed, if it ever has passed. 1. Note the unconditional character of the promise, "Shall save him that is sick." It is not really without conditions. See the demand for *faith*, and for certain defined *acts* expressing faith, and proving the obedience of faith. Rules should be stated without their exceptions; but all rules have such. Compare our Lord's strong sentences about prayer. 2. Consider the meaning of the anointing with oil. Whether before or after prayer, the anointing is to be understood as a strictly simultaneous act. Two ideas have been suggested: (1) The anointing may have been a medicinal healing. Oil was regarded as a curative agent. (2) The anointing may have been sacramental—a help towards realising the action of Divine grace. Sight and feeling may be helps toward the apprehension of spiritual things. Compare our Lord's *touching* those whom He healed, or making clay to put on the eyes of the man whose sight He restored. 3. Observe the sense in which forgiveness is blended with recovery. St. James does not assume that every case of sickness is a case of sin. But he says, if you do meet with a case in which the sickness connects with personal sin, in that case the faith which heals the body brings also forgiveness of the sin. (1) Sin regarded as scandal to the Church. In such a case the man must be penitent, or he would not send for the elders of the Church. (2) Sin as before God. Always conceived as the source of human disease. Compare our Lord saying to the woman, "Go, and sin no more."

III. **Removing the local and temporary, what may we learn from the passage for our own times?**—1. The duty of showing sympathy with the sick. Example of Christ. Consider sickness from the Christian point of view. Issue of self-will resisting the Divine order. Divine chastisement. Corrective discipline. 2. The duty of using means for the recovery of the sick. Oil was curative agency. The elders were to use means. Anointing here means rubbing the body, not pouring it on the head as a symbol of dedication—rubbing the affected parts, as for rheumatism. Symbol of all healing agents. Show how science now takes the place of miracle. 3. The importance of recognising the power of the "prayer of faith." This was needed for miracle. How much more is it needed for science! Prayer-power, faith-power, are especially needed if the spiritual ends, for which all sickness—certainly all Christian sickness—is sent, are to be reached.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Ver. 14. *Signs of Healing.*—Here unction was evidently an outward sign, similar to that used by our Saviour, when He made clay, and put it to the blind man's eyes. It was connected with the miraculous power of healing. The sign by which a healing work is indicated is not the healing, or even a necessary part of the healing. Our Lord could have completed the recovery of the sight without any putting clay on the eyes, and could have healed the leper without any touch. The signs were precisely intended either to impress the person healed, and direct his close attention to his Healer, or else to arouse the interest of bystanders, and compel them to think of the power and claims of Him who could thus heal. If the distinction between the sign and the healing is fully recognised, and the sign is regarded as an addition to the healing for the sake of securing its proper moral influence, the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord can be very simply explained. It was a ceremony, not a healing agency, and in no way essential to the cure. It may be freely admitted that oil is sometimes used in the East—and, for that matter, in the West too—as a medical agent. But it is not sufficiently recognised that the act St. James enjoins is not a rubbing over of the body, or even of affected parts of the body, but the symbolical act of anointing, with which the Jews were familiar. It is most simple to understand St. James as requiring the pouring of oil on the man's head, as a symbolic act, a sign of the Divine grace unto healing which would come down upon the sick man. Such a symbolic act would have a direct influence on those who prayed for the healing, fixing their thoughts on the power and grace of God whose ministry of healing they sought; and having an equally direct influence on the sufferer; making him look with believing expectancy for the recovering grace which the anointing oil symbolised. In this way the sign of healing, accompanying the prayer for healing, was a direct help to the nourishment of that faith on which the coming of the healing grace must ever depend.

Ver. 16. *The Healthy Confessional.*—"Confess therefore your sins one to another." It appears to be assumed by St. James, that sicknesses and diseases are often the natural and direct consequences, not only of sin, but of the actual sin of the person who suffers. And he seems to admit that this may even be true of members of the Church. By omissions, negligences, imprudences, and even self-indulgence and wilfulness, those within the Church may bring sickness and suffering upon themselves. There is then assumed a moral condition of sickness, as well as a physical. And the spirit of brotherly love in the Church secures as sincere—and a more anxious—interest in the state of the brother's soul as in the state of his body. What the Church could do for the body has been dealt with. No inquiries were necessary, and no confessions were required, for the condition of the patient was evident enough. But what the Church could do for the man's soul-condition was not manifest, for it must depend on what the condition of the man's soul was, and that could only be found out by inquiry. The man must confess to his brethren if he would have their help towards the restoration of inward health. We cannot pray for one another's spiritual conditions unless we know what those conditions are, and we can only know any man as he is pleased to reveal himself to us. This is what St. James means by "confessing our sins one to another." By no scheming can confessing to one another be made to mean confessing to an official who has authority to absolve from the sin, or to remit the penalty. The brethren can neither heal the body

nor the soul, but they can use the power of believing prayer about both the body and the soul. They can see with their eyes what to pray for on behalf of the body; but they can only know what to pray for on behalf of the soul, when the man himself tells them his trouble, his sin, or his need. Confessions that simply throw us on the sympathy and helpful love of our brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus are, in every way, healthy confessions.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17, 18.

Prayer affecting Natural Law.—The statement is made, in support of the advice to "pray for one another," that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." This is a strong statement. It is supported by a well-known but very striking instance of effectual prayer, which even influenced the course of nature. Elijah prayed, and the order of the rains was changed. Elijah prayed again, and the order of the rains was restored.

I. **It may be fully recognised that all events in nature follow ordered laws.**—But these things have to be taken into account: 1. Laws are constantly qualifying laws and changing results. 2. The natural laws which man has traced may not be the entire circle of natural laws. The qualifying power of unknown laws (which we therefore call "supernatural") may be the real explanation of phenomena. We have no right to say that a thing cannot be until we have mastered all the possible co-workings of all natural laws, known to us and unknown. No man has a right to deny miracle.

II. **It must be recognised that He who fixed the laws keeps control over the relative working of the laws.**—If God could make the relative conditions and the rules ordering the relations, it is inconceivable that He did not reserve His right of interference. He made the conditions for the accomplishment of His purpose; He must be able to bring His will to bear on the adjustment of the working of rules that necessarily cross and qualify one another.

III. **If then God is a being with will, that will must be subject to influence.**—Man's prayer may be one of the influences affecting it. Our prayer may be an element in the formation of Divine judgments and decisions; and so may, not directly, but indirectly, affect the order of nature, and the relative working of natural laws. It should be borne in mind that Christian prayer is never more than the submission of our need and wish to the consideration of the Divine Father.

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 17, 18. *Elijah's Effectual Prayer.—The necessity of prayer in order that the blessing come.* Prayer is the cause intermediate which compels the blessing down. This interlinking and efficient place of prayer, between the Divine promise and the actualisation of that promise, is very significant and wonderful. God had promised the rain, but *Elijah must pray for* the rain. Ezek. xxvi. another illustration of the same principle: "I will yet for this be *inquired of* by the house of Israel." Acts i. and ii. also illustration of the same principle. Christ had promised the descent of the Spirit, but the disciples must *pray for* His enduement. Apply this principle to prayer about personal need, to the coming of a revival, etc., etc. This effectual prayer of Elijah's was a prayer of *faith.* He had for argument in prayer the unequivocal Divine promise, "I will send rain upon the earth." Upon this promise his faith laid hold, and this weapon of

promise he wielded valiantly in his audience with Deity. You can almost hear him pressing the promise as you read of him lying prone there on Mount Carmel. This is the prayer of faith, and so the effectual prayer—a prayer which takes God at His word, and then reverently but really holds Him to it. We do not need to stretch and strain in a spasmodic attempt at more faith. The ground for faith is the Divine word. That is something upon which we can lay hold. And the prayer of faith is simply this—that when we pray we fully believe that God will be true to all that He has promised. "If ye abide in Me, *and My words abide in you*," etc. This effectual prayer of Elijah's was a prayer out of *a consecrated heart*. The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous man* availeth much. James brings forth Elijah as a specimen of such a righteous man. One thing Elijah was intent on; to one thing all his powers were consecrated—the Divine service. He was a man given up to God, and so, in the highest sense, righteous. The test of his consecrated righteousness is his *obedience*. Mark Elijah's exact obedience to the Divine commands in the whole Old Testament story. This effectual prayer of Elijah's was *specific* prayer. It was for a definite thing. We pray too much generally, not enough specifically. This effectual prayer of Elijah's was *untiring* prayer. Though the cloud did not immediately appear, he *kept on* praying. This effectual prayer of Elijah's was *expectant* prayer. Notice in the story how many times he sent his servant. He was on the *look-out* for answer.—*Anon.*

Elijah's waiting on his Prayer.—St. James suggests an historical illustration of the power that lies in fervent and believing prayer. The Jews had a great admiration for the prophet Elijah, and were never tired of hearing of his doings. They lived in constant expectation of his reappearing as the precursor of Messiah. James finds in his story impressive illustration of the power of prayer; but we have no record of Elijah's acts of prayer when he would have the rains kept away. His prayer for the rains to return is a part of the grandest day in his career. The witnessing fire of God had descended upon Elijah's sacrifice; and at the sight a sudden shout had risen from the vast watching crowd, "Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!" So intense was the excitement, and so absolute, for the moment, was the authority of the Jehovah-prophet, that only a word was needed to make that crowd seize the four hundred false prophets of discomfited Baal, hurry them down to the stream of the Kishon, and slay them there, that their bodies might be swept out to sea on the coming floods. But the day's work was not then complete. The return of the rain-showers upon the thirsty earth was virtually pledged in this return of the nation to Jehovah; and he who had prayed for the fire, and knew that he was praying according to the will of God, and had been graciously answered, must pray again for the rain, pray with the assurance that sending the rain was the will of God, and he must wait upon his prayer with the confident expectancy of hope. But the sight is a strange and a striking one. Elijah now goes away from the crowd and from the king, finds a sheltered spot under the crest of the hill, and there he might have been seen, crouching on the ground, his head bent upon his knees, and his cloak thrown over his head, as if to hide everything away that might disturb his intense supplications, absorbed in prayer until the youth sent to look out from the highest point could tell of a little cloud rising on the western edge of the sea. Then Elijah knew that the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Prayer availing in its Working.—"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." These familiar words are somewhat puzzling

when careful thought is directed to them. To speak of *effectual* prayer that *avails* is an evident repetition, and unnecessary. If it is *effectual*, it does *avail*. And the combination "effectual fervent" is unusual. It seems to be two words, and to describe prayer as both *effectual* and *fervent*; but there is only one word in the original, and it neither means "effectual" nor "fervent," nor both terms as combined. The word means "working," and St. James speaks of the "working prayer of a righteous man" as "availing much." The Revised Version gives a precise rendering of his meaning thus—"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." Then the appropriateness of the illustration from Elijah comes at once into view. Elijah's prayer did something in its working. It held the rain off; it brought the rain back again. It will be seen that this working power of prayer is precisely what St. James is speaking about in these closing words of his epistle. "Is any afflicted? let him pray," for prayer can *work* him both strength to bear, and wisdom to guide him through, his difficulties. "The prayer of faith" can work a blessing for the sick. It "shall save the sick." Whatever may be the faults and failings spoiling Christian fellowship, "pray for one another," for prayer can work wondrous healings of broken relations; the supplications even of one good man in a Church can avail much in its working. We may well be thankful to the Revisers for giving us so important and so suggestive a change. It brings before us quite a fresh view of prayer. We had hardly thought of it as, in its very nature, a thing that works. We know that it brings down to us Divine blessings. We know that it has a gracious influence upon the man who prays. But prayer as really an active force, as having in it an actual power of working—prayer as a kind of holy leaven, moving, influencing, wherever it goes—has hardly come into our thought. If it did, and could be worthily apprehended, it would give us a new joy in prayer, and the consciousness of possessing a tool, an instrument, a force, which we might more worthily use for God and for men. We might more constantly set prayer upon doing its work, its own precise, appropriate, and gracious work.

I. **We are in the presence of a general truth, which has a wide application.**—It always has been true, it always must be true, in the very nature of things, that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working. It would not be true to say that *all* prayer works; for unless the man who prays is a "righteous" man, he provides conditions that prevent his prayer from working. Prayer is not its effective self, save as it is the prayer of the righteous, right-minded, man. The man who is not right-minded can only pray the prayer of fear, or of brag, or of demand; and no such prayers can avail with God, or work blessing for the man himself, or for others. 1. A right-minded man's prayers work *as a persuasion upon God.* We need not hesitate to recognise that God permits Himself to be influenced by the considerations which His people present in their prayers. If we stand hard and fast by notions of Divine absoluteness and sovereignty, all idea of God's being open to persuasions must be abandoned; and we must look for the value of prayer in its gracious influence only on *us*, and on those *around us.* But, if we sit at the feet of Christ, and learn of Him to cry, "Abba, Father," and see in God the infinite of our finite fatherhood, then we shall readily apprehend how He can be interested in the *wishes* as well as in the *wants* of His children. Our prayer availing much in its working on God! The thought is almost overwhelming; but it must not be dismissed. The picture-teaching of it is Jacob's prevailing at Peniel. And nothing could make prayer more serious, nothing could make us more cautious, reverent, anxious, than to feel that our prayers

are to work on God, our Father, and to avail with God in their working. Our prayers will work with God according to their *contents*, and according to their *character*. The working may be very different to our expectations. There may even be cross-workings, as in the early praying of St. Augustine, "Lord, convert me, but *not yet*." God's dealings with humanity, with any race, any nation, any church, any generation, any family, can never be read aright unless due account is taken of all that followed the influences and persuasions of the prayers of righteous men. The prophet represents God as refusing at a particular time what He usually admits—the influence and persuasion of human intercessions. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be towards this people" (Jer. xv. 1). To the righteous man is entrusted a prayer-power with God. Our prayers work by making material for His judgments and decisions. 2. A right-minded man's prayers work in a way of sanctifying himself. It is a familiar thought that prayer proves a blessing to the man who prays; and F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, gives this particular efficacy of prayer a great prominence. He says: "All prayer is to change the will human into submission to the will Divine. That prayer which does not succeed in moderating our wish, in changing the passionate desire into still submission, the anxious, tumultuous expectation into silent surrender, is no true prayer, and proves that we have not the spirit of true prayer. That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God—that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving." Perhaps we have been accustomed to think chiefly of the spiritual grace which comes to us in answer to prayer. "Every good gift and every perfect gift," for the spiritual life, "cometh down from the Father of lights," and cometh in response to the openness, receptiveness, indicated in our prayers. But it gives a freshness to the familiar thought, if we regard our prayers as positively exerting an active power upon ourselves. Every time we pray we set a force to work, which will work upon ourselves. Our prayers are some of the workmen who are busy at the building and decorating of the spiritual house that we *are*—that we are raising. Our prayers are positive forces in the culture of the spiritual character—active influences affecting the tone and temper of our daily conduct. We begin the day with prayer; then that prayer is actually to be at work all through the day, and availing much in its working. Arrest life for a moment during the day, and you may trace its working in temper, tone, habit, spirit. It is at work to secure and establish the better self, a Christ-like self. Pray in connection with special difficulties and anxieties; the prayer will work, not merely in bringing Divine light and guidance, but also in fitting us to deal with the difficulties, in lifting us above the anxieties. Pray in relation to the Christian work you undertake, and the prayer works the furbishing of your sword, the spiritual ability for the service. We think too much of the *getting* by prayer. We need to think much more of the *doing* of prayer. In all our lives we want the activity and energy of the prayer-power, and so may wisely be "praying without ceasing," that we may be wholly sanctified. 3. A right-minded man's prayers work by exerting a moral influence on others. Here again we are wont to think chiefly of the good things for others that can be obtained in answer to the good man's prayers. And we may easily miss the answering truth, that the prayers themselves work good things. The point of distinction is at once seen if we think of family life. With a holy persistency, for long years, the father supplicates both general and special blessings for his family as he gathers them round the family altar; and,

in answer, heavenly benedictions, in gracious abundance and adaptation, do descend, and the family is blessed by the prayer-answering God. But is that all? Is that indeed the best? Perhaps when we can estimate things aright, we shall see, that what the prayers actually did in their working were the truest and best answers the prayers received. Those prayers worked the healing of many a family division; those prayers quickened many a nobler resolve; those prayers kept hearts together in an ever-helpful unity; those prayers saved from sin over and over again. They availed much in their working. Why, some of us can say that the family prayers of our early home life have never ceased to work their gracious work on us, and are even doing their work to-day. What is so evidently true of family prayer is true of all prayer—of private intercessory prayer, of public prayer, of special prayer in relation to Christian ministry and service. It is a power for good. It does influence, inspire, direct, bless. Pray, and you set moving a force that blesses others. Will this help to put a new interest into our prayer; to make us feel afresh the responsibility of our power to pray; and to renew our faith in prayer, as, in a double sense, God's way of securing spiritual blessings? Shall we estimate again our use of this prayer-power?

II. **We are in the presence of a specific truth, with a limited application.**—St. James is speaking of one particular matter in our text, and urging on the attention of disciples the working power of prayer in relation to it. Sins of frailty, faults, and failings are sure to appear in Church life. Men and women never do dwell together in any life associations without difficulties, misunderstandings, complex circumstances arising, and they generally come from somebody's *faults*, somebody's failing from the Christian charity, or purity, or duty. Given then a case of failure and inconsistency, something that disturbs relations, and might easily bring in contentions and enmities, what should be done? How would the Spirit of Christ lead the members to act? St. James says, "Confess therefore your sins one to another"; be willing to acknowledge it if you have done wrong or felt wrong; "and pray one for another": that is the very best way to heal up breaches, to restore pleasant relations, and to cure the faulty one of his faults. It is in this precise connection that St. James says, "The prayer of the righteous man availeth much in its working." Nothing heals the broken relations of Christ's disciples like prayer together. And the more spiritually minded members of a Church, the "righteous ones," have this special power—they can deal effectively with faults, failings, inconsistencies, misunderstandings, by their prayer which avails much in its working. When faults, involving misunderstanding, remain, depend upon it there has been no prayer for one another which avails much. This subject has its yet more special application for us to-day. Throughout the world, wherever care is being taken of the children for Christ's sake, the minds of Christian workers are being occupied with the power of prayer, and the hearts of Christian workers are being united in the acts of prayer. The tens of thousands are meeting in spirit and sending up a great cry for a blessing on the Sunday schools. And God's reviving grace will come as an answer to the cry. But there is something more for us to think of. The prayers of to-day will be a new power set to work, and will be working to secure the very things which they will be asking to be sent from God. Think of it; the prayers of to-day, if prayers of the right-hearted and believing, will be availing much in their working on the children, will be availing much in their working on the parents and teachers, will be availing much in their working on the Church, will be availing much in their working on the world. Prayer as an actual moral and spiritual force! Have we rightly

thought of that? Is that force active, strong, vigorous, availing—in our personal religious life, in our family life, in our Sunday-school life, in our Church life? The hymnist seems to have had this thought of prayer when he wrote,—

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armour bright."

Restraining prayer! Binding fast the *worker!* Is there any sense in which we have been doing that? Then let this day of universal and united prayer be the day for loosening the bonds, and letting it go free to do its gracious work. Give prayer full liberty to do its work. Pray for one another, for the "supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." How much it may avail, let us fully prove.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19, 20.

The Redeeming Work of the Redeemer's Servants.—The closing word of the epistle is especially interesting. St. James seems for a moment to stop, to think over what he has been writing. He has had in mind many failures from the Christian spirit and relations. He has thought of many who, in various ways, have "erred from the truth." What shall be his last word of counsel to the Churches? What should it be but this?—Don't let what I have been saying breed enmities among you. Don't let it separate you one from another. Don't let it make you suspicious of one another. Don't let it put you upon searching out your heretics, either in belief or practice. Let it bring you closer together in pitiful and sympathetic brotherliness. And if there is any one who makes you anxious, who seems to be going wrong in faith or conduct, set your heart upon his conversion, getting him turned round, and turned back to thoughts and ways of righteousness. Working for his conversion will keep you near to him in sympathy and love; and if you succeed, you will save a soul from death; when he is recovered, the sins of his lapsed time can be fully forgiven; and you will have the joy of knowing that you have been the means of "hiding a multitude of sins."

I. **There is a redeeming work to be done within Christ's Church.**—St. James is not writing about the conversion of outside sinners. There are weak Christians, who slide from righteousness in their weakness. There are wilful Christians, who break out of bounds in their wilfulness. There are always some in a Christian Church who need to be recovered and redeemed; and in the anxiety for the conversion of the world, it is quite possible for us to neglect the conversion of the failing, lapsing members of the Church. Servants of the Redeemer should expect to find redeeming work in every sphere in which they move. We can always find some Christian brother who needs to be converted from the error of his ways. To redeeming work within Christ's Church attention needs to be more fully directed.

II. **There is a redeeming power within Christ's Church.**—The members of a Church ought to have a most unusual and peculiar influence one upon another. That influence may properly be called redemptive. It is the continuance of the work and influence of the Church's head and Lord. It should be a power checking lapses in their beginning, guarding against persuasions of evil, and restoring the fallen. It should be an influence securing soul-health in the community, which is the best perservation against scepticism, heresy, or unfaithfulness. Very seldom is the Church's redeeming power upon itself considered; and this may explain why inconsistency is so often permitted to grow into apostasy. We ought to convert one another—within the Christian brotherhood—from the error of any ways into which we may have fallen.

III. **The exercise of the redeeming power is a blessing to him who exer-**

cises it, as well as to him on whom it is exercised.—"In the very act of seeking to convert one for whom we care, we must turn to God ourselves, and in covering the past sins of another our own also are covered. In such an act love reaches its highest point, and that love includes the faith in God which is the condition of forgiveness." 1. A blessing to him who tries to convert another, because it (1) clears his own vision of truth; (2) makes him anxious about his own example; and (3) brings to him the sense of Divine sympathy and approval. 2. A blessing to him on whom it is exercised. (1) It saves a soul from death. For if the man is in sin, this will be true for him—"sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." And (2) "It shall hide a multitude of sins." Because when one of His people is heart-restored to His allegiance, God can, and does, cast all his sins behind His back; they are hidden, as the harlots and riotous living of the younger son were all hidden from the home view, when the father had a penitent and restored boy back at his table again. St. Paul teaches the same duty of Church members to one another, when he says, "If any of you be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness."

SUGGESTIVE NOTES AND SERMON SKETCHES.

Vers. 19, 20. *Heresy.*

I. These words imply **the possibility of a truth-possessor becoming a truth-loser.**—Men may "err from the truth" through—1. A daring, speculative turn of thought. 2. Want of sympathy in their intellectual difficulties. 3. Intellectual pride.

II. **The principle of mutual oversight in spiritual life is here recognised.**—In him who would convert the sinner, there must be—1. Intense sympathy with Christ in the love of souls. 2. A thorough acquaintance with the heart's deceitfulness. 3. An intelligent reverence for the established truths of religion.

III. **The text teaches that the salvation of the soul is the sublimest of moral triumphs.**—It is so because—1. Christ deemed it worthy of His incarnation and sacrifice. 2. The mission of God's Spirit is thus fulfilled. 3. The sum of moral goodness is augmented.—*Dr. J. Parker.*

Ver. 20. *Hiding Sin.*—This is conversion—to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and not to turn him from one party to another, or merely from one notion and way of thinking to another. He who thus converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death. And by such conversion of heart and life a multitude of sins shall be hid. A most comfortable passage of Scripture is this. We learn hence that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid or pardoned; and that when sin is turned from or forsaken, it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us. Let people contrive to cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it but by forsaking it. Some make the sense of this text to be, that conversion shall *prevent* a multitude of sins; and it is a truth beyond dispute that many sins are prevented in the person converted, many also may be prevented in others that he may have an influence upon, or may converse with.—*Matthew Henry.*

ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER V.

Ver. 14. *The Use of Oil for anointing Bodies.*—The use of oil in anointing the body appears to have been general in ancient times among all the nations dwelling around the Mediterranean. Allusions to this use abound in ancient authors. The heroes of Homer are described by him as restoring their weary limbs after a battle by frictions

of oil. This was Alexander's practice. It was Pompey's daily practice also, as well as that of all the wealthy Romans. We find this custom alluded to in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments. It is mentioned as forming an habitual part of the toilet on special occasions (Ruth iii. 3; 2 Sam. xii. 20; Mic. vi. 15); not to be indulged in in case of mourning (2 Sam. xiv. 2; Dan. x. 2, 3). The head was anointed in connection with the recurring daily ablution, as mentioned in Matt. vi. 17. Egyptian monuments represent servants anointing guests on their arrival at their entertainer's house; and alabaster vases still exist which retain traces of the ointment they once contained. This was adopted from the Egyptians by the Jews, and the settlement of many of these people at Alexandria served to maintain Egyptian customs among them. This practice has disappeared in modern times, on account of the conquest of these lands by foreign nations. The hair is now anointed, but mostly by the women, since the men have the head shaved. The wrestlers, called by the Turks Pekhliwans, anoint themselves with oil before wrestling, as did the ancients preparatory to similar athletic exercises, in order to render their bodies more slippery under the grasp of their antagonists. The custom of anointing the body is still prevalent among some nations of Africa.—*Van Lennep.*

Church Customs of anointing with Oil.—Anointing with oil was a part of the ceremonial of the Jewish law, which has been introduced into the Roman as well as the Oriental Churches. It is prepared by these according to the rule prescribed by Moses, and is with them no inconsiderable source of revenue. The "extreme unction" practised by the Roman Church is defended by a misinterpretation of this text; for extreme unction is never applied until it is considered certain that the patient is about to die, whereas the words of St. James, as well as those in Mark vi. 13, connect anointing the sick with recovery. We do not consider that in these cases oil was used either as a means or a symbol; the anointing was simply an exercise of faith similar to Peter and John's saying to the lame man at the gate of the Temple called Beautiful, "Rise up, and walk." The elders of the Church, after praying for the sick man, were to treat him as though he were recovered. They were to help him rise from his bed, wash, anoint his head, and dress, and rejoice with him in view of the healing mercies of God.—*Ibid.*

Vers. 15, 16. *Answers to Prayer.*—About thirty years ago, a beloved friend and fellow-labourer was taken alarmingly ill, and his constitution being delicate, it was feared that he would not be able to resist so violent an attack. He was a man most highly esteemed both by teachers and children; indeed, I never knew a man more generally beloved. Kind and gentle in his deportment, superior in natural and acquired talent, and zealously devoted to the interests of the young, he was formed both by nature and grace to be a teacher of the very first order. His sudden indisposition spread a gloom over many hearts, and prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him. Several friends agreed to engage in this exercise every morning at eleven o'clock, and the result was waited for with the greatest anxiety. The next Sabbath came, and this faithful servant of Christ to all human appearance was fast approaching the gates of death; a few hours it was thought would terminate his useful career. But though cast down, his friends were not in despair. A special prayer-meeting was appointed to be held in the evening on his behalf, which was attended by not less than between two and three hundred persons, and never did Christians appear to be more united in purpose, more earnest in desire, and more interested in the one important object for which they were assembled, than were the friends on that occasion. It was in truth a solemn season. Every soul seemed dissolved in tenderness, and every eye melted to tears; while the language of each heart appeared to be, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan." For my own part I felt so overcome by the intense sympathy and earnestness displayed, that I was glad to retire from the meeting unobserved, that I might "commune with my own heart, and be still." The next day was with me a day of much anxiety; but in the evening I was greatly relieved by the information that the disorder of my friend had taken a sudden and favourable change at the very hour appointed for prayer; affording a striking illustration of the faithfulness of the promise, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." From that hour the sufferer began slowly to amend, until he was again restored to health, and to the duties from which he had for a season been laid aside. But the most extraordinary part of the story remains to be told. At the meeting referred to, an aged teacher, a man remarkable for the strength and simplicity of his faith, was called upon to pray. Whilst pleading with God on behalf of his friend, Hezekiah's sickness and recovery came forcibly to his mind, and he prayed that God would be pleased, as in the case of Israel's king, to add fifteen years to the valuable life of his afflicted brother. Time rolled on, carrying many who had engaged in this interesting service to the ocean of eternity, and with them the venerable man who had offered this singular prayer. He whose life had been given at his petition

wept over his remains, crying, "Alas, my brother!" and followed him to the open tomb. Years again passed away, and the circumstance of the fifteen years was forgotten by most, but not by him to whom it particularly referred. He treasured it up in his memory, until old age, with its accompanying infirmities, came stealing upon him. One day, when remarking upon it to his family, he said, "That prayer has been signally answered, for this very week the fifteen years have expired." In the evening the worn-out pilgrim retired to his rest; but oh, how sweet, how peaceful was that rest! it was the rest that remaineth for the people of God. When the sun again visited our hemisphere, his happy spirit had departed to partake of pleasures which longevity cannot diminish, and eternity itself can never exhaust.—*Cranfield.*

Ver. 16. *Luther's Prayer.*—"Just as a shoemaker makes a shoe, and a tailor a coat," said Luther, "so also ought the Christian to pray. The Christian's trade is praying. And the prayer of the Church works great miracles. In our days it has raised from the dead three persons, viz. myself, my wife Catherine, and Melancthon, who was nigh unto death at Weimar." Luther, having spoken thus, he lifted up his eyes towards heaven, praying, "Lord God, Thou hast spoken through the mouth of Thy servant David (Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9). Why wilt Thou not give us rain now, for which so long we have cried and prayed? Well, then, if no rain, Thou art able to give us something better—a peaceable and quiet life, peace and harmony. Now, we have prayed so much, prayed so often, and our prayers not being granted, dear Father, the wicked will say, Christ, Thy beloved Son, had told a falsehood, saying (John xvi. 23), Thus they will give both Thee and Thy Son the lie. I know that we sincerely cry to Thee and with yearning. Why, then, dost Thou not hear us?" In the very same night following there fell a very refreshing and productive rain.

Ver. 17, 18. *Rain in Answer to Prayer.*—An interesting coincidence in connection with this reference to Elijah's history presents itself in the narrative given in Josephus (*Ant.*, XVIII. viii. 6) of the troubles caused by Caligula's insane attempt to set up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem. Petronius, the then governor of Judæa, was moved by the passionate entreaties of the people, and supported the efforts made by Agrippa I., who remained in Rome, to turn the emperor from his purpose. It was one of the years of drought that brought about the great famine foretold by Agabus (Acts xi. 28). No rain had fallen for many weeks, and the people—Christians, we may well believe, as well as Jews, though Josephus of course makes no mention of the former—were "instant in prayer," calling upon the Lord God of Israel to send rain upon the earth. Suddenly rain fell in a plenteous shower from an almost cloudless sky. The earth was refreshed, and the pressing danger averted. Petronius, Josephus relates, was much moved by this manifestation, this Epiphany, of the Divine power, and looked upon it partly as an answer to the prayers of the people, partly as the reward of the equity which he had shown in dealing with them. According to the date which, on independent grounds, has been assigned to St. James's epistle, the event referred to must have happened but a few months before or but a few months after it. If before, he may well have had it in his thoughts. If after, it may well have been in part the effect of his teaching. Students of Church history will remember the strikingly parallel instance of the prayers of the soldiers of the Thundering Legion in the expedition of Marcus Aurelius against the Marcomanni (Euseb., *Hist.*, v. 5; Tertul., *Apol.*, c. 5).—*Dean Plumptre.*

Vers. 19, 20. *One Conversion leads to Many.*—The conversion of a soul to God may issue in the conversion of scores more, and perhaps in the planting of various Christian Churches. It is impossible to calculate where the blessing may terminate. The visit of a travelling pedlar to the door of Richard Baxter's father led to the purchase of a little book; that little book led to the conversion of Richard Baxter. Baxter wrote the *Saint's Rest*, which was blessed to the conversion of Philip Doddridge. Doddridge penned the *Rise and Progress of Religion*, and that led to the conversion of Wilberforce. Wilberforce's *Practical View* was the means of the conversion of Dr. Chalmers and Legh Richmond. How much good Chalmers did by his exalted genius, his burning piety, his sterling writings, it is impossible for any man to estimate; and I think we may safely say that the *Dairyman's Daughter*, and other works of Legh Richmond, have been honoured by God to the salvation of thousands.

Ver. 20. Thank God for the many instances in which one glowing soul, all aflame with love to God, has sufficed to kindle a whole heap of dead matter, and send it leaping skyward in ruddy brightness. Alas! for the many instances in which the wet, green wood has been too strong for the little spark, and has not only obstinately resisted, but has ignominiously quenched its ineffectual fire.—*A. Maclaren, D.D.*

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[NOTE: H. = Homily; N. = Note; I = Illustration]

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HOMILIES FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

Church Seasons: Lent, Heb. iv. 15, 16; vi. 12; xii. 1; 11; 29; Jas. i. 12-15; iv. 6; 7; 11. Good Friday, Heb. ii. 10; iv. 14-16; ix. 22; 28; x. 10. Whit Sunday, Heb. iii. 7.
Holy Communion: Heb. xiii. 10, 15.
Missions to Heathen: 1 Tim. ii. 4-8. Bible Society, 2 Tim. iii. 14-17; Heb. iv. 12, 13; v. 12.
Evangelistic Services: 1 Tim. i. 11; 15; ii. 4; iv. 10; Titus iii. 2, 3; 4-7; 5; Heb. ii. 1-4; vii. 23-28.
Special: Ordination, 1 Tim. i. 3, 4; iii. 1-7; 8-13; iv. 13-16; v. 17-22; 2 Tim. ii. 23-26; iv. 1-8; 6-8; Titus i. 5-9; ii. 1; iii. 9; 15; Heb. v. 1-10; x. 24. Workers, 1 Tim. i. 18-20; iii. 8-13; iv. 6, 7; 2 Tim. iii. 10-13; Titus i. 6; Heb. iii. 14; x. 24; Jas. i. 27; v. 19, 20. Harvest, Jas. v. 7-11. Young, Titus ii. 4-8. Parents, 1 Tim. v. 4, 8, 16; Heb. xii. 16. Aged, Titus ii. 1-3; Philem. 9. Young Men, 1 Tim. iv. 8-11; Heb. xii. 7. Soldiers, 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4; Jas. iv. 1, 2. Scientific men, 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21; Heb. xi. 1-3; Jas. iv. 17; v. 17, 18. Purity, Titus i. 15. Worship, 1 Tim. ii. 1-3; Heb. x. 25. Death, 2 Tim. i. 8, 10; Heb. xi. 5, 6; xiii. 7; 14; Jas. iv. 14.