

THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON THE

BOOK OF NUMBERS.

THE
Preacher's Complete Homiletical
COMMENTARY
ON THE
OLD TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN).

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

BY
VARIOUS AUTHORS.



New York
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON AND TORONTO
1892

A
HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE BOOK OF
NUMBERS

(CHAPTERS XVI. TO XXXVI.)

WITH CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES, INDICES, Etc. Etc.

BY

REV. WILLIAM JONES.

New York
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON & TORONTO
1892

HOMILETIC COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.

CHAPTER XVI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the history of the rebellion of Korah and his company. The time and place of this event are not recorded. It is probable that it occurred in one of the early years of their penal wanderings.

Verse 1. *Korah* was a Kohathite, and cousin to Moses and Aaron (Exod. vi. 16-21). *Dathan and Abiram and On* were Reubenites; and were probably discontented because the rights of primogeniture were taken from their tribe, and the tribe of Judah placed before them. Moreover the camps of Reuben and of the Kohathites were pitched on the same side of the tabernacle (chaps. ii. 10, iii. 29); thus the two families were conveniently situated for conspiring together. *On* is not mentioned hereafter: he probably withdrew from the conspiracy, or took only a very subordinate part in it.

Took men. The word "men" is not in the original; and the verb "took" is in the singular number. But it is not uncommon in Hebrew when the verb begins the sentence (as it does here) for it to be in the singular, even when the nominative case which follows is plural. So Gesenius would translate, *And Korah and Dathan*

and Abiram took and rose up against Moses &c. Keil and Del. follow Gesenius here. The Jerusalem Targum supplies "counsel" after "took." If this be adopted the translation will be, *And Korah took counsel apart with Dathan and Abiram, &c.* The Hebrew literally translated is, "And Korah, son of Yizhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, took both Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben; and they rose up," &c. In this way Bp. Patrick, Drs. A. Clarke, Gill, and others construe the verse. It is suggested in the *Speaker's Comm.* that "probably the whole difficulty is due to an after insertion of the mention of Dathan and Abiram, and of their insurrection against Moses, into the original narrative of the sedition of Korah. This narrative would run naturally as follows: 'Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took of the children of Israel two hundred and fifty,' &c. In it, moreover, Korah and his company would be naturally represented as gathering themselves together against Aaron as well as against Moses (ver. 3). But in the expansion of this narrative with a view of making it comprise the

account of the proceedings of Dathan and Abiram, it became important to mark that the outcry of the latter was directed against Moses alone; hence the introduction of the opening words of ver. 2."

Verse 2. *Famous in the congregation.* Keil and Del.: "'Called men of the congregation,' i.e., members of the council of the nation which administered the affairs of the congregation (cf. i. 16)."

Men of renown. Keil and Del.: "'Men of name' (see Gen. vi. 4). These two hundred and fifty men appear to have belonged to the other tribes; this is implied in chap. xxvii. 3."

Verse 3. *Ye take too much upon you.* Margin: "It is much for you." Dr. A.

Clarke: "The original is simply רַב לָכֶם, 'too much for you.'"

Verse 4. Comp. chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 7. *Ye take too much upon you.* Moses gives back to them their own words, רַב לָכֶם.

Verse 9. *Seemeth it but a small thing unto you.* The words, "seemeth it but" are not in the original. Keil and Del. translate, "Is this too little for you?"

Verse 11. "The words of Moses in his wrath are broken. Literally the verse runs: 'Wherefore against the Lord (not against Aaron) thou and all thy company who are gathered together, and Aaron, what is he, that ye murmur against him?' Cf. the parallel reproof of Ananias by St. Peter (Acts v. 3, 4)."
—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. *A land that floweth with milk and honey.* Thus insolently they apply to Egypt the very words by which Moses had described the Promised Land.

Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Keil and Del.: "That thou wilt be always playing the lord over us?"

Verse 14. *Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men.* Margin as in Heb.: "bore out," or dig out; "i.e., 'blind them to the fact that you keep none of your promises,' equivalent to 'throw dust in their eyes.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *The glory of the Lord appeared, &c.* Comp. chap. xiv. 10.

Verse 24. *Tabernacle of Korah.* Heb.: מִשְׁכַּן, dwelling of Korah.

Verse 29. *Die the common death of all men.* Margin: "Die as every man dieth," i.e., a natural death.

Verse 30. *Make a new thing.* Margin: "Create a creature." בְּרִיאָה בָּרָא, create a creation; i.e., work an extraordinary miracle: do such a thing as was never done before. So Dr. A. Clarke, Keil and Del. *et al.*

Verse 32. *And all the men that appertained unto Korah.* "Appertained," is not in the original; when that is omitted the A. V. is a literal translation of the Hebrew. This does not mean his children; for it is written, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not" (chap. xxvi. 11); and the celebrated Korahite choir were descendants of his. Keil and Del. say that, "'all the men belonging to Korah,' were his servants." The *Speaker's Comm.*: "All belonging to him who associated themselves with him in this rebellion."

It appears that Korah was not swallowed up with Dathan and Abiram. "Korah himself," says Bishop A. C. Hervey, "was doubtless with the 250 men who bare censers nearer the tabernacle (ver. 19), and perished with them by the 'fire from Jehovah' which accompanied the earthquake. It is nowhere said that he was one of those who 'went down quick into the pit' (comp. Psa. cvi. 17, 18), and it is natural that he should have been with the censor-bearers. That he was so is indeed clearly implied by Num. xvi. 16-19, 35, 40, compared with xxvi. 9, 10." (See a somewhat full and carefully-compiled consideration of this question in Cobbin's *Evangelical Synopsis* on this verse.)

Verse 35. Comp. Lev. x. 1, 2.

Verse 37. *Out of the burning, i.e., from the midst of the men that were burned.*

Scatter thou the fire yonder, i.e., scatter

far away the burning coals in the censers.

They are hallowed. See the next ver. : "For they offered them before the Lord," &c., and comp. Lev. xxvii. 28.

Verse 38. *Sinners against their own souls*, or lives. Because of their sin their lives had been suddenly cut off. Comp. Prov. xx. 2; Hab. ii. 10.

Verse 45. *And they fell upon their faces.* Comp. vers. 4, 22; and chap. xiv. 5.

Verse 46. *A censor.* "Rather 'the censor;' i.e., that of the High-priest which was used by him on the Great Day of Atonement; cf. Lev. xvi. 12; Heb. ix. 4."—*Speaker's Comm.*

THE REBELLION OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY.

(Verses 1-7.)

"The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults; but this was a regular conspiracy, headed by persons of consequence, abetted by many of the princes, and favoured by most of the congregation." In endeavouring to expound that portion of the narrative selected as our text, we take two main divisions.

I. The base rebellion of Korah and his company.

1. *The leaders of the rebellion.* "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, took both Dathan," &c. Korah was a Levite, engaged in sacred services in connection with the temple and worship of the Lord, and ought therefore to have set an example of loyalty to the rightful rulers. He was also cousin to Moses and Aaron, and he ought to have found in that an additional reason for rendering to them prompt and zealous support. Yet he seems to have been the instigator and leader of the rebellion. Dathan and Abiram were leading men in the tribe of Reuben, who joined Korah in the insurrection. And with them were two hundred and fifty of the most distinguished and influential men of the nation. "A very dangerous conspiracy," says Trapp; "for as in a beast the body follows the head, so in that *bellua multorum capitum*, the multitude. Great men are the looking-glasses of the country, according to which most men dress themselves; their sins do as seldom go unattended as their persons; height of place ever adds two wings to sin, ex-

ample and scandal, whereby it soars higher and flies much further." It is ill with a nation when its leaders are misleaders.

2. *The nature of the rebellion.* It was an organized effort to depose Moses from his position as the head of the civil life, and Aaron from his position as the head of the religious life of the nation. It was "against both magistracy and ministry." The rebels would have equal authority with Moses and Aaron; they would either ascend to the same level as that occupied by the two great chiefs, or they would drag the two chiefs down to their level. In its essential features this rebellion has had many successors. (a)

3. *The cause of the rebellion.* (1) *The ostensible cause.* "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you," &c. They alleged that Moses and Aaron had usurped the position which they now held and the authority which they wielded. An outrageous assertion when we consider how often the Lord God had manifested His presence with Moses, and used him as the instrument of His power. They also alleged that, as the worshippers of the Lord God, all the congregation were holy, and had, therefore, the right to officiate as priests, and to exercise equal authority with Moses in the government. Their position will not bear examination. It is true that "the whole congregation of Israel were holy in a sense, as being

taken into covenant with God; but that which was a national privilege, shared by the meanest Israelite, gave no claim to the magistracy or the priesthood, which He had bestowed according to His pleasure." There is a sense in which all men are equal before God, yet to some He gives greater abilities and position and authority than to others. But let us mark here two things. First: The tendency of man to seek to justify himself in evil conduct. Korah and his company tried to make their case appear just and good. Men try to justify their evil conduct partly with a view of securing the co-operation, or avoiding the condemnation of others. They do it also in order to quiet their own consciences, by persuading themselves that their course of conduct is reasonable and righteous. But this attempt to justify evil is to add sin to sin. Second: The best of men in this world are liable to reproach and slander. Very few, if indeed any, abler and holier men than Moses have ever lived. And his credentials, as to his being called of God to his high position, were of the clearest and most convincing character; yet he is accused of being a domineering usurper, &c. Count it not a strange thing if you are reviled, &c. Comp. Matt. x. 25. (2) The *real* cause. Envy and ambition seem to have been the root of the rebellion. Korah was envious of Aaron and the priests, Dathan and Abiram envied the tribe of Judah its first rank amongst the tribes, and the two hundred and fifty princes envied Moses because of his place and power. (b) All these men were ambitious of higher rank and wider authority. "Pride, envy, ambition," says Babington, "was in their hearts, and that bred discontentment; discontentment, in-

surrection. If a man should call out all carpenters, none would come but such; but call for all that think themselves wise and able to govern, who will not come?" (c)

II. The noble conduct of Moses in the rebellion.

"And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face," &c. (vers. 4-7). Notice:

1. *His all-sufficient resource in trouble.* "When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." By prayer he endeavoured to compose his spirit, and sought help of God. The good man may ever seek and obtain direction and help from God by prayer. Comp. Heb. iv. 16; James i. 5.

2. *His sublime confidence in God.* This confidence is manifest in—(1) His bold proposal for settling the question raised by the rebels. "This do, Take ye censers, Korah, and all his company," &c. (vers. 6, 7). Moses must have been directed to this expedient in answer to prayer: he would not have ventured on so daring a measure without the sanction of God. (2) His assurance that God would vindicate both Aaron and himself. "He spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are His," &c. (ver. 6). Moses was convinced of the Divine authority of his own mission and the mission of Aaron, and that God would manifest to all in a manner not to be mistaken that He had chosen and called them to their respective offices.

3. *His calm rebuke of the rebels.* "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." The rebuke was *deserved*. They were leading a most wicked rebellion. The rebuke was *appropriate*. They were impugning the arrangements of the all-wise God: surely that was to take too much upon them.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Democracy, we are all well aware, what is called "self-government" of the multitude by the multitude, is in words the thing everywhere passionately clamoured for at present. Democracy makes rapid progress in these latter times, and ever more rapid, in a perilous

accelerative ratio; towards democracy, and that only, the progress of things is everywhere tending as to the final goal and winning-post. So think, so clamour the multitudes everywhere. And yet all men may see, whose sight is good for much, that in democracy can

He no finality; that with the completest winning of democracy there is nothing yet won,—except emptiness, and the free chance to win! Democracy is, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of zero. When no government is wanted, save that of the parish constable, as in America with its boundless soil, every man being able to find work and recompense for himself, democracy may subsist; not elsewhere, except briefly, as a swift transition toward something other and farther. Democracy never yet, that we heard of, was able to accomplish much work, beyond that same cancelling of itself. Rome and Athens are the ones for the schools; unexceptionable for that purpose. In Rome and Athens, as elsewhere, if we look practically, we shall find that it was not by loud voting and debating of many, but by wise insight and ordering of a few, that the work was done. So is it ever, so will it ever be. The French Convention was a Parliament elected “by the five points,” with ballot boxes, universal-suffrages, and what not, as perfectly as Parliament can hope to be in this world; and had indeed a pretty spell of work to do, and did it. The French Convention had to cease from being a free Parliament, and become more arbitrary than any Sultan Bajazet, before it could so much as subsist. It had to purge out its argumentative Girondins, elect its Supreme Committee of *Salut*, guillotine into silence and extinction all that gainsayed it, and rule and work literally by the sternest despotism ever seen in Europe, before it could rule at all. Napoleon was not President of a Republic; Cromwell tried hard to rule in that way, but found that he could not. These, “the armed soldiers of democracy,” had to chain democracy under their feet, and become despots over it, before they could work out the earnest obscure purpose of democracy itself! Democracy, take it where you will in our Europe, is found but as a regulated

method of rebellion and abrogation; it abrogates the old arrangement of things; and leaves, as we say, *Zero* and vacuity for the institution of a new arrangement. It is the consummation of No-government and *Laissez-faire*. It may be natural for our Europe at present; but cannot be the ultimatum of it. Not towards the impossibility, “self-government” of a multitude by a multitude; but towards some possibility, government by the wisest, does bewildered Europe struggle. The blessedest possibility: not misgovernment, not *Laissez-faire*, but veritable government.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

(b) For Illustrations on Envy see pp. 206-208.

(c) Ambition, that high and glorious passion which makes such havoc among the sons of men, arises from a proud desire of honour and distinction; and when the splendid trappings in which it is usually caparisoned are removed, will be found to consist of the mean materials of envy, pride, and covetousness. It is described by different authors as a gallant madness, a pleasant poison, a hidden plague, a secret poison, a caustic of the soul, the moth of holiness, the mother of hypocrisy, and by crucifying and disquieting all it takes hold of, the cause of melancholy and madness.—*R. Burton*.

The same sun which gilds all nature, and exhilarates the whole creation, does not shine upon disappointed ambition. It is something that rays out of darkness, and inspires nothing but gloom and melancholy. Men in this deplorable state of mind find a comfort in spreading the contagion of their spleen. They find an advantage, too; for it is a general popular error to imagine the loudest complainers for the public to be most anxious for its welfare. If such persons can answer the ends of relief and profit to themselves, they are apt to be careless enough about either the means or the consequences.—*E. Burke*.

WICKED AMBITION FAITHFULLY REBUKED.

(Verses 8-11.)

Moses now addresses Korah and the other rebellious Levites, probably with a view to convince them of their error and sin before the case should come on for the Divine adjudication. For Moses knew that if their audacious claims were put to the test on the morrow “before the Lord,” as he had proposed, it would be at their dread peril, and that a similar fate to that of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 1, 2; chap. iii. 4) would probably befall them. By this remonstrance he seeks to prevent this.

In this appeal Moses makes it clear to Korah that he detected the real motives which actuated him in this movement. The enquiries, “Seek ye the priesthood also?” and “What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?” would leave no doubt on the mind of the leader of the rebels that Moses was cognisant of his real feeling and aims. Notice:—

I. The greatness of the privileges conferred upon the Levites.

“Seemeth it but a small thing unto

you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation," &c. (vers. 9, 10). Matthew Henry's notes are so excellent in themselves and in their arrangement that we cannot do better than quote them. "He reminds them how great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites.

"1. *They were separated from the congregation of Israel*, distinguished from them, dignified above them; instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to have been thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes, though they had been in all respects upon the level with them. Note, It will help to keep us from envying those that are above us duly to consider how many there are below us. Instead of fretting that any are preferred before us in honour, power, estate, or interest, in gifts, graces, or usefulness, we have reason to bless God if we, who are less than the least, are not put among the very last. Many perhaps who deserve better are not preferred so well.

"2. *They were separated to very great and valuable honours.* (1) To draw near to God, nearer than the common Israelites, though they also were a people near unto Him: the nearer any are to God the greater is their honour. (2) To do the service of the tabernacle. It is honour enough to bear the vessels of the sanctuary, and to be employed in any part of the service of the tabernacle. God's service is not only perfect freedom, but high preferment. (3) To stand before the congregation to minister unto them. Note, Those are truly great that serve the public, and it is the honour of God's ministers to be the Church's ministers; nay, which adds to the dignity put upon them.

"3. *It was the God of Israel Himself that separated them.* It was His act and deed to put them into their place, and therefore they ought not to have been discontented; and He it was likewise that put Aaron into his place, and therefore they ought not to have envied him."

II. The unrighteousness of the ambition cherished by them.

Their ambition involved—

1. *The disparagement of their present privileges.* Their privileges "seemed but a small thing unto them." Great as they were, they did not satisfy them. "Ambition," says Trapp, "is restless and unsatisfiable; for, like the crocodile, it grows as long as it lives." And M. Henry: "Those who aspire after and usurp the honours forbidden them put a great contempt upon the honours allowed them." (a)

2. *Interference in the Divine arrangements.* "Seek ye the priesthood also?" It was by the express arrangement and command of God that Aaron and his sons were separated to the duties and emoluments of the priesthood; and, therefore, in seeking the priesthood for themselves, Korah and the Levites who were united with him were endeavouring to set aside the arrangements of the Lord God. Their insatiable ambition had dethroned their judgment, and, for a time, mastered their conscience; it was both unreasonable and unrighteous.

III. The heinousness of the rebellion in which they engaged.

Moses points out to them concerning their rebellion that—

1. *It was unreasonable.* "What is Aaron that ye murmur against him?" The high-priest was merely an instrument in the hand of the Lord. Aaron was not self-appointed. He was a servant called of God to his office, with his duties and his privileges clearly apportioned unto him. How unreasonable, then, was it to murmur at him for being high-priest!

2. *It was exceedingly sinful.* "Thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord." "Those resist the prince who resist those that are commissioned by him." Comp. Matt. x. 40; John xiii. 20; Acts ix. 4.

Conclusion.

1. *Let us crush every rising of ambition which is not in harmony with wisdom*

and righteousness. It is of such that Shakespeare says, and says wisely—

“Fling away ambition :
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by’t?” (b)

2. Let us seek to give to our ambition
a righteous and noble direction. (c)

“The true ambition there alone resides,
Where justice vindicates, and wisdom guides;
Where inward dignity joins outward state;
Our purpose good as our achievement great;
Where public blessings public praise attend,
Where glory is our motive, not our end.
Wouldst thou be famed? Have those high
acts in view;
Brave men would act, though scandal would
ensue.”—*E. Young.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a curtain, but it is lifting, it is lifting, it is lifting; and when it is lifted, what do I see? The spirit world! 'Tis death that lifts the curtain; and when it is lifted, these present things will vanish, for they are but shadows. The world of eternity and reality will then be seen. I would summon a jury of the spirits that have passed that curtain; and they would not be long debating about the question whether Christ is worth the winning. I care not where you select them from—whether from among the condemned in hell, or from among the beatified in heaven. Let them sit—let even *those who are in hell* sit, and judge upon the matter, and, if they could for once speak honestly, they would tell you that it is a dreadful thing to despise Christ; now that they have come to see things in a true light—now that they are lost for ever—now that they are crushed with knowledge and feeling which have come too late to be profitable—now they wish that they had listened to the ministrations of truth, to the proclamations of the Gospel. Ah! if they could have a sane mind back again, they would shriek, “Oh! for one more Sabbath. Oh! to listen once more to an honest preacher, though his words might be clumsy and uncouth. Oh! to hear a voice once more say, ‘Come to Jesus while the day of mercy lasts.’ Oh! to be once more pressed to come to the marriage feast—once more bidden to look to Jesus and to live!” I tell you, sirs, some of you who make so light of Sundays, and think preaching is but a pastime, so that you come here to hear us as you would go to hear some fiddler on a week-night—I tell you, sirs, the lost in hell reckon these things at a very different rate, and so will you ere long, when another preacher, with skeleton fingers, shall talk to you upon your death-bed. Ah! then you will see that we were in earnest and you were the players, and you will comprehend that what we said to you demanded earnest, immediate attention, though, alas! you would not give it, and so played false to your own soul, and committed spiritual suicide, and went your way like a bullock to the slaughter, to be the murderers of your own spirits.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) How, like a mounting devil in the heart,
Rules the unrein'd ambition! Let it once

But play the monarch, and its haughty
brow
Glow with a beauty that bewilders
thought
And unthrones peace for ever. Putting
on
The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns
The heart to ashes, and with not a spring
Left in the bosom for the spirit's lip
We look upon our splendour and forget
The thirst for which we perish.
N. P. Willis.

(c) There are few men who are not ambitious of distinguishing themselves in the nation or country where they live, and of growing considerable with those with whom they converse. There is a kind of grandeur and respect which the meanest and most insignificant part of mankind endeavour to procure in the little circle of their friends and acquaintance. The poorest mechanic, nay, the man who lives upon common alms, gets him his set of admirers, and delights in that superiority which he enjoys over those who are in some respects beneath him. This ambition which is natural to the soul of man, might, methinks, receive a very happy turn; and, if it were *rightly directed*, contribute as much to a person's advantage as it generally does to his uneasiness and disquiet.—*J. Addison.*

“Ambition is the vice of noble souls!”
If 'tis a vice, then let those souls beware,
Thrice noble though they be, and passing
fair
In the world's eye, and high upon the scrolls,
Her favour'd minions where the world enrols,
Lest it conduct to shame! Be thine the
care,
Soldier of Christ, that nobler strife to dare,
Which the rash spirit of the world controls,
And makes ambition virtue! Be it thine
To win thy bright unfading diadem
By works of love! Around his brows shall
shine
In heaven from glory's source the purest
beam,
Whose aspect here, with beauty most divine,
Reflects the image of the GOOD SUPREME.

Ep. Manl.
295

THE SIN OF USURPING THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

(Verse 10.)

"Seek ye the priesthood also?"

The Papists say that Korah, Dathan and Abiram are like unto Protestants, and that as they perished for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron so Protestants for leaving "the Catholic Church," as they call it, will perish for ever in hell. But High Church clergy and writers of like kind compare Korah and his company to the Dissenters; they say that like as Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron, so Dissenters presuming to have preachers of their own establish a mock ministry different from that which has the apostolic commission. What a perverting of the truth! So far from it being true that Protestants or Dissenters are shadowed forth, it is not difficult to perceive rather that it shadows forth themselves. What was the crime of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? It was an attempt to put themselves in the place of Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron were mediators between God and Israel, and therefore types of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Moses as lawgiver and Aaron as priest were types of Jesus; their office was sacred and peculiar to themselves; no man could, with God's permission, perform the duties of their office but themselves. No man on any consideration was to usurp the office of priest; no, not even Jesus Christ Himself, as you see in Heb. v. 4, 5. So sacred was the office of priest that not even Jesus Himself might take it until called to it by God Himself. This was the very crime of Korah and his company Now what is the conduct of the Papists and of High Church clergy? Is it more like the conduct of Korah and his company, or is that of Dissenters or Protestants more like it? Surely, it requires very little sense to see which are like unto Korah and his company. High Churchmen say that *they are priests*, that they offer sacrifices, that in the Supper of the Lord they

really do present the body of Christ to God, that they are sacrificing priests between God and the people; this is the great point which they maintain. Whereas there is known in the Bible but *one* priest, in that sense, in the present dispensation, namely Jesus, the great High Priest, who has gone to appear in the presence of God to present His sacrifice and offer His intercession. He carries the blood and presents the incense on behalf of His Church.

The wickedness of claiming to be a priest is seen more plainly when we consider the effect of it; it is absolutely to set Jesus Christ aside, and shut a man out from salvation. This illustration very plainly shows this. Notice, first, that the priest offered the blood of the sacrifice; and what was that blood offered for? It was God's chosen means whereby He would avert punishment and deliver from danger. If they had done wrong and provoked Him to punish them, or if they were brought in the providential dealings of God, into danger of enemies or other evil; if they shed the blood of the sacrifice and presented it before the mercy seat, or at the altar, it would be accepted, judgment averted, and evil removed. That was the *national* character of the Jewish religion; "without shedding of blood there was no remission;" and national mercies were given in consequence of their observing their national rites, and national evils were removed because of the offering of that blood. But, mark, the priest alone was to offer it; it would have been in vain if any other man had attempted to present the blood, God would not have accepted it, and the punishment would have been poured out. It was the priest who confessed the sins of the people and presented the sacrifice, and then mercy was vouchsafed. Now, what was done by the priest for Israel is what is now actually done by our High Priest for the Church. Observe how it is asserted that one was

typical of the other (Heb. x. 11, 12). Thus you see Christ is both priest and victim, as it is again in Heb. ix. 11, 12. How great then the office of Christ! . . . How awful the iniquity for any miserable man calling himself a priest to thrust Christ aside, and take upon himself the very work which here we read in God's holy Word Jesus is exalted to heaven to carry on!

Again observe, under the Old Testament law, the priest offered the incense also; it was not acceptable to God if offered by any other man. Christ's intercession was typified by the burning incense going up in a cloud of smoke together with the prayers and praises of the people; and no man might offer that except the priest. In like manner it is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who intercedes in the presence of God for His people (Rom. viii. 34). Hence we offer prayer "through Jesus Christ our Lord," "through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Just as under the old law no man might offer incense himself but must give it to the priest, so in this

dispensation no prayer is acceptable to God but by and through Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." How great then the wickedness of those who would presume to put themselves in the place of Christ, the great High Priest, and say that they are mediators through whom the prayers of the people are to be offered! What says the Holy Ghost again on this point of incense by the mouth of the beloved Apostle? 1 John ii. 1. . . . It may be well indeed that ministers should pray for their people, and people for their ministers; but it is *not* well that ministers should pretend to put themselves as mediators between God and the people, and represent themselves as successors of the Jewish High Priests; in a word, supplanting Jesus Christ Himself; this is not well.

Application.

Trust to the only Priest. Have confidence in that Man who because "He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood."—*R. W. Dibdin, M.A.*

AUDACITY IN WICKEDNESS.

(Verses 12-15.)

Having finished his address to Korah and the Levites, Moses sent messengers to Dathan and Abiram, who during that address seems to have departed to their own tents, to call them to appear before him. With outrageous insolence they not only refused to obey his summons, but preferred the most unjust and impudent charges against him. *Their audacity in wickedness is manifest—*

I. In their defiance of the authority of the ruler appointed by God.

They absolutely and daringly refused to obey the summons of Moses. Twice they said, "We will not come up." "They denied his power," says Gill, "despised his authority, and would not obey his orders, and therefore refused to come up to the tabernacle, or to the tent of Moses, or to the Court of Judicature, wherever it was; perhaps the first is best." "Sturdy rebels," says

Trapp, "ripe for destruction." See Prov. xxix. 1.

II. In their reviling the ruler appointed by God.

They proceed to charge Moses with—

1. *Having injured them in their circumstances.* "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey? . . . Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards." The statement concerning Egypt was not truthful. Moreover, as Bp. Patrick observes, "nothing could be more insolent and ungrateful than to describe Egypt in the very same language in which God had often spoken of the Land of Promise." Their deliverance from Egypt, instead of being resented as an injury, should have been regarded by them as

a priceless blessing. And whose fault was it that they were not in possession of the Promised Land? They charge Moses with that for which they alone were to blame.

2. *Attempting to tyrannise over them.* "Thou make thyself altogether a prince over us." They speak as though Moses were in the habit of lording it over them as a usurping tyrant, when he was really devoting himself to their service.

3. *Endeavouring to deceive them.* "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?" They insinuate that Moses was trying to blind the congregation as to the true character of his doings and designs.

4. *Aiming at their destruction.* "Thou hast brought us . . . to kill us in the wilderness." Farther than this injustice and falsehood surely cannot go. If they were doomed to fall in the wilderness it was because of former rebellions of their own. As for Moses he had sought their good, and only their good. Is not the audacity of their wickedness terrible?

III. In the solemn appeal to God which their conduct called forth from the ruler which He had appointed.

"And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering," &c. Notice:

1. *His righteous anger.* "Moses was very wroth." Anger is not always sinful. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There are times when it would be a sin not to be angry. There is a deep principle of wrath in the Divine nature. Our Lord looked upon the wicked Pharisees "with anger" (Mark iii. 5). In proportion as we regard holiness with affection we must regard wickedness with indignation. There is much in this world at present to awaken wrath in godly souls. The anger of Moses was a righteous thing: it was the antagonism of his pure and noble soul against the base wickedness of Dathan and Abiram. (a)

2. *His truthful self-vindication.* "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them." "Moses was not one of them," says Trapp, "that follow the administration of justice as a trade only, with an

unquenchable and unconscionable desire of gain. This is but robbery with authority, and justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, whereto while the sheep flies for defence in weather, he is sure to lose part of his fleece." Moses could truthfully appeal to the Lord that although he was their ruler he had taken no tribute whatever from them or oppressed them in any way or degree. Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 3.

3. *His solemn prayer.* "Moses said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering." Comp. Gen. iv. 4, 5. It may at first sight appear that in this request Moses manifests an unworthy spirit. But really "he craveth of God no more than to show and make manifest his own innocency and uprightness, which was to be decided by that offering."

Lessons.

1. *That man, having entered upon an evil course, unless arrested by some restraining force, proceeds to greater daring in and deeper depths of wickedness.* Sc Dathan and Abiram grew bold and insolent in sin. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse," &c. Character is never stationary. It grows either towards perfection or towards perdition. In the case of the wicked their dread progress in wickedness is not difficult of explanation. (1) The heart becomes hardened; less susceptible to good influences; less amenable to conscience, &c. (b) (2) The propensity to evil increases in power. As the soul falls the momentum with which it falls increases. (3) The circumstances into which they bring themselves by sin urge them onward. One sin seems to make other sins necessary. Shakespeare clearly expresses the idea in *Macbeth*—

"I am in blood
Stept in so far, that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er." (c)

Guard against entering on wicked, or even questionable, courses.

2. *The best of men are liable to the vilest misrepresentations.* There was not the shadow of reason for these

charges against Moses. He was the last man to play the lord over any people. "Those often fall under the heaviest censures who have merited the highest applause."

3. *The good man when suffering from misrepresentation can carry his cause to the Great Vindicator.* Moses appealed to God from the misrepresentations of Dathan and Abiram. So did Job from

the false charges of his "miserable comforters." So did David from the slanders of his enemies. Comp. Job xvi. 19; xxiii. 10-12. So may we when falsely accused. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth Thy righteousness as the light, and Thy judgment as the noon-day."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There is a great difference between the sin of one who is angry, and the cruelty of one who holds another in hatred. For even with our children are we angry; but who is ever found to hate his children? Among the very cattle, too, the cow, in a sort of weariness, will sometimes in anger drive away her suckling calf; but anon she embraces it with all the affection of a mother. She is in a way disgusted with it when she butts it; yet, when she misses it, she will seek after it. Nor do we discipline our children otherwise than with a degree of anger and indignation; yet we should not discipline them at all but in love to them.

So far, then, is every one who is angry from hating, that sometimes one would be rather convicted of hating if he were not angry; for suppose a child wishes to play in some river's stream, by whose force he would be like to perish. If you see this and patiently suffer it, this would be hating—your patient suffering him in his death. How far better is it to be angry and correct him, than by not being angry to suffer him to perish! Great is the difference, indeed, between one's exceeding due limits in some words through anger, which he afterwards wipes off by repenting of it, and the keeping an insidious purpose shut up in the heart.—*Augustine.*

There is an anger that is damnable: it is the anger of selfishness. There is an anger that is majestic as the frown of Jehovah's brow: it is the anger of truth and love. If man meets with injustice, it is not required that he shall not be roused to meet it; but if he is angry after he has had time to think upon it, that is sinful. The flame is not wrong, but the coals are.—*H. W. Beecher.*

High and gusty passions that sweep through the soul are sometimes like fierce summer storms that cleanse the air, and give the earth refreshment by strong winds and down-pelting rains. Men are better for knowing how to be angry, provided the sun does not go down on their wrath, and provided it is justified by the occasions of it.—*Ibid.*

(b) Wilful disobedience to God's commands tends most powerfully to harden the heart; for after we have once disobeyed, it becomes more easy to repeat the disobedience. But

this is not all. If you disobey, you must assign some excuse to justify your disobedience, or your conscience will reproach you, and render you uneasy; if no plausible excuse occurs, you will seek one; if none can readily be found, you will invent one. And when God proceeds to enforce His commands by frowns and threatenings, and to press you with motives and arguments, you must fortify your minds against their influence, and seek other arguments to assist you in doing it. This also tends most powerfully to harden the heart. A man who is frequently employed in seeking arguments and excuses to justify his neglect of religion, soon becomes expert in the work of self-justification. He is, if I may so express it, armed at all points against the truth; so that in a little time, nothing affects him, no arrow from the quiver of revelation can reach his conscience. Urge him to what duty you will, he has some plausible excuse in readiness to justify himself for neglecting to perform it. But if, as is sometimes the case, his excuses prove insufficient, and his understanding and conscience become convinced that he ought to hear God's voice to-day, he can avoid compliance only by taking refuge in an obstinate refusal, or by resolutely diverting his attention to some other object, till God's commands are forgotten, or by a vague kind of promise that he will become religious at some future period. Whichever of these methods he adopts, the present impression is effaced, and his heart is hardened. He has engaged in a warfare with his reason and conscience, and has gained a victory over them. He has resisted the force of truth, and thus rendered it more easy for him to resist it again. In a word, he has less religious sensibility; he has become more inaccessible to conviction, and less disposed to yield to it than before.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(c) It is somewhere fabled in ancient literature that a certain stag and horse were at variance; they battled for some time fiercely with each other. At length the strength of the horse failed him, and he sought the help of a man. The man complies, gets on his back, and chases the stag to death. So far the noble steed overcame the difficulty of his position, and gained his point; but the very

means he adopted placed him in a far worse position afterwards. With a bit in his mouth and saddle on his back, he continued to the end of his days the slave of the man whose assistance he obtained. It is thus with those who seek to overcome a difficulty or avoid a danger by recourse to immoral expedients. This, alas! is often done. In business a man contracts obligations. He finds that his credit, reputation, and position are in danger unless they are fully met. The hour comes

when those obligations heavily press upon him. He struggles honourably with them for a time. At length he gives way, and has recourse to forgeries, falsehoods, or some other wicked device. For the moment he seems to succeed; but the immorality he called in to serve him for the hour becomes his master and his tyrant, uses him as the man did the horse in the fable—as a wretched beast of burden, the victim of the bit, the saddle, and the spur.—*The Clerical Year Book.*

THE REBELLION MAINTAINED IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF GOD.

(Verses 16-22).

Consider:—

I. The test proposed by Moses to the rebels.

“And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord,” &c. (vers. 16, 17). Moses here repeats the challenge which he had previously made (vers. 5-7), with this addition, he states that Aaron also shall be there, and submit to the test. The test includes three clauses, or articles.

1. *That Korah and his company shall assemble at the tabernacle and burn incense.* This was a function reserved to the priesthood: they had claimed equality with the priesthood: thus let their claim be put to proof.

2. *That they should burn incense in sight of God.* All things transpire beneath His eye (Prov. xv. 3; Heb. iv. 13); but Moses gives special prominence to the fact that the trial of their claims was to take place “before the Lord.” In this renewal of the challenge he twice mentions this solemn fact (vers. 16, 17). Will they dare the awful experiment in His holy presence?

3. *That they should burn incense in the sight of God with a view to His interposition for the settlement of the question which they had raised.* This was the great object which they had in view in this business, and was clearly stated by Moses when he first proposed this method of testing their claims. Truly a very serious, and indeed awful proposal. How will the rebels treat it?

II. The test accepted by the rebels.

On the morrow “they took every man

his censer, and put fire in them,” &c. (vers. 18, 19). Notice:

1. *The awful presumption involved in their conduct.* It was but recently that they had witnessed Nadab and Abihu burnt to death by fire from the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, and yet they presume with unconsecrated hands and in a rebellious spirit to burn incense in the door of the tabernacle before the Lord. Terrible is their sinful hardihood! (a)

2. *The infatuation of Korah in sin.* He “gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” He seems entirely confident of success. Not a grain of prudence seems left to him. *Quos Deus vult perdere dementat prius.* “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

III. The interposition of the Lord God.

“And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. And the Lord spake,” &c. (vers. 19-21). The interposition of the Lord was characterised by—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* “The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation.” (See notes on chap. xiv. 10, p. 248.)

2. *The declaration of His judgment.* He called upon Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation that He “may consume them in a moment.” By rallying to the tabernacle at the call of Korah the people had made common cause with the rebels

and become sharers in their guilt, and God threatens to destroy them instantly.

3. *His care for His faithful servants.* He "spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation," &c. Excellent are the notes of Trapp on this: "Good men are taken away from the evil to come. When God pulls away the pillars, what will become of the building? Lot was no sooner taken out of Sodom, but Sodom was taken out of the world." Comp. Gen. xix. 22-25. (b)

IV. The intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation.

"And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God," &c. (ver. 22).

1. *Its object.* The aim of the intercession of Moses and Aaron was to avert the threatened destruction of all the congregation.

2. *Its pleas.* These are—(1) The relationship of God to man. "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh." God is the creator and sustainer of human life. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "The Father

of spirits." Will He not then have mercy upon these misguided spirits, of which He was the author and preserver? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth," &c. (Psa. ciii. 13-18). "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands." Comp. Isa. lxiv. 8, 9. (c). (2) The justice of God. "Shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?" As compared with Korah, the author of the rebellion, the great multitude of the people were almost innocent. Would God sweep them all away in the same judgment? Comp. Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

Mark the magnanimity of Moses and Aaron in thus interceding for the people. The people were ever ready to join in any rebellion against their leaders, yet those leaders were ever ready to entreat God for them. "The good man," says a Hindoo epigram, "goes not upon enmity, but rewards with kindness the very being who injures him. So the sandal-wood while it is felling, imparts to the edge of the axe its aromatic savour."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a farther and a farther invasion upon the person encroached upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and with a running progress carries a venom and a contagion all over the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. If Cæsar comes once to pass the Rubicon, he will be sure to march farther on, even till he enters the very bowels of Rome, and breaks open the Capitol itself. He that wades so far as to wet and foul himself, cares not how much he trashes farther.—*Robert South, D.D.*

(b) "No doubt," said the Rev. J. Brown, of Haddington, "I have met with trials as well as others, yet so kind has God been to me, that I think if He were to give me as many years as I have already lived in the world, I should not desire one single circumstance in my lot changed except that I wish I had less sin. It might be written on my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother and yet never missed them.'"—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

(c) The Creator is faithful. He abides by His creation, neither deserting, nor repudi-

ating it. Though nature has become a mad-house of fierce passions and deadly strife, His devotion to it knows no abatement. He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has put down all evil, and established righteousness, even "everlasting righteousness." "A faithful Creator" involves the idea of a tender Redeemer.—*John Pulsford.*

God never loses sight of any one thing He has created, and no created thing can continue either to be, or to act independently of Him. His eye is upon every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart. His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me. His hand impresses a direction on every footstep of my goings. Every breath I inhale is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which, upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woful suffering, is now at ease, because He at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery. His presiding influence keeps by me through the whole current of my restless and ever-changing history. When I walk by the wayside, He is along with me. When I enter into

company, amid all my forgetfulness of Him, He never forgets me. In the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of Him who never slumbers is upon me. I cannot fly from His presence. Go where I will, He tends me, and watches

me, and cares for me; and the same Being who is now at work in the remotest domains of nature and of Providence, is also at my right hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings and of all my faculties.—*Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*

THE SPIRIT AND THE SOVEREIGN OF MAN.

(Verse 22.)

“The God of the spirits of all flesh.”

These words suggest three considerations.

I. The grand distinction of human nature.

The glory of human nature is not in anything physical, *e.g.*, the upright form, the steady and penetrating glance of the eye, &c.; but in the fact of its spirituality. Man is a spirit in a vesture of flesh. “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

(a). Concerning the human spirit consider—

1. *Its attributes.* (1) *Unity.* The body is composed of an indefinite number of separate and separable parts. But the spirit is one and indivisible. We are conscious of our individuality as thinking, feeling, acting beings. (2) *Voluntary activity.* Bodies have no power of spontaneous motion; being at rest, they will remain so for ever, unless acted upon by some power which is not inherent. But the spirit acts independently; man is gifted with volition, he chooses and rejects, &c. (3) *Thought.* The body does not think; after the death of the body the brain may remain perfect, but it does not reflect. But the spirit thinks, reflects, compares, judges. How wonderful is this power! and how great and glorious are its achievements! (4) *Sensation.* It is not the mere body which feels: when life has departed from it you may subject the body to any treatment whatsoever, but you will not discover in it any sign of sensation. But the spirit feels: it is capable of the deepest, intensest misery, and of the most exquisite and unspeakable joy.

(5) *Religiousness.* Bodies are incapable of admiration or veneration; but spirits have capabilities of worship and an instinct or instincts for worship. By his very nature man is a worshipper; his spirit wonders, admires, loves, adores. How great, then, are the capacities and faculties of the human spirit! Moreover the spirit *acts without weariness.* The bodily organs through which in our present state it acts are speedily tired, but the spirit seems untiring in its activities. And further, it appears to be *capable of indefinite growth and progress.* All the material forms of life with which we are acquainted advance and grow to a certain point, and then begin to decay. But the spirit seems to possess innate capabilities for never-ending growth. How wonderful and sacred are our spirits, possessing, as they do, such attributes as these!

2. *Its relationships.* It is related— (1) *To angels.* With holy angels it has relations. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” These holy and heavenly spirits minister to human spirits upon earth. The human spirit has relations with evil angels also. We are one with them in the fact that we are rebellious spirits. These evil angels act malignantly on human spirits; they tempt them to sin; they seek their utter and irretrievable ruin. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,” &c. (Eph. vi. 12). “The prince of the power of

the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (2) *To God.* "God is a Spirit." "The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zech. xii. 1). He is "the Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9). "We are also His offspring" (Acts xvii. 28). He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh." We were created in His image. His great redemptive purpose is to renew us into His image again. We may receive communications from Him; may commune with Him; may be "workers together with Him"; may participate in His joy, &c. We are called into this high fellowship through Jesus Christ. He restores the human spirit to those relations to God which sin had ruptured. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Him." How exalted and august are these relations of the human spirit to God!

3. *Its destiny.* At death the body "shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." From the body the spirit passes into the presence of God as the great Judge; and from His presence it passes to its own place of retribution, either to the Paradise of God or to the prison of the lost. (b)

Here, then, is the grand distinction of man that he is spirit with such wondrous faculties, &c. Amongst all God's works in this world he stands alone in this; for if we allow a spiritual principle to animals it is greatly and obviously inferior to the human spirit.

Man reverence thy spirit—reverence thyself!

II. The supreme Sovereign of human nature.

"The God of the spirits of all flesh." God's relations of Creator and Sustainer of man were most probably present to the mind of Moses in this appeal. We have already spoken of Him as the Creator of spirits. He is also their Sustainer. "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job xii. 10). "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25). His sovereignty over human spirits rests upon these re-

lations which He sustains to them, and it is manifest:—

1. *In the claims which He makes upon the human spirit.* He requires the sincere worship and the supreme affection of man: He claims the throne of our being. Comp. Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12; Ezek. xviii. 4; Luke x. 27.

2. *In the power which He exercises over the human spirit.* We have seen that He is its Creator; and its departure from this world is in His hands. He summons the spirit hence when He pleases. Comp. Job xiv. 5, 20; Eccles. viii. 8; Rev i. 18.

III. The inspiring hope of human nature.

Because God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" Moses was encouraged to plead with Him that He would not destroy "all the congregation" because of the rebellion of Korah and his company. For the creatures whom He has created and whom He sustains He must have a kind regard. Towards the spirits of which He is the Father He must be gracious and merciful. "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job xiv. 15). Comp. Psal. ciii. 13-18; cxxxviii. 8; Isa. lxiv. 8, 9.

From the relations which He sustains to our spirits we have a good hope that He will ever deal graciously with us. Comp. Lam. iii. 31-33.

Should we not leave the future destinies of men (about which so many minds are now much exercised) calmly and confidently to "the God of the spirits of all flesh"? It is absolutely certain that He will deal righteously and kindly with His creatures in this and in all things.

Conclusion.

Realise the greatness and dignity of your being. You are a spirit, created in the image of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and destined for immortality. The time comes on apace when you will realise the unspeakable importance of your spirit. Let your great concern be to secure its well-being. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) To say there is no such thing as matter would be a much less absurd inference, than to say there is no such thing as mind. The very act of inferring, as we do by reasoning, that the object which effects our senses exists apart from ourselves, is wholly incapable of giving us any knowledge of the object's existence, without, at the same time, giving us a knowledge of our own, that is, of the mind's existence. An external necessarily implies an internal. That there may be anything beyond or without, there must necessarily be something beyond or without which it is said to exist. That there may be a body which we feel abiding separate from us, namely our own body, one part of which gives us sensations through another part, there must be a *WE*, an *US*, that is, a *MIND*. If we have a right to call spirit, or soul, or mind, a mere negation of the qualities of matter; surely this might just as well be retorted by saying that matter is only a negation of the qualities of mind. But in truth the materialists cannot stir one step without the aid of that mind whose existence they deny. . . . The truth is that we believe in the existence of matter because we cannot help it. The inferences of our reason from our sensations impel us to this conclusion; and the steps are few and short by which we reach it. But the steps are fewer and shorter, and of the self-same nature, which lead us to believe in the existence of mind; for of that we have the evidence within ourselves, and wholly independent of our senses. Nor can we ever draw the inference, in any one instance, of the existence of matter, without, at the same time, exhibiting a proof of the existence of mind; for we are, by the supposition, reasoning, inferring, drawing a conclusion, forming a belief: therefore, there exists somebody, something, to reason, to infer, to conclude, to believe; that is, *WE*, not any fraction of matter, but a reasoning, inferring, believing being; in other words, a *MIND*. If scepticism can have any place in our system, assuredly it relates to the existence of matter, far more than of mind.—*Lord Brougham*.

(b) Nothing is more difficult than to realise that every man has a distinct soul—that every one of all the millions who live or have lived, is as whole and independent a being in himself as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. To explain what I mean. . . . When we read history, we meet with accounts of great slaughters and massacres, great pestilences, famines, conflagrations, and so on; and we are accustomed to regard collections of people as single individuals. We cannot understand that a multitude is a collection of immortal souls. I say immortal souls. Each of those multitudes not only *had*, while he was upon earth, but has a soul, which did in its own time but return to God who gave it, and not perish, and which now lives unto Him. All those millions upon millions of human beings

who ever trod the earth, and saw the sun successively, are at this moment in existence all together. Every one of those souls still lives. They had their separate thoughts and feelings when on earth; they have them now. They had their likings and pursuits, they gained what they thought good, and enjoyed it; and they still somewhere or other live, and what they then did in the flesh surely has its influence upon their present destiny. They live, reserved for a day which is to come, when all nations shall stand before God. . . . All the names we see written on monuments in churches or churchyards; all the writers whose names and works we see in our libraries; all the workmen who raised the great buildings far and near, which are the wonder of the world, they are all in God's remembrance—they all live.

Moreover, every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth, is in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another that one is the subject of God's favour, and the other under His wrath; the one in the way to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and is true of the living also. All are tending one way or the other; there is no middle or neutral state for any one, though as far as the sight of the external world goes, all men seem to be in a middle state common to one and all. Yet, much as men look the same, and impossible as it is for us to say where each man stands in God's sight, there are two, and but two, classes of men, and these have characters and destinies as far apart in their tendencies as light and darkness. This is the case even of those who are in the body, and it is much more true of those who have passed into the unseen state.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(c) Endeavour then, my brethren, to realize that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavour to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge them as He judges. Pass a very few years, and you will actually experience what as yet you are called on to believe. There will be no need of the effort of mind to which I invite you. When you have passed into the unseen state, there will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world, when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God, and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the Judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left? How poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the infinite aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable! O, my brethren! let the thought be upon you day by day, especially when you are

tempted to sin. Avoid sin as a serpent; it looks and promises well; it bites afterwards. It is dreadful in memory, dreadful even on earth; but in that awful period, when the fever of life is over, and you are waiting in silence for the Judgment, with nothing to distract your thoughts, who can say how dreadful may be the memory of sins done in the body? Then the very apprehension of their punishment, when Christ shall suddenly visit, will doubtless outweigh a thousandfold their gratification, such as it was, which you

felt in committing them; and if so, what will be the proportion between it and that punishment, if, after all, it be actually inflicted? Let us lay to heart our Saviour's own most merciful words. "Be not afraid," He says, "of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."—*Ibid.*

THE PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT.

(Verses 23-30.)

In this section of the narrative we have the final steps before the infliction of punishment upon the rebels.

I. The complete separation of the people from the rebels.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," &c. (vers. 23-27). In these instructions we have—

1. *A manifestation of the justice of God.* In his intercession Moses had pleaded the justice of God; and this is the Divine answer to his prayer. God will not consume all the congregation because of the sin of a portion of that congregation. "All His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." "The just Lord will not do iniquity: every morning doth He bring His judgment to light, He faileth not." (a)

2. *An illustration of the peril of evil associations.* The people that were in the immediate neighbourhood of the rebels were in danger of sharing their dread fate. "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men," &c. (ver. 26). Lot's residence in Sodom well nigh ruined him. Jehoshaphat's partnership with the wicked Ahaziah ended in disaster (2 Chron. xx. 35-37). "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." (b)

3. *An illustration of the necessity of human effort in the attainment of salvation.* If the people would avoid the doom of Dathan and Abiram they must

hasten away from the tents of those wicked men. Lot had to make a speedy departure from Sodom. If the sinner would be saved from the punishment and power of sin, he must "flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him." (c)

The people obeyed the word of the Lord spoken by Moses: "They gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side." The instinct of self-preservation would urge them to swift compliance with the Divine instructions. Thus the rebels and their families were separated from the rest of the people.

II. The final statement concerning the decision of the question which the rebels had raised.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me," &c. (vers. 28-30). It has been well said by Dr. Kitto: "From the beginning of the world unto this day, no man ever made so bold and noble an assertion of Divine approval, or subjected his claims in the presence of a nation to a test so immediate and so infallible." And Matthew Henry: "The judgment itself would have been proof enough of God's displeasure against the rebels, and would have given all men to 'understand that they had provoked the Lord'; but when it was thus solemnly foretold and appealed to by Moses beforehand, when there was not the least previous indication of it from without, the convincing evidence of it was much the stronger, and it was put

beyond dispute that he was not only a servant but a favourite of Heaven, who was so intimately acquainted with the Divine counsels, and could obtain such extraordinary appearances of the Divine power in his vindication." How extraordinary and sublime was the confidence of Moses in all this! Calmly he makes this remarkably bold declaration, and leaves the issue in the hands of the Lord God. He knew well that he was not seeking his own in any respect; that his great aim was to promote the glory of God in the service to which He had appointed him; and, therefore, he could confidently leave the issue with his great Lord.

III. The final opportunity afforded to the rebels of turning from their evil course.

The warning which was given to the people to separate themselves from the tents of the rebels, and the final statement of Moses as to the settlement of the question in dispute, afforded the rebels another opportunity of desisting from their re-

bellion, acknowledging the authority of their rightful leaders, &c. The Lord is slow to anger. He affords to the greatest sinners many opportunities of turning from their sin, before He smites them in wrath. The Divine mercy in this case is the more conspicuous, inasmuch as Dathan and Abiram having refused to go to Moses and the elders, Moses and the elders go to them. Dathan and Abiram may yet be saved if they will. How great is the long-suffering of God! (d)

IV. The persistent and terrible audacity of the rebels.

"Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." "As outfacing Moses," says Trapp, "and scorning the judgment threatened. Hardened sinners make no more of God's dreadful threatenings than Behemoth doth of iron weapons, which he esteemeth as straws." "He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here we open the Bible, in which we find that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required, and that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for nations which enjoyed a fuller revelation of Divine purpose and requirements. The heathen are a law unto themselves. Five talents are expected to produce more than two. The Divine plan of judgment, therefore, is not arbitrary, but moral. If we lose hold of this principle, we shall see confusion where we might see the order of righteousness. First of all, and last of all, it must be our settled and unalterable conviction that *God must do right*, or He is no longer God. Everything must perish which opposes this law. We are not, however, to look at incomplete cases, and regard them as final criteria by which to test the wisdom and righteousness of the Almighty. In many cases we shall have to repress our impatience, and calmly to wait until fuller light is granted. —Joseph Parker, D.D.

(b) Be cautious with whom you associate, and never give your company or your confidence to persons of whose good principles you are not certain. No person that is an enemy to God can be a friend to man. He that has already proved himself ungrateful to the Author of every blessing, will not scruple, when

it will serve his turn, to shake off a fellow-worm like himself. He may render you instrumental to his own purposes, but he will never benefit you. A bad man is a curse to others; as he is secretly, notwithstanding all his boasting and affected gaiety, a burden to himself. Shun him as you would a serpent in your path. Be not seduced by his rank, his wealth, his wit, or his influence. Think of him as already in the grave; think of him as standing before the everlasting God in judgment. This awful reality will instantly strip off all that is now so imposing, and present him in his true light, the object rather of your compassion and of your prayers than of your wonder and imitation —Bp Coleridge.

(c) If a man knew that the ship in which he and his family were sailing, and which contained all his property, was leaking day and night, do you suppose he would be careless about it? Would he not be constantly baling out the water lest it should sink the vessel with its precious freight? If a man understood that a spark from the flue of the furnace had set fire to the timber of his dwelling, and that, smothered, it was creeping along and charring the wainscoting and partition, do you suppose he would content himself merely with saying, "I have no doubt that this house is on fire, and that it is dangerous?" Would

he not *do* something? Many men read the Bible, and say, "My dear children, we are all sinful; we are sold in sin; may God lead us out of our sinfulness, and draw us toward Him!" and yet put forth no effort to reform their lives. Meanwhile their sinfulness increases, and envelops them and consumes them. Thousands and thousands of men have died in that way, and been utterly destroyed. If a man is wise, no sooner does he have the slightest intimation that there is fire threatening the destruction of his house and all that are in it, than he calls for men, and sets them to work to put an end to the mischief. And when a man is touched by the Spirit of God, and he is made conscious that the fires of hell are in him, with what earnestness does he enter upon a course of repentance! How does he say, "God have mercy on me. Help me; teach me; lead me!"—*H. W. Beecher*.

(d) He doth often give warning of judgments, that He might not pour out His wrath. He summons them to a surrender of themselves, and a return from their rebellion, that they might not feel the force of His arms. He offers peace before He shakes off the dust of His feet, that His despised peace might not return in vain to Him to solicit a revenge from His anger. He hath a right to punish the first commission of a crime, but He warns

men of what they have deserved, of what His justice moves Him to inflict, that by having recourse to His mercy He might not exercise the rights of His justice. God threatens Nineveh, by the prophet, with destruction, that Nineveh's repentance might make void the prophecy. He fights with men by the sword of His mouth, that He might not pierce them by the sword of His wrath. He threatens, that men might prevent the execution of His threatening; He terrifies, that He might not destroy, but that men by humiliation might lie prostrate before Him, and move the bowels of His mercy to a louder sound than the voice of His anger. He takes time to whet His sword, that men may turn themselves from the edge of it. He roars like a lion, that men, by hearing His voice, may shelter themselves from being torn by His wrath. There is patience in the sharpest threatening, that we may avoid the scourge. Who can charge God with an eagerness to revenge, that sends so many heralds and so often before He strikes, that He might be prevented from striking? His threatenings have not so much of a black flag as of an olive branch. He lifts up His hand before He strikes that men might see it and avert the stroke (*Isa. xxvi. 11*).—*Charnocke*.

THE DUTY OF SEPARATION FROM THE WICKED.

(Verse 26.)

The statement of this duty needs to be very guarded.

This duty is different from the self-righteousness of the Pharisee described by our Lord in Luke xviii. 11, 12. Comp. *Isa. lxxv. 5*.

This duty is not binding as regards the legitimate transactions of business with wicked men. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

This duty does not preclude association with the wicked with a view to their spiritual good. As followers of Jesus Christ it is our duty to endeavour to turn the wicked from his wickedness.

But it is our duty to avoid all voluntary and friendly association with the openly and defiantly wicked, all such association as may appear to countenance their wickedness. The testimony of the Sacred Scriptures on

this question is unmistakable. See *Psa. i. 1*; *Prov. i. 10-16*; *iv. 14, 15*; *ix. 6*; *Acts ii. 40*; *2 Cor. vi. 17, 18*; *Rev. xviii. 4*.

Moreover, our text insists on the *thoroughness* of this separation. "Touch nothing of theirs" We must separate ourselves from their (1) society; (2) friendship; (3) pursuits; (4) customs, &c. In enforcement of this duty consider, that *by friendly association with such wicked persons*—

I. We countenance them in their sins.

It is the duty of every man to discourage evil; to wage determined and incessant warfare against wickedness; to agree to no truce with the devil. If we would discourage wickedness, we must separate ourselves from notorious evil-doers; we must not allow them any reason to suppose that we consent even by silence to their sins. Comp. *1 Cor. v. 11*; *Eph. v. 11*; *2 Thess. iii. 14*. (a)

II. We are in peril of being drawn into their sins.

The contagion of their example may take hold upon us. Friendly association with the wicked is full of danger to our own spiritual health. Comp. Isa. lii. 11. Such association also makes us partakers of their sins. Comp. 2 John 10, 11. (b)

III. We are in peril of the judg-

ment which will fall upon them for their sins.

This was the peril of the congregation about the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They must speedily get away from those tents "lest they be consumed." This was the peril of Lot in Sodom. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Comp. Jer. li. 6, 45; Rev. xviii. 4.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Every person is most sacredly bound, in times of prevailing degeneracy, to act an open, firm, and decided part in favour of virtue and religion; and resolutely endeavour, by his example, to discountenance vice and impiety in every shape. In an especial manner should he avoid the very appearance of those evils which are most prevalent around him, and practice with double care and diligence those virtues which are most generally neglected and despised. . . . It has been justly remarked, that when God confers on us the power to do good and repress evil, He lays us under an obligation to exert that power. Agreeably, the Apostle informs us, that to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Hence it follows that we are accountable for all the good which we might, but have not done; and for all the evil which we might, but have not prevented. By conniving at the sins of others, therefore, we make them our own. If the name of God be profaned, if His holy day be dishonoured, if a fellow-creature by intemperance render his family wretched, spread a snare in the path of his children, destroy his health, and finally plunge himself into eternal ruin, when we, by proper exertions, might have prevented it, a righteous God will not hold us guiltless, nor will rivers of tears, shed in secret over these sins, wash out the guilt thus contracted.—*E. Payson, D.D.*

(b) There is but one resource for innocence among men or women, and that is, an embargo upon all commerce of bad men. Bar the window! bolt the door! nor answer their strain,

if they charm never so wisely! In no other way can you be safe. So well am I assured of the power of bad men to seduce the erring purity of man, that I pronounce it next to impossible for man or woman to escape, *if they permit bad men to approach and dally with them.*—*H. W. Beecher.*

Let no young man or woman go into a social circle where the influences are vicious or hostile to the Christian religion. You will begin by reproving their faults, and end by copying them. Sin is contagious. You go among those who are profane, and you will become profane. You go among those who use impure language, and you will use impure language. Go among those who are given to strong drink, and you will inevitably become an inebriate. There is no exception to the rule. A man is no better than the company he continually keeps. It is always best to keep ourselves under Christian influences. It is not possible, if you mingle in associations positively Christian, not to be made better men or women. The Christian people with whom you associate may not be always talking their religion, but there is something in the moral atmosphere that will be life to your soul. You choose out for your most intimate associates eight or ten Christian people. You mingle in that association; you take their counsel; you are guided by their example, and you live a useful life, and die a happy death, and go to a blessed eternity. There is no possibility of mistaking it; there is not an exception in all the universe or ages—not one.—*T. de Witt Talmage, D.D.*

CHRIST'S DEATH A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY.

(Verse 29.)

We wish simply to take the fact that an uncommon death, a "visitation, which is not after the visitation of all men," was made a sign or evidence of the Divine mission of Moses. We wish to see whether a precisely similar sign or evidence may not be urged for the

Divine mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We mean to assert that our blessed Saviour did not "die the common death of all men;" and from and by this very circumstance we strengthen our belief in His having been the Son of God; yea, God

as well as man. We wish you to well examine whether there were not powerful indications in the mode in which our Lord and Saviour submitted to His last sufferings, that He did not die as an individual man, but as a sacrifice for the sins of this creation.

Three out of the four Evangelists make express mention of Christ's crying with a loud voice, immediately before He gave up the ghost. And this loud cry preceding almost instantaneously His decease, produced in the centurion who stood by, the persuasion that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (Mark xv. 39). Now let us see what it was which thus wrought on the centurion. There was before him a Being nailed to a cross, dying in a manner as lingering as it was painful. The thing to be expected was that the victim would gradually sink, growing weaker and weaker, until exhausted nature gave way and the soul escaped from the body. Since this mode of executing malefactors was ordinarily so tedious that the legs of the sufferers were broken in order to hasten their dissolution, we must conclude that no crucified person would have naturally died, unless through the slow process of exhaustion, life having ebbed away as though drop by drop, till there was nothing more for the torture to exact. It was therefore quite unnatural that our Lord should have had strength to utter a loud cry at the very moment of the separation of the soul from the body. He showed that there was nothing like an exhaustion of nature; and yet the mode of death was such, that it was only through exhaustion of nature that dissolution could take place. Indeed, we have additional testimony that Christ's dying as He did might justly be called unnatural, for He died long before those who were crucified with Him—in a time so unusually short, that when Joseph of Arimathea applied for leave to take the body, Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and would not believe it till he had called the centurion and obtained certain information. Our Lord, though

crucified, did not die in strict truth through the effects of crucifixion: He did not die, as the thieves did, through any necessity of nature, or because His enemies had been able to reach the citadel of life. And it was the manifest voluntariness of the death of Christ which overcame the centurion. He could not but perceive that, through some mysterious ordinance or prerogative, our Lord had His life entirely in His own keeping; so that in place of being subjected to death, He seemed to have literally the lordship over life. Comp. John x. 17, 18. It may sound like a paradox, but it is nevertheless a truth, that death had no power over Christ even when He died. He breathed His last only because choosing to suspend that animation, of which, as Himself alone the author, Himself alone could be the destroyer. And if, then, Christ did not "die the common death of all men," who can wonder that the centurion was confounded at the spectacle, or that he broke into an exclamation which showed that he felt the Sufferer was something more than a mere man? "Of a truth this Man was the Son of God."

But now let us take a wider survey, and accompany our Redeemer through the scenes of His agony. We have on other occasions pointed out to you the striking and almost inexplicable contrast between the deportment of Christ, and that of numbers of His followers, as the hour drew nigh of departure from earth. It is a contrast which seems all in favour of the disciple rather than the Master; for whilst there has been tranquility, and even triumph, in those who have been dying in the faith of the Redeemer, there was perturbation and anguish in that Redeemer Himself. The bold defender of truth has gone up to the stake or the scaffold rejoicing in being thought worthy to suffer for his Lord, and cheered by bright glimpses which he caught of immortality. How different was the demeanour of Christ when anticipating death from the hands of His enemies! I see Him casting Him-

self on the ground, praying that "if it be possible the cup might pass from Him;" &c. I hear Him uttering the most touching and thrilling complaints, as though His spirit were sorely disquieted and actually deserted of God. Yes, Christ is evidently not dying "the common death of all" Christians.

But let us see whether on this very account there be not reason for concluding Him to be God's own Son. For what are the causes which commonly make death terrible to men? In the first place, to a perfectly righteous individual nothing would make death so terrible as uncertainty with respect to the immortality of the soul. To the good man the thought of annihilation would be utterly insupportable.

But now let us view Christ as nothing more than an eminently righteous man who is about to submit to death to confirm the doctrines which he had taught. Died there ever the man so certified of the great truth of the soul's immortality? Had He not been Himself the preacher of that truth? (2 Tim. i. 10). . . . But what are we to say when we behold Him literally overcome with terror, manifesting a perturbation which could not be exceeded if the future were all darkness, or there were even a knowledge that the soul perished with the body? Oh! we can only say that the agony of the Mediator proves Him less than man, or more than man. It is what no mere man, at least no mere Christian man, passing from one world to another, with just his own account to make up and his own pains to undergo, ever had, or could have, to sustain. We think ourselves warranted in calling upon you to apply the reasoning of our text; and to conclude that God had sent Christ as a propitiation for sin, forasmuch as He does not "die the common death of all men;" and is not "visited after the visitation of all men."

We go on to observe, that however assured a man might be as to the soul's immortality, he might be harrassed

with doubts as to his acceptance with God; and this would necessarily produce a painful shrinking from the act of dissolution. In ordinary cases it is just herein that the distressing thing lies. This is true in the case of the righteous. We cannot be surprised if they are sometimes daunted as they view death at hand.

But now, can you think that there ever lived the man so persuaded of the favour of God, so secure of happiness at death, as Jesus of Nazareth? Had He not been pure in thought, and word, and deed; so that there could be no place for repentance, as there had been none for sin? And was He not thoroughly certain that He was about to enter on a recompense such as had never been awarded to any created being? (Heb. xii. 2). Who then shall meet death composedly—who triumphantly—if not Jesus Christ? But how is the expectation answered? That afflicted and agitated Man, prostrated on the ground, trembling and astonished and convulsed—is this the Being who has everything in His favour, and over whom we have felt it impossible that death could exert any terrifying power? What account do we give of this? This should make you feel that He must be sustaining some lofty and responsible character—that in the scene which is so counter to expectation He has to bear some vast burden which that character entails. We contend that the doctrine of the atonement—the doctrine that Christ died as a sin-offering and propitiation for the offences of the world—furnishes the only explanation of the anguish and the horrors of the sufferer.

Blessed be His name! we may meet death with confidence, because He met it in terror; for "by His stripes we are healed." He took away the sting of death, but it was by bearing that sting in His own soul; He scattered the darkness of the grave, but it was by Himself enduring the eclipse of the face of His Father.—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 31-35.)

These verses warrant the following observations :—

I. That God vindicates the character of His faithful servants from the misrepresentations by which they may be assailed.

By this stern judgment on the rebels, Jehovah fulfilled the word of His servant Moses, and splendidly vindicated the character and calling of both Moses and Aaron. By it He also honoured the extraordinary confidence which Moses had exercised in Him, in the calm and unshaken declaration which he made that God would manifest in a certain miraculous manner whether He had commissioned him or not. God always honours the faith of His servants; and they may confidently leave the vindication of their character and call to Him. Such vindication may be delayed, but it is certain. Comp. *Psa. xxxvii. 5, 6.*

II. That the Divine threatenings are certain of fulfilment.

“And it came to pass, as He had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder under them,” &c. The declarations of His judgment against sin are spoken not merely *in terrorem*. His threatenings are as true as His promises. If any soul will persist in rebellion against God he will find to his cost that the punishment denounced against sin will be inflicted. (*a*)

III. That everything in the universe may be employed by God as the instrument of His judgments.

In this history we find that the earth and the forces that are at work within it were the instruments of His judgment upon Dathan and Abiram, and the fire upon Korah and the two hundred and fifty who burnt incense. (*b*)

IV. That the wicked often involve those who are innocent of their sins in the consequences of such sins.

“The earth opened her mouth, and

swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods,” &c. (vers. 32, 33). Thus these rebels brought destruction upon others. Some of the penalties of sin seldom fall merely upon the sinner. One man sins, and others suffer by reason of his sins. (See notes on this point on pp. 34 and 264.) This fact—

1. *Shows the heinousness of sin.*

2. *Should act as a restraint from sin.*

V. That hardened rebels are prone to cry out when the judgment of God falls upon them.

When the judgment of God fell upon them the rebels cried out so lamentably that the people who were round about fled in alarm lest the same judgment should overtake them. A little while ago they were bold and defiant; now they are terror-stricken. “Who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?”

1. *Their cries were selfish.* They were the expression of terror, not of repentance.

2. *Their cries were too late.* They should have cried before, while mercy might have been obtained; but now their cries are utterly in vain. Comp. *Prov. i. 24-31. (c)*

VI. That the judgments of God occasion alarm amongst men.

“And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.” “Others’ ruins should be our warnings.” Generally the alarm which is awakened by the Divine judgments speedily passes away (as it did in this case) and leaves no good result. “Law and terrors do but harden.”

Conclusion.

Here is very solemn warning to impenitent sinners. “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take these away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.” (*d*)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Is God all-mighty, all-mighty? Then do not imagine you can escape His judgments. His lightnings find us out. His sharp spear penetrates our secrecy. You have evaded Him now fifty years, and you think you can do it fifty more. Believe me, as speaking the word of the Lord, *you cannot*. Has the ox that has been driven into the fat pasture escaped the knife? Look at the noble animal there. Look at the rich grass or clover, and see the sunshine falling upon the scene, and the ox says, "I am at rest, I have escaped the knife of the slayer," not knowing that the pasture is on the way to the slaughter-house, and that next to its death stands the rich blessing of its life. There are many oxen that are being prepared for the slaughter when they little think it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) Mark here, how all creatures obey their Creator, and are at His commandment: when God willeth the earth to open her mouth, it openeth: when He willeth it to swallow, it swalloweth up: when He willeth it to close again, it closeth: when He willeth the fire to come down, it cometh: and to consume, it consumeth. The sounding of the rams' horns threw down the high walls of Jericho at His commandment. The waters of the Red Sea stood still, and Jordan fled back at His word. The fire could not burn, nor the lions devour when it pleased the Almighty. Acknowledge therefore His infinite power for our instruction; and let us rest upon it in all dangers for our consolation.—*Attersoll*.

God is not confined to one method of punishment. He toucheth a man's bones, and they melt; He breathes upon a man's brain, and henceforth he is not able to think. He comes in at night-time, and shakes the foundations of man's most trusted towers, and in the morning there is nought but a heap of ruins. He disorganizes men's memories, and in an instant they confuse all the recollections of their life-time; He touches man's tongue, and the fluent speaker becomes a stammerer. He breaks the staff in twain, and he who was relying upon it is thrown down in utter helplessness.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point see p. 252.

(c) Now these rebels begin to cry, but they cry out and howl when it is too late: they should have cried unto God for mercy and forgiveness while it was time and pardon was offered. Thus no doubt did many men of the

old world cry out when they were in the water, but then the acceptable time was past; they should have watered their hearts with the tears of repentance when Noah preached unto them. The Sodomites no doubt cried out when fire and brimstone was come down upon them, but they should have cried to God when He cried to them by Lot whom He sent among them. But then was the time of judgment; the time of mercy was gone and past. So it was with Esau, when he had sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, he cried with a great cry and a bitter, but it was too late. Heb. xii. 17; Gen. xxvii. 38. So did the rich man, being in hell in torments, Luke xvi. 23; then he called for mercy, but mercy was departed from him. Here is time and place for mercy, but there is no mercy to be had in hell. The earth is the school of instruction; hell is the house of correction. There the reprobate cry and yell, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth, but it is without ease, without end, without profit. They that could shed never a tear to God in this life, shall be constrained to shed abundance of tears in the pit of destruction. The tears of repentance that we pour out ascend up unto heaven, and are kept in a bottle of remembrance; but the tears that are wrung from the reprobate in hell, are never gathered up, nor regarded of God, and are utterly unprofitable to ourselves. Let it therefore be our wisdom to make use of the time of God's mercy and patience, and know that there is no place of repentance after this life.—*Attersoll*.

(d) When the death-thirst is in your throat, what do you think you will do without God? To die in God's presence, is simply to let life blossom into something better than life; but to die without God must be horrible! You will not want your boon companions then. The drink will not pacify you then. Music will have no charms for you then. The love of a tender and gentle wife can yield you but sorry comfort then. You may have your money bags at your side, but they will not calm your palpitating heart then. You will hear the booming of the waves of the great sea of eternity; you will feel your feet slipping into the dreadful quicksand; you will clutch about for help, but there will be none! Instead thereof invisible hands shall begin to pull you down, and down through the dark sea you must descend to those darker depths, where dread despair will be your everlasting heritage.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

THE JUDGMENT OF KORAH.

(Verses 31-33.)

A reference to the words of Moses recorded in verses 29 and 30, will show that the death of these men was a

supernatural event. Moses foretells the exact manner in which it should take place; he calls it "a new thing;"

he stakes his Divine commission upon it—"Hereby shall ye know that Jehovah has sent me." It was new as the dividing of the Red Sea had been new, or the standing still of the sun in after days in obedience to the command of Joshua, and was as miraculous as either of those events. God alone could have given such an attestation to the mission of a man; the death of Korah was an emphatic and terrible answer to the charges which had been brought against Moses; and its following so immediately upon his words adds another supernatural element to the event. We may learn from it and from what led to it—

1. That the human character which most approaches perfection, and the most qualified leader of men, may be falsely accused by those to whom he is a blessing. Probably Moses never had a superior either in character or ability, yet to him it was said, "Ye take too much upon you" (ver. 3).

2. It must depend upon the *character* and not upon the *number* of the people whether their voice is to be taken as the voice of God. Nearly all Israel, it appears (ver. 21), were with Korah and his associates, yet Moses, although almost alone, had God and right on his side.

3. That God will, sooner or later, vindicate those of His servants who have been falsely accused. False charges have rested upon many for *centuries*, and at the end of that time the truth has come to light. There is to be a day which shall "declare it" (1 Cor. iii. 13). The Son of God lived and died under false accusation, but He was vindicated by His resurrection; and when He shall be revealed from heaven "with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14), He will bring to light men's hidden motives, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.—*From "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament."*

A MEMORIAL OF JUDGMENT.

(Verses 36-40.)

These verses teach the following important truths:—

I. That things appropriated to religious uses should be reverently regarded.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning; for they are hallowed . . . for they offered them before the Lord; therefore they are hallowed." Comp. Lev. xxvii. 28. For notes and an illustration on this point, see pp. 56, 57. (a)

II. That the designs and doings of wicked men are overruled by God for the accomplishment of His purposes.

"The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar." In this way "God's altar was *protected* by the means which had been used to *violate* its sanctity." "Surely the wrath

of man shall praise Thee." We have a striking illustration of this in the sins of Joseph's brethren, and the way in which they were used by God for the carrying out of His gracious designs. Comp. Gen. i. 20.

III. That he who sins against God injures himself.

"These sinners against their own souls," or, "against their own lives." By sin man injures himself *physically*. When the laws of health are violated disease and misery follow. By sin man injures himself *morally*. Sin blunts the spiritual sensibilities, stifles the aspirations, and quenches the hopes of the soul, &c. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." (b)

IV. That the judgments of God should be remembered and heeded.

These broad plates for a covering of the altar were to "be a sign unto the

children of Israel. . . . a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company." Man is prone to think that he may sin, and escape the punishment of his sin, notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence against such a notion; hence the importance of memorials such as this. The sternest judgments of God are speedily lost sight of by those who most need to keep them in mind; therefore this memorial was

fitted to answer a useful end in reminding the people of this judgment, and so deterring them from sin. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition." "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Conclusion:

Seeing that God is so concerned to guard us against sin, it surely behoves us to flee from it as from our worst foe.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The Christian dispensation, although it is a dispensation of universality, and bases all its promises and sanctions upon the fact of spiritual service, has not annulled the seemly and the sacred in connection with the worship of God. The false pride of Gerizim is humbled by its superior light. The haughtiness which would build an exclusive altar at Jerusalem is rebuked by every word of its inspired lips. It proclaims that everywhere where need compels, and where hearts prompt, and where the wealth of love constrains the offering, man may build a temple and look for acceptance and blessing. But it nowhere approves the idea that all places are equally sacred, or that God has ceased to visit Zion, and to dwell in its tabernacles with His manifestations of peculiar regard. There is a sentimental devotion that has become very fashionable now-a-days, a sort of spurious spirituality, minced out commonly from the lips of most unspiritual people—a kind of domestic pantheism, whose flame of devotion is too subtle to be kindled in houses made with hands. They tell us—and it is true—that the heart which God has touched will find Him everywhere, in every

gracious prodigality of nature, and in every bounteous ministry of life; that to His tuned spirit the wild heatherbells sing Sabbath knells. Well, it is true; but it is true also—a profounder truth in theory, and a commoner experience in fact—that God has special honours for the places that are devoted to His worship; and it is true, too, that the spirit tuned to the music of the sanctuary is the keenest in its recognition of those tremulous airs of worship-song which are floating all the universe around.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(b) You have heard of the Spartan youth who concealed a stolen fox under his garment, and although it was eating into his bowels, he would not show it, and therefore died through the creature's bites. You are of that sort, sinner; you are carrying sin in your bosom, and it is eating out your heart. God knows what it is, and you know what it is. Now, you cannot keep it there and be unbidden, undestroyed. Why keep it there? Oh, cry to God with a vehement cry, God save me from my sin! Oh, bring me, even me, to the foot of Thy Son's cross, and forgive me, and then crucify my sin, for I see clearly now that sin must perish or I must.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE COVERING OF THE ALTAR, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 38.)

Let us inquire what these plates on the altar would teach the people.

I. How futile it is for any one to oppose God, and how God can make the opposition of men helpful to His cause.

How easily God brings down the pride of man! No weapon that is

formed against Him can prosper. (Job ix. 4.) "He is wise"—man cannot outwit Him: "He is mighty in strength"—man cannot overcome Him. To oppose Him is only to place thorns and briars before a consuming fire: the attempt is foolish, fruitless, and destructive. Angels rebelled, and it was

their ruin. Pharaoh opposed God, and he was destroyed. It was the same with the people in the Wilderness. These plates would be lasting witnesses of the madness and the futility of opposing God.

Further, they teach that God can make use of the very opposition, and turn what was meant to be destructive to be helpful to His cause. These censers were designed to be rivals to those of Aaron; the avowed object of the rebels was to take the priesthood from the family of Aaron and to make the altar common property. What did God do? He caused these very censers to be made into plates for a covering of the altar, so as to preserve it from the action of the fire that was ever burning on it. God permits evil, but He ever controls it (Psalm lxxvi. 10). We should never tremble for the success of God's work. As a matter of fact no opposition has ever hurt His work. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." In all history we see Him working out His own wise, great, and good purposes from the tangled web of human life.

II. That God wishes one age to learn from another.

His treatment of men is not only punitive, but educational. These plates were for a memorial; they were to "be a sign," &c. God did not want the event to be forgotten. He teaches us through human life. The Bible to a great extent is made up of biography—brief records of human lives. God shows us how one prospers, and where another fails; and He means one age to learn from another. The wrecks we meet with in society, by drunkenness, gambling and other sins (as with these plates), God holds them up to "be a sign unto" us.

III. That sacred things must be treated reverently.

"They offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed." God was

then teaching the people by practical illustrations, and not by the mere announcing of principles. Thus here He taught them and us the importance of dealing reverently with sacred things. There is need of this lesson in the present day; for there is a tendency to "pooh pooh" many things which our fathers held sacred. Human reason is enthroned: Divine things are brought to its bar, and are very freely and irreverently handled. It is so in respect of the Bible, the Lord's day, the fundamental truths of Christianity, &c. "Hands off" these sacred things! they are hallowed to the Lord; let us not treat them as if they were ordinary things.

IV. That the sinner ever injures himself.

God speaks of these men as "sinners against their own souls," or lives. They had brought ruin on themselves. These plates would teach the people that "the way of transgressors is hard," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and "he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul." Sin robs God, does harm to others, but it ruins none but the doer of it. Every sin of man is a wrong to his own nature: we see it so physically, mentally, and morally. Every sin is a transgression of some law, and the broken law insists on its penalty. Sin hardens the soul, deprives it of good, alienates it from God, defiles it, shuts it from heaven, makes it only fit for hell, and exposes it to the eternal curse. Through these plates God cries to the sinful, "Do thyself no harm."

Conclusion :—

1. *What folly is a life of sin!* The Biblical definition of a sinner is—*a Fool*.

2. *To obey God and to please Him is true wisdom.* He ever seeks our good, knows what is best for us, so in obeying Him we do ourselves the greatest possible good.—*David Lloyd*.

THE AGGRAVATED REBELLION OF THE PEOPLE, THE EFFECTUAL INTERCESSION
OF THE GOOD, AND THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD.

(Verses 41-50.)

Consider:—

I. The aggravated rebellion of the people.

“On the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” In this fresh outbreak of rebellion we have—

1. *Terrible disregard of Divine warnings.* These people had witnessed judgment after judgment because of rebellion; only yesterday they had seen Dathan and Abiram swallowed up by earthquake, and Korah and his company consumed by fire from the Lord, yet to-day they break out into rebellion again. Warnings seem to be utterly lost upon them. “He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck,” &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

2. *Base ingratitude to Moses and Aaron.* “They murmured against Moses and against Aaron,” &c. It seems as if the people believed “that Moses and Aaron had used some cunning in this business, and that the earthquake and fire were artificial; else, had they discerned the hand of God in this punishment, could they have dared the anger of the Lord in the very face of justice?” Their charge against Moses and Aaron was utterly unjust and basely ungrateful. It was owing to the intercession of these holy men (ver. 22) that the whole congregation was not consumed; yet, &c.

3. *Profane characterization of the wicked as the people of God.* They speak of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their confederates, as “the people of the Lord.” Thus they justify the ungodly; they canonise the most stout-hearted rebels as saints of the Lord. This rebellion seems to us the worst which has arisen in the history of this rebellious people. The time of its occurrence—immediately after most awful judgments; the form which it assumed,

this malicious charge against Moses and Aaron; and its reason, their sympathy with hardened rebels whom God had destroyed, render this rebellion one of fearful aggravations. How powerless are the sternest judgments to change men’s sinful hearts, or effectually to restrain from sin! Only the grace of God can do this.

II. The speedy interposition of Jehovah.

“And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared,” &c. (vers. 42-45). Thus God interposes by:—

1. *The manifestation of His glory.* “The cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared.” “As the cloud rested continually above the tabernacle during the time of encampment (chap. ix. 18 sqq.; Exod. xl. 38), we must suppose that at this time the cloud covered it in a fuller and much more conspicuous sense, just as it had done when the tabernacle was first erected (chap. ix. 15; Exod. xl. 34), and that at the same time the glory of God burst forth from the dark cloud in a miraculous splendour.”—*Keil and Del.* This was done for—(1) A security to His servants. (2) A check to the rebels.

2. *The declaration of the desert of the rebels.* “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.” Had they been so consumed, who could have questioned the righteousness of their doom?

III. The effectual intercession of Moses and Aaron.

When God spake to Moses about consuming the congregation, he and Aaron “fell upon their faces” in humble and earnest prayer to Him for the guilty

people. Moses discovered that the plague had begun; he directed Aaron to "take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar," &c. (vers. 46-48). Notice here:—

1. *The kindness of Moses and Aaron.* The congregation had risen up in rebellion against them; this plague was the punishment inflicted by God because of the rebellion; yet Moses and Aaron entreated God to spare the rebellious people. Freely they forgive them. Their conduct reminds us of Him who prayed, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." (a)

2. *The courage of Aaron.* He feared neither the excited people who were embittered against him, nor the pestilence which was smiting down the people by thousands; but "ran into the midst of the congregation," &c.

3. *The zeal of Aaron.* He was now an old man, yet he "ran into the midst," &c. An example for Christian ministers.

4. *The success of Aaron.* "The plague was stayed." His intercession was accepted by God, and it availed to arrest the advance of the pestilence. In this we have very striking confirmation of his priesthood. "Compare the censer

of Aaron here with 'the censers of those sinners against their own souls.' Those provoked God's anger, this pacified it; those destroyed men's lives, this saved them; no room therefore is left to doubt of Aaron's call to the priesthood."

How great is the power of prayer! (James v. 16-18). (b)

If God thus respected the sacrifice and intercession of Aaron, how great must be the efficacy of the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ!

IV. The exercise of the justice and mercy of God.

1. *Here is an impressive display of Divine justice.* "They that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred." (c)

2. *Here is an encouraging manifestation of Divine mercy.* Notwithstanding the aggravated and oft-repeated provocations of the people, they were not all destroyed. It was of the Lord's mercies that they were not all consumed. (d)

Conclusion. Learn—

1. *The heinousness of sin.*

2. *The great value of a faithful ministry.*

3. *The readiness of God to forgive sin.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A forgiving spirit is a noble, generous Christian virtue. It takes its rise in that love of God and man which is the fruit of the Spirit and the fulfilling of the law; it is made up of love and forbearance, united with the tenderness of compassion towards those who have injured us, and fortified by some just sense of our own sinfulness and need of forgiveness from God. In the full sense of the thing itself, it consists of the inward spirit of forgiveness and the outward act of reconciliation. It belongs to the heart, just as every other grace has its seat in the inner man. In this view of it, it is the opposite of revenge, which angrily seeks redress for injuries by inflicting injuries in return. It is the inward exercise of kindness and goodwill towards our enemies and those who have wronged us. It is an abhorrence of their wrong, yet a kind regard for the wrongdoer. It cannot be genuine unless it be accompanied by these benevolent emotions, and at a great remove from all bitterness and wrath. God requires that we forgive from the heart. This inward spirit ought to be always in exercise, whatsoever may be the character of those who have

injured us, and whatever their present and future conduct. We may feel benevolently towards them, without at all committing ourselves in favour of their conduct or character. They may repeat the injury they have done us every day of their lives, but this does not warrant in us the spirit of malignity or unkindness. We should love them still, and do them good as we have opportunity.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(b) The conduct of the eminent and justly celebrated Francke, in the establishment of the hospital and school for the poor, at Halle, near Glaucha, in Saxony, is well known. Having no permanent funds to meet the expenses, it may be easily supposed that the good man would be frequently reduced to great difficulties; at such times the interpositions of the Providence of God were truly remarkable. About Easter, 1696, he knew not where to obtain money for the expenses of the ensuing week; but when their food was reduced to the very last morsel, one thousand crowns were contributed by some entirely unknown person. At another time, all their provisions were exhausted, and the good

minister wisely presented his requests to the God of mercy, who careth even for the ravens when they cry. When prayer was over, just as he was taking his seat, a friend from a distance arrived with fifty crowns, which was shortly followed by twenty more. At another period, the workmen wanted thirty crowns, when he remarked that he had no money, but that he trusted in God; scarcely had he uttered the sentence, when, in this moment of necessity, the precise sum arrived. "Another time," says Francke, "all our provision was spent; but in addressing myself to the Lord, I found myself deeply affected with the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread;' and my thoughts were fixed in a more special manner upon the words 'this day,' because on the very same day we had great occasion for it. While I was yet praying, a friend of mine came before my door in a coach, and brought the sum of four hundred crowns."—*R. Arvine, A.M.*

(c) Goodness may punish; nay, it must punish the ill-deserving. A good law punishes; a good judge punishes; and the more certainly because they are good. However inclined to forgive the Divine Lawgiver may be, and however strongly moved to acts of mercy by the tenderness of His own kind nature, justice has claims as well as clemency and compassion. And what shall countervail these righteous demands? Reason cannot; conscience dare not. The whole history of the Divine government is proof that sin cannot go unpunished. The nature of the Deity forbids it; because He is just and righteous as well as good and kind. His law forbids it, and stands forth a pledge to the universe that it knows no such thing as impunity for crime. It is essential to the character of God as Law-

giver, that wherever the claims of the law are violated, His authority be enforced by the infliction of its penalty; otherwise it is no longer law, and He no longer Lawgiver.—*Gardiner Spring, D.D.*

(d) The Scriptures everywhere magnify the mercy of God, and speak of it with all possible advantage, as if the Divine nature, which does in all perfections excel every other thing, did in this perfection excel itself. And of this we have a farther conviction, if we but lift up our eyes to God, and then, turning them upon ourselves, begin to consider how many evils and miseries that every day we are exposed to, by His preventing mercy are hindered, or, when they were coming upon us, stopped or turned another way. How oft our punishment has He deferred by His forbearing mercy; or, when it was necessary for our chastisement, mitigated and made light! How oft we have been supported in our afflictions by His comforting mercy, and visited with the light of His countenance, in the exigencies of our soul, and the gloominess of despair! How oft we have been supplied by His relieving mercy in our wants, and, when there was no hand to succour, and no soul to pity us, His arm has been stretched out to lift us from the mire and clay, and, by a providential train of events, brought about our sustenance and support! And, above all, how daily, how hourly, how minutely we offend against Him; and yet, by the power of His pardoning mercy, we are still alive! For, considering the multitude and heinousness of our provocations, "it is of His mercy alone that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not. Whoso is wise will ponder these things, and He will understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."—*Archbishop Tillotson.*

THE SIN OF MAN AND THE SALVATION OF GOD.

(Verse 46.)

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Israel's judgments were recorded for our warning; Israel's mercies, for our encouragement. What Israel was, we are; what Israel suffered, we deserve; what Israel enjoyed, in the way of mercy, we may hope for.

The principle of all this is very plain. Human beings placed in the same circumstances act very much in the same manner. They have the same hopes and the same fears, they display the same obduracy and the same guilt;

and they can only be saved in the same mysterious manner. And, accordingly, God's methods of grace towards them are essentially the same in all ages. The censer and the incense and the atonement of Aaron may fitly remind us of the work and intercession of our great High Priest.

I. There is an awful controversy between a holy God and a rebellious world.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague has begun." A sentence of death has been passed upon every soul of man. Many have already perished, &c. The world some of us

deem so fair and happy, is nothing better than the camp of Israel;—a scene of mercy, it is true; but yet a scene of misery, terror, and death. Our sin resembles theirs in many aspects, and has the same aggravations.

1. *As it directly strikes against the authority and the grace of God, whatever be the form it assumes.* Israel professedly murmured against Moses and Aaron, but God viewed it as rebellion against Himself. How different often is sin from what sin appears. “Ye have killed the people of the Lord;” but it was not Moses that killed them, but God Himself. . . . God struck a blow which no human arm could have inflicted to punish them for their murmurings, and in a moment fourteen thousand and seven hundred die of the plague by His omnipotent hand.

Learn that all sin, whatever form it assumes, is in reality committed against God. When the undutiful child rises against his parent, he rebels against God. When we complain of our circumstances and lot in life, we rebel against God. When we refuse the messages of His mercy, and neglect the great salvation, we rebel against God. If the office of Moses and Aaron were so much to be regarded, how much more the work and office of God’s beloved Son! Comp. Heb. xii. 25.

Often when we complain of *second causes* in our afflictions we sin against God. We must take heed how we push God out of His own world. He will be acknowledged in our afflictions as well as in our mercies. Comp. Job xxxvi. 24. Israel failed here. In reality they justified Korah and his companions in their rebellion, and secretly condemned the judgment of God against them as severe and harsh. But God will be

justified when He speaks, and be clear when He judges. He will be acknowledged in the judgments that desolate our families and wring our souls with anguish, as in the mercies which yield unmixed gladness and delight.

2. *As it is often committed in the face of frequent and awful warnings.* Many deem it hard to believe this obduracy of Israel, and would think it almost too bad to be true. But the man who knows himself believes it all. Which of us has not despised His warnings, trembling one day at His judgments and making light of them the next? in the hour of sickness binding ourselves by solemn vows to His service, and upon the return of health rising to greater heights of iniquity than before?

3. *As it is heightened by the experience of God’s preserving and upholding mercy.*

II. There is at hand a prescribed and Divinely approved remedy.

When wrath was gone out from God, Moses was quick-sighted to discern it, and as prompt to apply the remedy. Yet observe, Moses does not take upon him this reconciliation; he calls upon Aaron to do so. I know not which to admire more, the courage or the mercy of Aaron.

1. *That our only escape from threatened wrath is through the mediation and advocacy of our High Priest.* As the trembling Israelites found in Aaron an interposer and deliverer, so may we find in Christ a Saviour.

2. *That the plan of Salvation by Faith is as efficacious in reality as it is simple in its mode of application.*

3. *That an immediate application to it is our only protection against certain ruin.* “Go quickly.”—*The late Samuel Thodey.*

AN AWFUL PLAGUE AND A SURPRISING REMEDY.

(Verses 46-48)

The solemn duties devolving upon the ministers of religion can never be too deeply contemplated by themselves, or

too seriously considered by their hearers. It is of consequence to us, that we may clearly apprehend our duty; of conse-

quence to *them*, that by estimating our responsibility they may judge of their own. If both speakers and hearers could see things now as they must see them very soon, when Death has done his office, when the trumpet shall sound, and the books be opened, and the retributions of eternity shall take place, what a change would be produced both in our ministrations and in your worship. (*a*)

A very noble spirit displayed by Moses and Aaron. They had been deeply injured, yet, &c.

I. An awful spectacle exhibited.

"There is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun." It was awful in itself—awful in its causes—its concomitants—its issues; for after death, the judgment. Awful to see the thousands of Israel in high rebellion against God, to see the countenance maddened with rage, suddenly smitten with disease, then convulsed with anguish, then numbered with the dead.

It was the more awful, as it was not a cursory thing following in the ordinary course of events, but it was a direct judgment immediately following the sin—a fearful visitation tremendously signalling the most hardened and obdurate sinners. What a circle is here of sins and judgments! because the people rose up against Moses and Aaron, therefore God consumed them; and because God consumed them, therefore they rose up against Moses and Aaron; and now their third rebellion draws down a more awful visitation. "Though hand join in hand," &c.

O what has sin done! It has turned angels into demons, man into an heir of wrath, Paradise into a wilderness, &c. Other evils are limited—the destructive forces of nature, the earthquake, the volcano, the deluge, the wide-wasting conflagration, know their bound; they have their period and their issue and their appointed range; but sin has none; it lays waste not here and there a country, but a world. The pestilence fastened only upon the body, and after that had no more that it could do; but sin destroys the soul, by sepa-

rating it from the Source of Life—*nay*, it casts both soul and body into hell.

Mark one impressive circumstance. Moses marks the wrath in its very commencement, sees the beginnings of the pestilence, when no other man discerns or suspects it, even as the physician sees disease in what appears to be the ripe bloom of health, or the veteran sailor marks the prelude of the storm before the heavens have lost their brightness. Moses had heard the word of God in the Tabernacle, &c. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," &c.

There are signs in the moral world of the commencement of evil, and the going forth of wrath, which the wise observer cannot mistake. "The plague is begun." When the man first restrains prayer—when the spirit of the world creeps into the mind of Christians—when they begin to lessen their fear of sin, and to compromise principle, to seek a more accommodating system of religion, to lengthen the creed and shorten the Decalogue—when private prayer is a task, and the minor moralities of life begin to be disregarded—there are fearful symptoms of decay and declension. "The plague is begun."

II. The surprising remedy found.

"Take a censer," &c. Where is the physician who would have recommended this as a cure for the plague? Who would have thought that the appearance of a single priest amidst the dying and the dead should have stopped the progress of the pestilence? Yet the incense and the fire and the oblation accomplish that for Israel which all the wisdom of the Egyptians could never have achieved. Who does not, in like manner, rebel against God's appointed method of pardon? or question the mysterious virtue of Christ's atoning blood, and doubt the efficacy of faith, repentance, and prayer? Who does not say with Naaman, "Are not Abana and Pharpar" &c.?

Mark the promptitude and self-votion of Aaron. He does not pause, does not cavil at the insufficiency of the means, but thrusts himself into the

post of danger. He stands boldly between the living and the dead, as one who will either die with them or have them live with him. Type of Him who on Calvary said, "Father forgive them." How promptly He came!

Mark the principles illustrated. There is no cure for the evils which sin has introduced but by a sacrifice of atonement. "Without shedding of blood," &c. And as a new offering could not be presented, he was to take the fire from the altar, the ashes of the morning sacrifice, and put incense upon that in the golden censer. If Aaron's sacrifice be thus accepted, how much more the offering of the great High Priest? "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14.)

But it is not enough that the sacrifice be presented, but prayer must be offered. Beautiful to see, wherever Aaron moved, Death retire and Hope

revive. More so to see the spiritually dead quickened (Eph. ii. 4 6).

III. A practical application demanded.

1. *What infinite solemnity attaches to all the offices of religion.* Death and life are involved. The two hundred and fifty men that offered incense perished: their spirit was bad. What if we bring strange fire! Aaron's offering saves life. If awful to preach, so also to hear.

2. *How dreadful if the plague be in the heart, and we, unconscious of danger, neglect the remedy.* "Examine yourselves."

3. *What need ministers have for the prayers and sympathies of their people.* The whole camp looks to Moses and Aaron. We have all the infirmities of which you complain; we are exposed to the infection, &c.

4. *Rejoice in the absolute sufficiency of salvation applied by the Spirit.*—*Samuel Thodey.*

ILLUSTRATION.

(a) I know not what others think of these concerns, but for my own part I am ashamed of my insensibility, and wonder at myself that I deal no more with my own and other men's souls as becomes one who looks for the great day of the Lord. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smites me that I have not been more serious and fervent. It is no trifling matter to stand up in the face

of a congregation and deliver a message of salvation or damnation as from the living God in the name of the Redeemer: it is no easy thing to speak so plainly that the most ignorant may understand; so seriously that the dearest heart may feel; and so convincingly that contradictory cavillers may be silenced and awakened.—*Richard Baxter.*

THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING.

(Verses 47, 48.)

I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of man who "like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way."

I. Look at Aaron as the lover of the people.

In this case *he* was the aggrieved party. The clamour was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who interceded and saved the people. The old man with generous love hastened into the midst

of the people, &c. Is not this the very picture of our Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonoured Him? &c. Yet He becomes the Saviour of His people.

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled," &c.

Aaron in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of the people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood, &c. But into the midst of their crowd he boldly springs (comp. John i. 11). Jesus transcends Aaron;

Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people; Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there He stood even in the hour of death, waving His censer, staying the plague, &c.

Again, Aaron might have said, "But *the Lord* will surely destroy *me* also with the people; if I go where shafts of death are flying they will reach me." He exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. . . . The plague which Jesus kept from us slew Him. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

Aaron deserves much commendation from the fact that he *ran* into the host. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within. And was it not so with Christ? . . . While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ.

II. View Aaron as the great propitiator.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, &c.

Aaron as the Propitiator is to be looked at as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censer, &c. Behold the Great High Priest! His incense consists first of His positive obedience to the Divine law. Then mixed with this is His blood, &c. Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement.

Besides that, Aaron must be the ordained priest; for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others; their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained One, &c. Comp. Heb. v. 4-10. None but Jesus; all other priests and offerings we disdain.

We must look upon Aaron as being ready for his work. The people were ready to perish, and he was ready to save. Oh, my hearer, Jesus Christ stands ready to save thee now. Trust Him.

III. View Aaron as the interposer.

The old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moveth along a field of corn." Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. "The stripes must fall on Me," He cries. There is nothing between me and hell save Christ. But He is enough. There is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God.

IV. View Aaron as the saviour.

It was Aaron, Aaron's censer, that saved the lives of that great multitude. Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Saviour. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron, &c. If Christ hath saved us He is a gracious Saviour indeed. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God, &c.

Aaron was an unaided saviour. He stands alone! And herein is he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trodden the winepress alone," &c. "There is none other name under heaven," &c.

Aaron as a saviour was all-sufficient. Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, *able* to save; you cannot save yourself, but He *can* save you. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool," &c.

V. Aaron as the divider.

Aaron the anointed one stands here; on that side is death, on this side life; the boundary between life and death is that one man. . . . The one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is *Christ*. A man in Christ is a Christian; a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. On which side, then, art thou to-day?

As Christ is the great divider now, so will He be in the day of judgment. He shall divide them the one from the other, &c. Oh! on which side shall I be when all these transitory things are done away with? &c.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

AARON STAYING THE PLAGUE.

(Verses 47, 48.)

Open with a brief account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the awful punishment which befel them from God. The people on the next day as rebellious as before. The plague begun. Aaron's intercession;—

I. The willingness of Aaron to intercede.

He “ran into the midst,” &c., though at this time of great age, above one hundred years. And this willingness will be more manifest, if we observe that he was—

1. *Regardless of the plague*; he feared not the contagion.

2. *Regardless of the people's enmity*; he dreaded not their malice; and forgave the injuries they had done him.

Show how in these respects Aaron was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus. The plague of sin had laid hold of our race; yet see the willingness of Jesus to come (Ps. xl. 7). “Lo, I come.”

1. *He shrank not from us because of our pollution* (Rom. viii. 3; Heb. ii. 14-17). Nay, He took upon Him *our curse* (Gal. iii. 13; Isa. liii.). Our guilt and perishing condition that which moved His compassion.

2. *He did not abandon His work because of our enmity*, but though continually despised, rejected, &c., endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself (Heb. xii. 2, 3; Rom. xv. 3), and would not be turned from His purpose of love.

II. The nature of Aaron's intercession.

He took fire from the altar of *burnt offering*, where the fire was always burning; and he put *incense* upon the fire, that a sweet savour of atonement might ascend to God. So Jesus offers

the sacrifice of His own most precious blood, and perfumes it with the incense of His all-sufficient merit. The sacrifice of Jesus *ever new*; the fire always burning. Jesus interposes between the wrath of God and the perishing sinner. “Father forgive them,” &c. “He made intercession for the transgressors.” Enlarge upon the intercession of Jesus,—its constancy, its freeness—*spontaneous*.

III. The success of Aaron's intercession.

Aaron's incense more powerful to procure pardon, than the people's guilt to call down punishment. The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and turned away His wrathful indignation.

Observe, *the plague was stayed*. Aaron did not give over interceding until the plague had ceased. So Jesus will never give over interceding for a penitent believer, until the plague of sin is *perfectly done away*. And will never give over interceding for His Church, until *every member* of it has entered glory.

Conclusion:—

1. *Let us tremble at the wrath of an offended God*. Address the sinner. “Who can stand before this HOLY LORD GOD?” What wilt thou do in the day of visitation? No intercessor then.

2. *Let us rejoice in the intercession of our Great High Priest*. What need we any other mediators besides Him? Look at Korah and his company; were their intercessions received? And why not? They were not the *appointed* mediators. Why, then, go to saints and angels—the Virgin Mary?—*J. D. Lane, M.A.*

THE PLAGUE STAYED.

(Verse 48.)

Observe,—

I. The evil.

Murmuring against God. Dissatisfac-

r 2

tion with God—His government, &c. Now this is the essence of all *sin*. Holiness is harmony—agreement with

God. Sin, disagreement and murmuring. So it was with the first sin, and every sin since. This leads to irreverence, complaining, and audacious presumption. How these abound—

1. *In profane swearing*,—horrid imprecations.

2. *In Sabbath profanation*. Counted as no sin.

3. *In gross intemperance*.

4. *In general profligacy*.

5. *In scepticism*. Denying God's government, &c.

6. *In recklessness*—amidst Divine judgments.

What a sight for a holy God to behold! I come back to the first idea:—All sin is contrariety to God—dissatisfaction with God; and hence, rebellion against His government.

II. The punishment.

It was,—

1. *Divine*. God did it. No magistrate. No human pain or penalty. God immediately did it. Often sin immediately is its own punishment; but sometimes direct, &c.

2. *It was by the plague*. We do not know precisely what it was. Some sudden disease, which swept all before it. It was, however, evidently—(1) Fatal. Destroyed life. (2) Speedily so. Like a blast of wind, &c. (3) Invariably so. No one knew of a remedy.

How analogous is the nature and effect of sin! (1) Sin is the disease of the soul. (2) It is deadly in three senses—temporal, spiritual, and eter-

nal. (3) There is for it no human remedy. All human skill, &c. failed.

III. The remedy.

1. *In itself, not apparently adapted*. Doubtless, the air was charged with death. But the incense was not possibly adapted to decompose, and change, and purify.

2. *It was connected with pious intercession*. In which there was confession of sin, admission of the justice of God, and the Divine mercy was implored. It was a direct appeal to God.

3. *It was intercession grounded on sacrifice*. By the priest, in view of the victims presented to God.

4. *It was efficient*. Completely. At once.

Let us now turn to the great remedy for sin. It is, (1) Not what human philosophy would have recommended. (2) It is essentially connected with the priestly work of Christ. His obedience, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, intercession. (3) It is *effectual*. The curse removed, wrath averted, mercy published, life offered. None need now die, no, not one. The connecting link between a guilty world and the remedy is, on God's part, the preaching of the Word; on our part, believing the Word so preached; by which repentance, humiliation of soul, and devotedness to God, are secured. Learn,—

1. *The extreme evil of sin*.

2. *The riches of the grace of God*.

3. *The immediate duty of the sinner*; to call earnestly on the Lord.—*Jabez Burns, D.D.*

CHAPTER XVII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter the High-priesthood of Aaron is further confirmed by a supernatural and significant sign.

Verse 4. *The testimony*, "i.e., the Two Tables of the Law; cf. Exod. xxv. 16. No doubt the rods lay in front of the Tables within the Ark."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 5. *I will make to cease from Me*.

"שָׁכַח, *Hiph.*, to cause to sink, to bring to rest, construed with מַעַל in a pregnant signification, to quiet in such a way that it will not rise again."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 6. *Twelve rods*. "Possibly the two tribes of the children of Joseph were reckoned together, as in Deut.

xxvii. 12. But as these two tribes had separate princes, and it was with the names of the princes that the rods were marked (ver. 2), it is more probable that the whole number of rods was twelve exclusively of Aaron's, as the Vulgate expressly renders ('fuerunt virgæ duodecim absque virga Aaron').—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 8. *Yielded almonds.* "Or rather 'ripened almonds,' i.e., 'brought forth ripe almonds.' Probably different portions of the rod showed the several stages of the process of fructification through which those parts which had advanced the furthest had passed. The name almond in Hebrew denotes the 'waking tree,' the 'waking fruit;' and is applied to this tree because it blossoms early in the season. It serves here, as in Jer. i. 11, 12, to set forth the speed and certainty with which, at God's will, His purposes are accomplished."—*Ibid.* "This was miraculous . . . for no ordinary branch would have buds, blossoms, and fruits upon it, all at once."—*M. Henry.*

Verse 10. *For a token, &c.* Keil and Del. translate: "For a sign for the rebellious, that thou puttest an end to

their murmuring, and they die not." Aaron's rod was probably lost while the Ark was in the hands of the Philistines; for it is stated in 1 Kings viii. 9 that there was "nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone."

Verses 12, 13. "A new section should begin with these verses. They are connected retrospectively with chap. xvi.; and form the immediate introduction to chap. xviii. The people were terror-stricken with the fate of the company of Korah at the door of the tabernacle, followed up by the plague in which so many thousands of their numbers had perished. Presumption passes by reaction into despair. Was there any approach for them to the tabernacle of the Lord? Was there any escape from death, except by keeping aloof from His presence? The answers are supplied by the ordinances that follow; ordinances which testified that the God of judgment was still a God of grace and of love."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 13. Keil and Del. translate: "Every one who comes near to the dwelling of Jehovah dies; are we all to die?"

THE DIVINE PLAN FOR VINDICATING THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF AARON, AND ITS MORAL TEACHING.

(Verses 1-5.)

The directions which are here given to Moses teach us—

I. That true ministers of religion are elected by God.

In directing Moses to place these rods in the tabernacle, the Lord promises to meet with him there, and He says, "And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom." God called Aaron to his office (Heb. v. 4). He here makes arrangements for confirming that call, and placing it beyond dispute. To enter the Christian ministry for its honours, or its emoluments, &c., is an awful sin. To refuse to enter it when convinced of the Divine call thereto is

also a sin. The authority of the true minister of Christ arises from his being sent forth by God. Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 4-11, 28; Gal. i. 1; Eph. iv. 7-13. (a)

II. It is of great importance that men should know that their ministers of religion are called by God.

The Lord here makes arrangements for His own miraculous interposition, in order that the Israelites might be completely convinced of the Divine authority of Aaron in his office. It is important that people should be convinced of the Divine call of their ministers, in order that—

1. *They might regard them with becoming respect.* They are ambassadors for

Christ; and should be treated as such. Comp. John xiii. 20; Phil. ii. 29; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. v. 17.

2. *They might take heed to their message.* If the ministers of Christ come to be regarded as mere lecturers on religious themes, having no authority from God, their ministry will be productive of little true and lasting good. Crowds may gather round the eloquent preacher, but they will be like those which gathered round the ancient prophet (Ezek. xxxiii. 30-32). When people see in their ministers a Christlike life, and manifest fitness for their sacred duties, and the signs of the Divine approval of their ministry, let them rest assured that such ministers have their commission from God, and their ministry should be received accordingly. "Despise not prophesyings." "Take heed how ye hear." (b)

III. *The vitality of sin is of dreadful tenacity.*

The miraculous sign for which Moses is directed to make arrangements was necessary to completely subdue the murmurings of the children of Israel. The previous judgments, although so numerous and terrible, had not effectually destroyed their tendency to mur-

mur against the leaders whom God had appointed. "Many men's lips," says Trapp, "like rusty hinges, for want of the oil of grace and gladness, move not without murmuring and complaining." It is a thing of extreme difficulty to eradicate any evil disposition from the human heart. "For such is the habitual hardness of men's hearts, as neither ministry, nor misery, nor miracle, nor mercy, can possibly mollify. Nothing can do it, but an extraordinary touch from the hand of Heaven." (c)

IV. *God is engaged in eradicating sin from human hearts.*

"I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel," &c. He cries to the sinner, "O do not this abominable thing, which I hate." His laws are all against sin. The great redemptive mission of Jesus Christ aims at the destruction of sin. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (d)

Since God is thus engaged, we may confidently anticipate that the crusade against sin will be gloriously triumphant. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The ministry is the Divinely-appointed agency for the communication of God's will to man. As a Divine institution, it advanced its claims in the beginning, and in no solitary instance have they been relinquished since. This Divine authorization and enactment are still in force. The Bible says, when Christ ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." There might be something special, perhaps, in this original commission, but the principle of its Divine origin is evidently presented as the principle of the ministry itself; for St. Paul, who was not then called, who speaks of himself afterwards as one born out of due time, earnestly and anxiously vindicates the heavenly origin of his apostleship: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not of men; for I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." This it is

which is the elevation of the Christian ministry, which exalts it far above human resources and human authority. It travels on in its own majestic strength—Heaven-inspired and Heaven-sustained. Moreover, the same passage which tells us of the institution of the ministry, announces its duration, and tells of the period when it shall be no longer needed, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This period, thus Divinely appointed for the cessation of the ministry, has obviously not yet arrived.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

It would appear to be a difficult lesson for the Church to learn, that God will choose His own instruments. In spite of a thousand proofs of sovereignty on this matter, the Church will stubbornly try to have a hand in the choice of ministers. Now that civilization has become a very devil to us, we say that God's agents shall not be carpenters, fishermen, tent-makers, or ploughmen. No, certainly not; they shall be sons of gentlemen; they shall

have hands unhardened by labour; they shall be favourites of conventional fortune. God will not have this; He will not be indebted to His creatures. The shepherd shall be entrusted with His thunder, and the husbandman shall wield His lightnings; the little child shall subdue the dragon, and the suckling shall not be afraid of the cockatrice.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) How many hear the Gospel, but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange—they read it with both their eyes—will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade—how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practise what they have gathered from it. A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it—as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot to the “i” had dropped off the letter; or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticise the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice. Oh, how men will hear and think it to be right, to be the height of perfection, to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one doot whether you did or did not like his sermon, his business being not to please your tastes, but to save your souls; not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) That plant must possess great vitality which increases by being uprooted and cut down. That which lives by being killed is strangely full of force. That must be a very hard substance which is hardened by lying in the blast furnace, in the central heat of the

fire, where iron melts and runs like wax. That must be a very terrible power which gathers strength from that which should restrain it, and rushes on the more violently in proportion as it is reined in. Sin kills men by that which was ordained to life. It makes Heaven’s gifts the stepping stones to hell, uses the lamps of the temple to show the way to perdition, and makes the Ark of the Lord, as in Uzzah’s case, the messenger of death. Sin is that strange fire which burns the more fiercely for being damped, finding fuel in the water which was intended to quench it. The Lord brings good out of evil, but sin brings evil out of good. It is a deadly evil; judge ye how deadly! O that men knew its nature and abhorred it with all their hearts! May the Eternal Spirit teach men to know aright this worst of ills, that they may flee from it to Him who alone can deliver.—*Ibid.*

(d) 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 on 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. W. Beecher.*

AARON’S ROD AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 6-11.)

In this rod we have an illustration of—

I. The characteristics of the true Christian ministry.

1. *Life.* The rod of Aaron was quickened into life by God, while all the other rods remained mere dead wood. The true minister is alive spiritually. The life of supreme sympathy with God is his. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” “He that hath the Son of God hath the life.” “I live; yet not I,

but Christ liveth in me,” &c. The true minister is aflame with zeal for the glory of God, and the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of believers. Without this spiritual life man is utterly unfit for the Gospel ministry, even though he possessed every other qualification in great measure. (a)

2. *Beauty.* “The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms.” It was not only living, but beautiful. The true minister of Christ is adorned with the beauties of holiness. The Gospel which he

preaches to others he endeavours to illustrate in his own life; he translates his creed into his conduct. (b)

3. *Fruitfulness*. "The rod of Aaron . . . yielded almonds." This was not promised by the Lord (comp. ver. 5); it makes the vindication of the priesthood of Aaron more gloriously complete and conclusive. God is often better than His word: His performances never fall beneath His promises, but frequently transcend them. The true minister, like the rod of Aaron, is fruitful. His life and work are blessed by God to the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers in Christ, and the leading of the young into the faith and service of the Lord Jesus. He is useful in quickening holy thoughts and noble purposes, in training souls for spiritual service, and in leading them in such service. He is not only alive himself, his ministry is life-giving to others. (c)

II. The origin of the true Christian ministry.

The transformation of the rod of Aaron was the work of God. We have an extraordinary manifestation of the Divine power in giving life to this piece of dead wood, and causing it to put forth buds, blossoms, and fruit. It was unquestionably a supernatural achievement. The attributes of a true minister of Jesus Christ are gifts of God. *Spiritual life* is His gift. "Born of the Spirit." "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." *Spiritual beauty* is bestowed by God. It is "the beauty of the Lord

our God upon us." We are being transformed into the image of the Lord, "from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." "The Lord will beautify the meek with salvation." *Spiritual fruitfulness* is also the gift of God. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me," &c. (John xv. 4, 5.) "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" &c. (1 Cor. iii. 5-7.) Thus every true minister is a creation of God, and a gift of God to His Church.

III. The influence of the true Christian ministry.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept," &c. Thus this rod was to remain, and to continue to exercise a beneficent influence in repressing the disposition of the Israelites to murmur against the servants of the Lord. In like manner the true Christian ministry and its fruits are abiding things; and the manifestation of those fruits is calculated to silence murmurers and detractors. The holiest and most useful ministers may be assailed by detraction and even by cruel slander, as Aaron was; but his life and work will in due time silence the detractors and cover them with shame. The results of the life and work of the true minister will be the most effective vindication of his Divine call, and will "put to silence the ignorance of foolish" and wicked men.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no one entered the temple in the afternoon. A snow-storm was falling around us. The snow-storm was real, the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had no one word indicating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the

wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession—namely, to convert life into truth—he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed, and planted, and talked, and bought, and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches; his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse that he had ever lived at all. Not a line did he draw out of real history. The true preacher can always be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the

fire of thought. But of the bad preacher, it could not be told from his sermon what age of the world he fell in; whether he had a father or a child; whether he was a freeholder or a pauper; whether he was a citizen, or any other fact in his history.—*R. W. Emerson.*

For the spiritual being, man, the only real life is in goodness. Can it not be proved so? If the fountain of all the life that flows through the fields of the universe is God, God is but another name for goodness. All the life that proceeds from Him, therefore, must be according to goodness or love, whether it beats in the bosom of a sinless child, or nerves the arm of a hero-saint; whether He rounds a planet, or tints a roseleaf; whether He balances the Pleiades in their spheres, or adjusts the microscopic machinery of an insect's wing; whether the afflatus of His Spirit bears up the "seraph that adores and burns" before the throne, or lights the lamp of a feebleness in these vessels of clay. Only so far as we share in the Father's goodness, then, are we partakers in *His* life. The measure of our being, as living souls, is precisely the measure of our excellence. In proportion as our actions are in harmony with Divine laws, and our familiar frame of feeling with God's will, we live. Herein is the Apostolic saying true, "To be spiritually-minded is life." Every rising-up of pure aspiration; every clinging to principle when you are tempted; every choice of abstract right above politic selfishness; every putting down of sensual passion by prayer; every preference of a truth which inherits a cross, over the lie that flatters you with a promise of prosperity—is a palpable motion of God's life within you. Indeed, this is the most intimate subjective knowledge you have of God. God, out of His express revelation, never speaks to us so audibly as when His Spirit prompts us to struggle, or braces us for a sacrifice. A generous impulse is the plainest pledge of His presence; a devout trust in Him, the mightiest demonstration of His Fatherhood.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult to stand in its way. It is the force that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which Heaven has given him, that will ac-

complish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives with all the force of his nature for the glory of God.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) Beauty and love ought always to go together. In the highest moral realm, in the noblest moral traits, there should be the beautiful. Religion is itself beautiful. Its fragments, like shining particles of gold, are beautiful; but at every stage and step of its development toward moral perfection, it grows in the direction of beauty, and the highest conception of beauty is in character. Physical beauty is but the outward symbol and the lower representation of that which has its true existence only in spiritual elements. Religion is beautiful, because it is the service of the God of beauty. Its inward and characteristic experiences are full of beauty.—*H. W. Beecher.*

A true man after Christ will be the most noble and beautiful thing upon the earth—the freest, the most joyous, the most fruitful in all goodness. There is no picture that was ever painted, there is no statue that was ever carved, there was no work of art ever conceived of that was half so beautiful as is a living man, thoroughly developed on the pattern of Christ Jesus.—*Ibid.*

(c) Vitality is a test of any system of doctrine, as it is of any teacher's qualification. If you would find the value of any message, ask of it, Does it live? Do vital pulses leap through it? Does it reproduce its life? Does it help men to live? Does it leave them more alive or more dead than they were without it? Get an answer to these questions, and you will find whether the given ministry is of heaven, or of a private self-interest—whether it comes out of the all-quickening and all-comprehending God, or out of some dreamer's brain.

Nothing goes with much momentum, in the long trial, that does not carry life with it. Accumulate the learning of a thousand Melancthons; pile together the erudition of ancient schools and modern universities; what does it contribute to the real treasure of men, if it does not create life in them? The alcoves of libraries may be but the chambers of a mausoleum,—sepulchres of thought, instead of nurseries—and meeting houses, spiritual dormitories. Eloquence, burning as Peter the Hermit's, is wasted breath, unless the succeeding life of men shows that it reached the springs from which that life was fed. So in all communication of man with man. Nothing tells, nothing does execution, nothing survives very long, but what makes men feel and will and act,—nothing but the "word of life." Find me a book, a speech, a preacher, a gospel, that is not life-giving, and I know there is no true message, no inspiration, no revelation from God there.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

THE BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD.

(Verse 8.)

Notice—

I. The threefold significance of the rods which were laid to settle the question in dispute.

1. They were *historic*. The rods of the tribes were handed down from one generation to another, outliving many generations, and reminding the men of the present of the events of the past, as the mace of a city in England calls up to our minds events which have been connected with it in the past.

2. They were *representative*. They represented every man of the tribe as a mace represents every citizen, or as the heraldic sign of a noble house represents each member of the house, and the number upon the colour of each regiment represents each soldier in the regiment.

3. The rod was a sign of *personal authority* when borne by the man who alone was entitled to carry it—the head of the tribe. The macebearer derives no authority from bearing the sign of it, but in the hands of the chief magistrate it is an emblem of official power. The coronet in the hands, or even upon the *head*, of a commoner, means nothing; but it means rank upon the brow of him to whom it rightfully belongs.

II. Aaron's rod represented more remarkable historic events, and signified more authority, than the rods belonging to the heads of the other tribes.

It is generally supposed to have been the rod used by him and by Moses in the performance of the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness (comp. Exod. vii. 9, 19, &c.). It was, therefore, connected with a miracle in the past—it had been alive. And it signified an authority not derived from birth (Exod. vi. 16-20), but conferred by the special selection of God. The present miraculous manifestation may suggest—

1. *That the creation of life is the highest manifestation of Divine power.* Miracles of increase may to some extent find an analogy in the works of man when he works in co-operation with the established laws of nature. He sows a seed and reaps thirty-fold, and so on. But there is life in the seed to work upon. The giving of life to the dead can in no way be imitated by man. The character of this miracle, therefore, seems intended—

2. *To vindicate most forcibly the right of God to decide who should be, not only the head of the tribe of Levi, but the priestly head of the entire nation.* He who could thus dispense with all the seasons in the production of the flowers and fruit upon the rod, had a right to set aside the ordinary laws of primogeniture. God is not handcuffed by either His natural or social laws. He can break all laws except those of moral rectitude. To violate *them* is His blessed impossibility.

3. It may further suggest that *the choice of God would be justified in the after history of Israel.* The choice for special service begins with God. The selection of an earthly ambassador springs not from himself, but from the king who sends him. So the Saviour and King of men said to His ambassadors, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." But His choice was justified by their "bringing forth fruit which remained" (John xv. 16). So the choice of Aaron's family was justified by the fruit which some members brought forth to bless the nation. Their faith and courage in entering Jordan, the zeal of Phinehas (Num. xxv. 7), &c., were typified in the budding and fruit-bearing rod which was their symbol.—*From "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament,"*

THE BUDDED ROD, A TYPE OF CHRIST.

(Verse 8.)

Let us advance from the ancient record to the still-living Gospel of the fact. The Rod in many graphic tints shows Jesus. The very name is caught by raptured prophets—Isa. xi. 1 ; Zech. vi. 12, 13. Thus faith gleans lessons from the very title—Rod.

But the grand purport of the type is to reject all rivals. It sets Aaron alone upon the priestly seat. The parallel proclaims, that similarly Jesus is our only Priest. God calls—anooints—appoints—accepts, and ever hears Him ; but Him alone. In His hands only do these functions live.

Next, the constant luxuriance has a clear voice. In nature's field, buds—blossoms—fruit, soon wither. Not so this Rod. Its verdure was for ever green ; its fruit was ever ripe. Beside the Ark it was reserved in never-fading beauty. Here is the ever-blooming Priesthood of our Lord. *Psa. cx. 4 ; Heb. vii. 24. . . .* Because Christ ever lives, and ever loves, and ever prays, and ever works, therefore His kingdom swells. And so it shall be while the need remains. But when the last of the redeemed is safely gathered in, then heaven shall no more hear the interceding Priest. Then the one

sound from the vast throng shall be—Hallelujah.

Mark, moreover, that types of Jesus often comprehend the Church. It is so with these rods. The twelve at first seem all alike. They are all sapless twigs. But suddenly one puts forth loveliness ; while the others still remain worthless and withered. Here is a picture of God's dealings with a sin-slain race. Since Adam's fall, all are born lifeless branches of a withered stock. When any child of man arises from the death of sin, and blooms in grace, God has arisen with Divine almightiness.

Believer, the Budded Rod gives another warning. It is a picture of luxuriance. Turn from it and look inward. Is your soul thus richly fertile ? Instead of fruit, you often yield the thorn. *John xv. 8.* Whence is the fault ? *John xv. 4.* Perhaps your neglectful soul departs from Christ. Meditate in God's law day and night, and you "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water," &c. *Psa. i. 3.*

But if the Budded Rod rebukes the scanty fruit in the new-born soul, what is its voice to unregenerate worldlings ? *Heb. vi. 8.*—*Henry Law, D.D.*

THE CRY OF THE SUBDUED REBELS.

(Verses 12, 13.)

This last miraculous interposition, coming after the preceding judgments, awakened a salutary dread in the minds of the rebellious people, and led them to cry to Moses in great bitterness of spirit, "Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish," &c. This cry of theirs suggests the following observations :—

I. That sinners are prone to pass from one extreme of evil to the opposite one.

A little while ago they went to the extreme of presumption, now they are

in the extreme of despair. "See," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the folly and extravagance of this sinful people. At first, every person might come near to God, for all, they thought, were sufficiently holy, and every way qualified to minister in holy things. Now, no one, in their apprehension, can come near to the tabernacle without being consumed (ver. 13). In both cases they were wrong ; some there were who might approach, others there were who might not. God had put the difference. His decision should

have been final with them ; but sinners are ever running into extremes." " In the preceding events," says Scott, " they 'despised the chastening of the Lord ;' and now they fainted when rebuked by Him." For another instance of their swift transition from one sinful extreme to another, comp. chap. xiv. 1-5, with 40-45.

II. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission, while the heart remains as rebellious as ever.

These Israelites were subdued, but they were not penitent. They do not recognise the fact that the thousands who perished, perished because of their sins ; they do not confess their own sins. Their cry is that of a people who are painfully conscious that they have to do with a Being against whose judgments they cannot stand ; but who evidently feel themselves injured by those judgments. Their cry was really a complaint against God. They felt themselves unable to cope with Him, and, therefore, yielded an unwilling submission to Him. Law and judgment may subdue rebellion, but they cannot enkindle loyalty ; they may compel to submission, but they cannot convert to affection. It is only love that can do this.

III. The Divine judgments may produce outward submission while the mind entertains most erroneous moral opinions.

The people cried, "Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." They are still in

error. They have renounced the error, that all men might approach the tabernacle, but they have adopted the error that no one might approach unto it. There were those who might come near unto it ; the priests might do so ; it was their business to do so. And all might avail themselves of the offices of the priests ; and were under solemn obligations to do so. But the judgments which they had experienced had not taught them this. Under the judgments of God men are not in a fit state for learning much concerning their relation to Him. And judgments are neither designed nor fitted to teach much, except man's utter inability to withstand God. Judgments are for correction rather than instruction. They have been used with effect for the destruction of the false and evil, but they are not fitted for building up the true and good. It was correction that Israel most needed when they were visited by these judgments. They persistently refused instruction. And, as is remarked by Keil and Del., " if this fear of death was no fruit of faith, it was fitted for all that to prevent any fresh outbreaks of rebellion on the part of the rejected generation."

IV. The most stout-hearted rebels against God must, sooner or later, submit to Him.

If they will not submit willingly, they will be compelled into submission. Comp. Job. ix. 3, 4 ; xl. 9 ; xxii. 21 ; Psa. i. 12 ; 1 Cor. xv. 25. (a)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord to be vulnerable, yet where is the bow and where the arrow that could reach Him on His throne? What javelin shall pierce Jehovah's buckler? Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage against God, how shall they reach His throne? They cannot even shake his footstool. If all the angels of heaven should rebel against the Great King, and their squadrons should advance in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most High, He has but to will it and they would wither as autumn leaves, or consume as the fat upon the altar. Reserved in chains of darkness, the opponents of his power would for ever

become mementoes of His wrath. None can touch Him ; He is the God that ever liveth. Let us who delight in the living God bow before Him, and humbly worship Him as the God in whom we live and move and have our being.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

As you stood some stormy day upon a sea-cliff, and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course, and hurl it back to the depths of ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling

athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its course? Still more foolish and vain his thoughts, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purpose of God, saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us!" Break His bands asunder! How He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh!—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Prosperity is not found in opposing God. It is only by *falling in* with His arrangements and following His designs. A prosperous voyage is made by falling in with winds and currents, and not in opposing them; prosperous agriculture is carried on with coinciding with the favourable seasons of the year, and taking advantage of the dews, and rains, and sunbeams that God sends, and not in

opposing them; prosperity in regard to health is found in taking advantage of the means which God gives to secure it, and not in opposing them. And the sinner in his course has no more chance of success and prosperity, than a man would have who should make it a point or principle of life always to sail against tides, and currents, and head-winds; or he who should set at defiance all the laws of husbandry, and plant on a rock, or in the dead of winter; or he who should feed himself on poison rather than on nutritious food, and cultivate the nightshade rather than wheat. If a man desires prosperity, he *must* fall in with the arrangements of God in His providence and grace; and wisdom is seen in studying these arrangements, and in yielding to them.—*Albert Barnes, D.D.*

THE RUIN AND THE REMEDY.

(Verses 12 and 13.)

This was the language of desperation, remorse, and enmity to God. Israel had deeply transgressed and hardened themselves in transgression, and a just God had repeatedly visited them in wrath. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, had been swallowed up, and 250 men bearing impious fire had been consumed, and the surviving rebels said,—“Ye have killed the people of the Lord.” When further punished, crushed, but not humbled, again they murmur against God, as in the text.

Affecting description of the ravages of sin and death. Let us consider—

I. The devastations of death.

A true picture of all mankind—“Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish—we are consumed with dying.”

1. *Sad universal picture.* True in all ages, countries, climes. Death is universal and unavoidable: no exemption, old and young, strong and weak, rich and poor, tyrant and oppressor, the wise man and the fool—all die. Same phenomena, sickness, pain, suffering, decay—in all lands. (Job xiv. 1, 2, &c.; Isa. xxxviii. 12; xl. 6-8.) How many gone from among us, and we are hasting after them, and soon shall be with them.

2. *And whither are they gone?* Ask the philosopher, the sceptic, the Deist—

they cannot tell you—they have no comfort for you: perhaps your departed ones are annihilated, or they wander in other bodies, or are absorbed in Deity! Ah! man without God's Word knows nothing of the future.

They are in the separate state—they have begun to be eternally happy or miserable—eternal woes or eternal bliss—a second death—oh! terrible: the first death is sad, but what is the second? “Where their worm never dies,” &c.

II. The cause of these widespread desolations of death.

Again ask the philosopher, the philanthropist, the disbeliever in the Scripture account of it—Why all this misery, pain, death? How do you reconcile it with a God of benevolence? They are silent. Our answer is one word—“*Sin*”—“our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa. lxiv. 6.)

1. *This world is a penal state.* A fact much overlooked. It so far resembles the future world of suffering, with this difference—*this* world is both penal and probationary, *that* is penal only. *But this world is a state of punishment*—we are born into it under the curse and wrath of God—and every pain, sorrow, grief—bodily, mental, spiritual—is a

punishment for original sin, or the effect of actual sin. "We die, we perish, we all perish," because we sin, we all sin. Universal death proves universal sin; because death is the penalty of sin. (Rom. v. 12.) Almost all men hasten death and shorten their lives by sin. It peoples gaols and madhouses, and feeds the tomb. (Rom. vi. 23.) The mortal wound—"sting of death is sin." (1 Cor. xv. 56.) "Brings forth death." (James i. 15.)

2. *Alas, this, too, peoples hell!* "The wicked turned into hell." (Psa. ix. 17; Matt. xxiii. 33; 2 Pet. ii. 4.) First death only dark portal to the second.

III. The remedy for this widespread desolation of sin and death.

It was that very "tabernacle" which these frightened, but desperate sinners dreaded. There only was their refuge; there the mercy-seat; there the propitiation—the sacrificing priest, the altar, and a sin-forgiving God above it. Yet they said, "Whosoever cometh near the tabernacle of the Lord shall die." And perhaps they were right—for as of the Gospel it typified, so the tabernacle was a means of life or death, according as it was approached—"of life unto life, or of death unto death." (2 Cor. ii. 16.) But there was no other refuge, no other salvation.

Now Christ is our true tabernacle (Heb. viii. 2.) "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." (Heb. ix. 26.) "He hath abolished death." (2 Tim. i. 10.) He has offered one sacrifice for sins. (Heb. x. 12.) He is our "Apostle and High Priest;" our living "Advocate with the Father." (1 John ii. 1.)

Here is the universal remedy—Christ

Jesus the Lord—He is "the tree, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 2.) "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "He healeth broken hearts"—"wipes tears from sorrowing faces"—lights up the grave with joy—makes men "long to depart" that they may "be with Him." By faith in Him His people rejoice in tribulation—count temptations "all joy"—heavy burdens are lightened, long troubles shortened and sweetened: and they have "a hope full of immortality." Well has He said, "Oh death, I will be thy plagues!" (Hos. xiii. 14.)

With what view do you regard Almighty God?—as terrible, revengeful, cruel, relentless? Do you read these attributes in the present miseries of the world? Do the promised miseries of another world confirm them? Does the language of the text suit you? Then it is because *you do not know God*. Conscious guilt and dread of punishment we have in common with devils who "believe and tremble;" but only repent, humble your proud hearts, lay low that unbelieving spirit, and seek mercy through the Son of His love, and then you "shall see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Some men will "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" but if you "flee from the wrath to come," and lay hold on the all-sufficient Saviour, you shall taste the sweetness of His mercy.

Let all who know Him, and love Him, cleave unto Him in His tabernacle, His mercy-seat; they shall find His name "Love," and shall rejoice before Him.—*F. Close, D.D.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people recorded at the close of the preceding chapter. And after the confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his family, these Divine directions as to the duties

and emoluments of the Priests and Levites come in very appropriately. The greater part of these directions were addressed by the Lord directly to Aaron (vers. 1-24). But the regulations as to the tithes to be paid by the Levites

to the Priests were addressed to Moses, as the head of all Israel (vers. 25-32).

Verse 1. *The iniquity of the sanctuary.* "i.e., the guilt of the offences which an erring people would be continually committing against the majesty of God, when brought into contact, through the ordinances, with the manifestations of His presence. Cf. Exodus xxviii. 38 ; also viii. 19."—*Speaker's Comm.*

The iniquity of your priesthood. "As the priests themselves were but men, they could no more than others abide it, if God were extreme to mark what was done amiss. An atonement was consequently ordained for them (Lev. xvi.) ; and they were strengthened to bear the iniquity of their own unintentional offences, by being entrusted with the ceremonial means of taking it away. The word 'bear' has, in the Old Testament, this double sense of 'enduring' and 'removing ;' but in the person of Christ, who atoned by His own endurance, the two are in effect one."—*Ibid.*

And thy father's house with thee. "The father's house of Aaron, i.e., the Levitical family of Kohath, was also to join in bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, because the oversight of the holy vessels of the sanctuary devolved upon it (chap. iv. 4, sqq.).—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 2. *Thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi . . . may be joined unto thee.* "There is a fine paronomasia, or play upon words, in the original. *Levi* comes from the root *lavah*, to join to, couple, associate : hence Moses says, the *Levites*, *yillavu*, shall be joined or associated with the priests ; they shall conjointly perform the whole of the sacred office, but the priests shall be principal, the Levites only their associates or assistants."—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 4. *A stranger, i.e., everyone who was neither a priest nor a Levite.* Comp. chap. i. 53 ; iii. 7.

Verse 5. *Ye shall keep, &c. Ye, viz., Aaron and his sons.*

Verse 7. *I have given your priest's office, &c.* "This office, which brought them into the closest fellowship with the Lord, was a favour accorded to

them by the grace of God. This is expressed in the words, 'as a service of gift (a service with which I present you) I give you the priesthood.'"—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 8. *By reason of the anointing.* Keil and Del. *et al.* translate, "for a portion."

Verse 10. *In the most holy place,* i.e., "in the court of the tabernacle (see Lev. vi. 9, 19 ; vii. 6), which is called 'most holy' here, to lay a stronger emphasis upon the precept."—*Keil and Del.*

Every male. Only the males of the priestly families could eat of the things mentioned in ver. 9.

Verse 11. *To thy sons and to thy daughters.* Both the males and females of the priestly families, provided they were legally clean, might eat of the things mentioned in this verse.

Verse 15. *Surely redeem redeem.* "A stronger expression is intentionally used in reference to the redemption of the first-born of man than in reference to that of unclean beasts. For the rule as to the former admitted of no exception : the owner of the latter, if unwilling to redeem, might destroy the beasts (Exod. xiii. 13 ; xxxiv. 20). Usually, of course, he would redeem them, but in the case of a diseased or maimed animal he might well be excused from making a payment for that which, if redeemed, would be worthless. As to the mode of redemption of unclean beasts, it had been originally enjoined that the firstling of an ass should be redeemed with a lamb. But the owner of the beast might not be always able to provide a lamb, especially in the wilderness, and the liability was accordingly commuted (Lev. xxvii. 27). Into all the details of this the present ordinances do not enter. Their object is not so much to prescribe accurately to the people what should be paid, as to assign to the priests their various revenues."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 19. *A covenant of salt.* "That is, an incorruptible everlasting covenant. As salt was added to different kinds of viands, not only to give them

a relish, but to preserve them from putrefaction and decay, it became the emblem of *incorruptibility* and *permanence*. Hence, a *covenant of salt* signified an *everlasting covenant*. Among the Asiatics, eating together was considered a bond of perpetual friendship; and as *salt* was a common article in all their repasts, it may be in reference to this circumstance that a perpetual covenant is termed a *covenant of salt*; because the parties ate together of the sacrifice offered on the occasion, and the whole transaction was considered as a league of endless friendship. See Lev. ii. 13."—*A. Clarke, LL D.*

Verse 20. Comp. Deut. x. 9; xviii. 1, 2; Josh. xiii. 33. "No tract of land was peculiarly assigned to them, as were to the other tribes, as fields nor vineyards; they had fields appointed them, and they had houses and cities devoted to the Lord which fell to them, and others they had by gift or legacy, or by purchase, as had Jeremiah, the priest, and Barnabas, the Levite, Jer. xxxii. 9; and Acts iv. 36, 37; but they

had no share in the distribution of the land of Canaan at the time of the division of it among the tribes; no, not even in the spoil of the cities of the land of Canaan when they were conquered."—*Evang. Synopsis.*

Verse 21. Comp. Lev. xxvii. 31-33; Neh. x. 37; xii. 44.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. chap. i. 53 and viii. 19.

Verse 26. The Levites are here commanded to give to the priests, as an offering to the Lord, a tithe of the tithes which they received.

Verse 27. *Shall be reckoned, &c.* "That is, it should be as acceptable to God as if they had fields and vineyards, threshing-floors and wine-presses, of their own, from whence corn and wine were taken."—*Dr. Gill.*

Verse 29. *Of all the best thereof.* Heb. as in margin, "Of all the fat."

Verse 32. *Neither shall ye pollute, &c.* "Rather, 'And by not polluting the holy things of the children of Israel, ye shall not die.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

A GRAVE PERIL AND A GRACIOUS PRECAUTION.

(Verses 1-7.)

Two preliminary points :

First : *Here is the answer of the Lord to the cry of the people.* The inquiry concerning the approach to the tabernacle of the Lord, with which the preceding chapter closes, receives a clear response in the paragraph now before us. Man may draw near to God, but it must be in the way which He has appointed. Mic. vi. 6-8; John xiv. 6.

Second : *Here is a solemn reminder to Aaron that his great honours involved great responsibilities.* The Lord had abundantly vindicated his priesthood, and now He reminds him of the serious responsibilities of his charge. "Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear," &c. (ver. 1). "And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary," &c. (ver. 5). Wherefore let them "not be high-minded, but fear." (See pp. 32, 33.) (a)

Let us now consider—

I. The grave peril referred to.

There was danger that the wrath of God might be again kindled against them by reason of—

1. *Sin in relation to consecrated places and things.* No one was to come nigh unto these except upon such occasions as were permitted by God, *e.g.*, when bringing their sacrifices to the priests, &c. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." Korah and his company had sinned in this way, and they were consumed by "fire from the Lord." Aaron and his sons, with the Levites as assistants, must bear the responsibility of the charge of the sacred places and things. As with the Israelites there was danger of sin by unwarranted approach to the tabernacle; so our best services are imper-

fect; even our worship is marred by wandering thoughts and lukewarm affections; our religious exercises need the merits of the gracious Saviour. (b)

2. *Sin in consecrated persons.* "The Lord said unto Aaron, . . . Thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver. 1). The holiest of men in the holiest office is, in the present state, exposed to temptation, and liable to sin, and stands constantly in need of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (c)

Sin, whether in priests or in people, is a perilous thing; it issues in death (James i. 15); it kindles the wrath of God. "Sin and punishment," says Trapp, "come under one name, as being tied together with chains of adamant: where the one dines the other will sup; where the one is in the saddle, the other will be upon the crupper. *Nemo crimen gerit in pectore qui non idem Nemesis in tergo.* Sin doth as naturally draw and suck judgments to it, as the loadstone doth iron, or turpentine fire."

II. The gracious precaution against this peril.

By appointing the priests and Levites to the charge of the consecrated places and things; by appointing to them means of atonement for sin (Lev. xvi.); and by solemnly warning the people against intruding into sacred places or intermeddling with sacred duties, the Lord endeavours to guard them against the perils to which they were exposed. But there are several particulars which call for notice:—

1. *The Divine distribution of duty.* To the priests and the Levites respectively certain duties were allotted (comp. chaps. iii. and iv., and see pp. 48, 49, 56, 57).

2. *The Divine recognition of differences of rank amongst men.* The Levites, though brethren to the priests, were to serve them. They shall "be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee." Differences of rank are inevitable amongst men. (See pp. 12, 13.) The Church of Christ is no exception

in this. (See p. 48.) As the Levites were to serve under Aaron, so Christians work under Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest. (d)

3. *In the differences of rank the common brotherhood of all must not be lost sight of.* Though servants to the priests, the Levites were their brethren. "Thy brethren" (ver. 2); "your brethren the Levites" (ver. 6). In the Christian Church differences of rank do not invalidate the brotherhood of all. The elders of the Church are not to be "lords over God's heritage." "One is your master, Christ; and all ye are brethren." Even "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (e)

4. *Men of every rank are called to service.* The priests must serve; so also must the Levites; and those who belonged to neither of these orders were called to serve in other departments of the national life. From the highest to the lowest no one was exempted from this obligation. (See pp. 13, 56, 57.)

5. *Each must faithfully fulfil his own service, and abstain from intrusion into the province of others.* The Levites were not to interfere with priestly duties: "They shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die." They who were neither priests nor Levites were to abstain from all the sacred functions connected with the tabernacle. "A stranger shall not come nigh unto you." "The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." No one must intermeddle with duties which belonged not to him. An excellent rule for all times and places.

6. *The faithful discharge of appointed duty promotes the safety of the entire people.* "Ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel." The welfare of the whole community is affected beneficially or injuriously by the conduct of each member of it. The faithfulness of even the feeblest and most obscure member contributes to the security and prosperity of the entire commonwealth. (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The greater the trust is of work and power that is committed to us the greater is our danger of contracting guilt, by falsifying and betraying that trust. This is a good reason why we should neither be envious at others' honours nor ambitious ourselves of high places, because great dignity exposes us to great iniquity. Those that are entrusted with the charge of the sanctuary will have a great deal to answer for. Who would have the care of souls who considers the account that must be given of that care?—*Matthew Henry*.

(b) The temple itself is full of vacant worship. It resounds with rash vows and babbling voices. It is the house of God; but man has made it a nest of triflers, a fair of vanity, a den of thieves. Some come to it, as reckless and irreverent as if they were stepping into a neighbour's house. Some come to it, and feel as if they had laid the most High under obligation, because they bring a sheaf of corn or a pair of pigeons; whilst they never listen to God's Word, nor strive after that obedience which is better than sacrifice. Some come, and rattle over empty forms of devotion, as if they would be heard because of their much speaking. And some, in a fit of fervour, utter vows which they forget to pay; and, when reminded of their promise by the "angel" of the church, they protest that there must be some mistake: they repudiate the vow, and say it was an error.—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

(c) As a man who in the morning washeth his hands, and goes abroad about his business and affairs in the world, though he doth not puddle in the mire, or rake among dunghills, yet when he returns home again to dinner, or at night, if he wash, he finds that he hath contracted some uncleanness and that his hands are foul: we cannot converse in an unclean and dirty world with our bodies, but some uncleanness will fasten upon them. So it is with the soul; the souls of the best, of the purest, of the holiest, though they do not rake in the dunghill, and wallow in the mire of sin basely and filibilly, yet they do from day to day, yea, from moment to moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. And in this sense it is that "there is no man that liveth and sinneth not." Every man hath a "fountain of uncleanness" in him; and there will be ever some sin, some filthiness bubbling and boiling up, if not flowing forth.—*Caryl*.

(d) The Levites were to serve under Aaron, the head of the priestly house. This teaches us a fine lesson, and one much needed by Christians at the present moment. We all want to bear in mind that service, to be intelligent and acceptable, must be rendered in subjection to priestly authority and guidance. The whole tribe of workers were associated with and subject to the high priest. All was under his immediate control and guidance. So must it be now in reference to all God's workers. All Christian service must be rendered in fellowship with our Great High Priest, and in holy subjection

to His authority. It is of no value otherwise. There may be a great deal of work done, there may be a great deal of activity; but if Christ be not the immediate object before the heart, if His guidance and authority be not fully owned, the work must go for nothing. But, on the other hand, the smallest act of service, the meanest work done under the eye of Christ, done with direct reference to Him, has its value in God's estimation, and shall most assuredly receive its due reward. This is truly encouraging, and consolatory to the heart of every earnest worker. The Levites had to work under Aaron. Christians have to work under Christ. We are responsible to Him.—*Anon.*

(e) You recognise in every nation, in every tribe, your fellow men, your brethren. Go to Egypt, and stand among the Sphinxes, the Pyramids, the old and wondrous temples, and you are a stranger in a strange land, and it seems scarcely less than a ghastly dream. Go farther East, behold the ruined architecture, revive the manners and customs of the Syrian and Babylonian empires, and you seem still among a strange people. If they should rise and speak to you, their tongues would be as strange to you as yours would be to them. But let a maiden speak her love, and instantly you know that voice. The works that their hands wrought are wondrous. The affections that throb in their hearts are familiar. The things that they lived for outwardly—see how widely you are separated from these. How different are their laws, their institutions, and their methods of commerce from ours! How strange to us are their political economy and their ecclesiastical system! Touch that which man fashioned and formed, and man is disjointed, and split apart by rivers, and mountains, and times, and ages; but touch the human heart, and let that speak, and all men rise up and say, "That voice is my voice." Reach but the feeling of love, and every human being says, "It is my brother; it is my sister." Strike those cords that bring out the experience of grief, and every man wails with the hoary wailers of antiquity. Man is not a unit by virtue of the fruits of his intellect and the works of his hand, but by virtue of those eternal identities of sentiment and affection which are common to all men in all nations and ages.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(f) No man has a right to say he can do nothing for the benefit of mankind, who are less benefited by ambitious projects than by the sober fulfilment of each man's proper duties. By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor. The results of "patient continuance in well-doing" are never to be measured by the weakness of the instrument, but by the omnipotence of Him who blesseth the sincere efforts of obedient faith alike in the prince and in the cottager.—*H. Thompson*.

THE FIDELITY OF ONE, THE SAFETY OF MANY.

(Verse 5.)

This applies—

I. To ministers of the Gospel, who are—

1. To preach the whole truth.
2. To guard the ordinances of religion.
3. To urge the performance of duty, that the people of their charge may be saved from sin and wrath.

II. To civil rulers,

Who are to make and enforce laws to maintain and increase the tone of public morality.

III. To heads of families,

Who, by example and precept, should seek to form good characters and correct evil habits in their children and servants.

An illustration of fidelity.—The fidelity of the keepers of the lighthouse once

on Minet's Ledge, near Boston, may well be imitated. In the terrible April gale of 1851, this beautiful structure was destroyed. Two men were in it at the time; and a vast multitude were gathered upon the shore, waiting, in anxious distress, for the expected catastrophe. Every hour, however, the bell tolled the time, and ever the light pierced the dark raging storm, and bid the sailor beware. No howling blast could silence the one, or rising wave extinguish the other. At last, one giant wave, mightier than the rest, rose up and threw its arms around the tower, and laid it low in the waves. Then alone was the bell silent; then alone did the light cease to shine.—*J. M. Reid.—Biblical Museum.*

THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Verses 8-32.)

The main subject of this portion of the history has already engaged our attention (see pp. 84-86); but there are additional matters brought before us here which demand notice.

The Redemption of the Firstborn (vers. 15, 16) has also been already noticed by us (see pp. 59, 60).

“These regulations concerning the revenues of the priests and Levites were in perfect accordance with the true idea of the Israelitish Kingdom of God. Whereas in heathen states, where there was an hereditary priestly caste, that caste was generally a rich one, and held a firm possession in the soil (in Egypt, for example; see at Gen. xlvii. 22), the Levites received no hereditary landed property in the land of Israel, but only towns to dwell in among the other tribes, with pasturage for their cattle (chap. xxxv.), because Jehovah, the

God of Israel, would be their inheritance. In this way their earthly existence was based upon the spiritual ground and soil of faith, in accordance with the calling assigned them, to be the guardians and promoters of the commandments, statutes, and rights of Jehovah; and their authority and influence among the people were bound up with their unreserved surrender of themselves to the Lord, and their firm reliance upon the possession of their God. Now, whilst this position was to be a constant incitement to the Levites to surrender themselves entirely to the Lord and His service, it was also to become to the whole nation a constant admonition, inasmuch as it was a prerogative conferred upon them by the Lord, to seek the highest of all good in the possession of the Lord, as its portion and inheritance.”—*Keil and Del.*

The following observations are suggested—

I. That the maintenance of the Christian ministry devolves upon the Christian Church.

This nation of Israelites was separated unto the Lord, and is thus an illustration of the Church. God ordained that the priests and Levites should be supported by the nation; the Christian ministry should be supported by the Christian Church.

1. *This is righteous.* The priests and Levites were required to renounce the paths of worldly ambition and profit; they had no share in the inheritance of the children of Israel (vers. 20, 24); they were to devote themselves unreservedly to the promotion of the religious interests of the people. Inasmuch as they gave their time, their strength, &c., to serve the people, the people could not neglect to provide for them without dishonesty. The Christian minister has a right to a liberal maintenance from the church which he serves. What the Lord said to the Levites might be said to ministers to day respecting the provision made for them, "It is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (ver. 31). (a)

2. *This is advantageous.* It promotes the prosperity of the Church. (See pp. 85, 86.)

3. *This is scriptural.* Matt. x. 9, 10; Luke x. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 7-14; Gal. vi. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

II. That Christian ministers of every grade who are devoted to the service of the Church have a right to support from the Church.

God gives directions for the worthy support of the high priest, the priests, and their servants, the Levites, also. The claims of the poor, hard-working curate upon the Church for a respectable maintenance are, in the sight of God, as binding as those of the wealthy and lordly bishop. The claims of many of the most faithful and useful ministers, who are working in inconspicuous spheres, are most sadly and sinfully overlooked by the Christian Church. (b)

III. That the Christian ministry

should be supported liberally by the Church.

"The revenue which the Lord assigned to the Levites and priests, as His servants, consisting of the tenths and firstfruits, as well as certain portions of the different sacrificial gifts that were offered to Him, appears to have been a very considerable one, especially if we adopt the computation of J. D. Michaelis (*Mos. Recht.* i. § 52) with reference to the tithes. 'A tribe,' he says, 'which had only 22,000 males in it (23,000 afterwards), and therefore could hardly have numbered more than 12,000 grown up men, received the tithes of 600,000 Israelites; consequently one single Levite, without the slightest necessity for sowing, and without any of the expenses of agriculture, reaped or received from the produce of the flocks and herds as much as five of the other Israelites.' But this leaves out of sight the fact that tithes are never paid so exactly as this, and that no doubt there was as little conscientiousness in the matter then as there is at the present day, when those who are entitled to receive a tenth often receive even less than a twentieth. Moreover, the revenue of the tribe which the Lord had chosen as His own peculiar possession, was not intended to be a miserable and beggarly one; but it was hardly equal, at any time, to the revenues which the priestly castes of other nations derived from their endowments."—*Keil and Del.* It is deplorable that the Christian Church, with its richer spiritual heritage, should fall so far below the Jewish Church in this respect.

IV. That all the members of the Church should contribute to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every one who brought a sacrifice contributed a portion of the same to the priests, and those who had children or cattle contributed the firstborn, and those who cultivated the soil presented the choicest of their productions and the firstfruits, and to the Levites all the tithes were given. So that, in one way or another, all contributed to the

support of the priests and Levites. And surely the principle is just that all who receive the services of the Christian ministry should contribute to its support. (c)

V. That all should contribute proportionally to the maintenance of the ministry.

Every Israelite contributed a tenth of his possessions to the cause of God. The rule for the Christian should be, "Every man according to his ability." "As God hath prospered him." "Freely ye have received, freely give." (d)

VI. That out of their maintenance Christian ministers should offer a portion to the Lord. (Verses 25-29.)

"The Levites had to give up the tenth of all the tithes they received to the priests; and the priests were to offer to Jehovah upon the altar a portion of the firstfruits, heave-offerings, and wave-offerings that were assigned to them. Consequently, as the whole nation was to make a practical acknow-

ledgment, in the presentation of the tithe and firstfruits, that it had received its hereditary property as a fief from the Lord its God, so the Levites, by their payment of the tenth to the priests, and the priests, by presenting a portion of their revenues upon the altar, were to make a practical confession that they had received all their revenues from the Lord their God, and owed Him praise and adoration in return (see *Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. pp. 43 sqq.).—*Keil and Del.* And the Christian minister, being liberally maintained by the Church, should be an example of liberality, honouring God and doing good to men with his temporal goods.

Application :—

1. Let the *Church* recognise and do its duty in relation to the ministry; and do it as unto the Lord, and then it will become a privilege.

2. Let *ministers* be faithful and diligent in the discharge of their duties, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You listen to a minister suspiciously because he is paid for preaching. Very good. I only insist upon your being consistent throughout; then what will happen? When you are drowning, you will ask the life-boat men whether they are paid for their services, and on being told that they live by their occupation, you will nobly perish in the deep. When your house is in flames, you will demand, notwithstanding the stifling smoke and cracking timbers, whether the fire-escape men are paid for their work, and on learning that they have a pound a week, you will embrace the flames with a martyr's rapture. Of course you will do so. But let me tell you that men who try to save life never can be paid! A man may pay for his coat, but he can never pay for the services which, by the blessing of God, redeem and sanctify his nature.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) All in the ministry, whatsoever their gifts be, are to be accepted; yea, though their gifts oftentimes be small and slender. True it is, they must all have some gifts to fit them to teach the people, but howsoever they be inferior to many others, yet for their office sake they must be regarded. I do not say, the people should depend upon them that are utterly ignorant and unlearned, but if meanly gifted in comparison of others, the people must not forsake them, neither wander from one Levite to another. Mark, therefore, that

ministers endued with a small, and yet a competent measure of gifts, may, notwithstanding, do unto God good service in the Church, and gain glory to His Name. He putteth His rich treasures in vessels, not of silver and gold, but of earth. Among the Apostles, it is to be thought that some had greater gifts than others; some were "the sons of thunder," and some "laboured more abundantly than others," no doubt according to the gifts they had received, yet all profitable to the Church. There is "a difference of gifts by the same Spirit," nevertheless all "given to profit withal" (1 Cor. xii. 4-7). And Paul saith, he spake with tongues more than others (1 Cor. xiv. 18). Experience teacheth this among ourselves, that many of mean gifts and little human learning, yet have been profitable teachers, and powerful instruments of much good in the Church of God, and gaining many to Him.—*W. Attersoll.*

(c) As the great principle of love to Christ will not allow the more opulent to give scantily, so neither will it permit the poorest to come before Him empty. It was one of the Divine enactments even of the legal dispensation—*None shall come before Me empty.* But that which was matter of law with the Israelite, the Christian will seize as a golden opportunity for evincing his love to Christ; and will bring, though it be only a grain of incense for an offering, or a leaf for that wreath of

praise and honour which the Church delights to lay at the feet of Christ. Whatever Scripture example others may profess to copy, he will select the example of the benevolent widow; and, while others content themselves with only admiring it, he will often reflect on its imitableness. Nor will the language of the Apostle be ever heard by him but as an address to himself,—“Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” “These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to those that are with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Agreeably with these sentiments, the man who, at one time, imagined that his poverty quite exempted him from the obligations of charity, and only rendered him an *object* of it, is no sooner made the partaker of grace, than he feels himself impelled to place some offering on the altar of Christian benevolence; and, with the ready eye and hand of affection, he soon detects, for this end, some small superfluity which can be retrenched, or some leisure time which can be profitably employed. And when his mite-like offerings, the fruit of hard self-denial, or of the sweat of his brow, is presented, nothing could inflict on his grateful heart a deeper wound than to see that offering rejected on the ground of its comparative insignificance, or of his supposed inability to give it. It is the offering of a sinner’s gratitude to a Saviour’s love, and heaven rejoices over the oblation.—*John Hurris, D D.*

(d) It is observable that Abraham and Jacob, on particular occasions, voluntarily

devoted to God—what afterwards became a Divine law for the Jewish nation—a *tenth* of their property. Without implying that their example has any obligation on us, we may venture to say that *one tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion for charity, for those who, with so doing, are able to support themselves and families. For the more opulent, and especially for those who have no families, a larger proportion would be equally easy. For some, one half would be too little; while, for others, a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care. Indeed, of many among the poor it may be said, that if they give *anything* they give their *share*, they cast in more than all their brethren.

But in determining the proportion to be made sacred to God, the Christian would surely rather exceed than fall short of the exact amount. *With whom* is he stipulating? *For whom* is he preparing the offering? Well may the recollection put every covetous thought to instant flight tinging his cheek with shame at the bare possibility of ingratitude; and impelling him to lay his all at the feet of Christ. Only let him think of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved him, only let him pass by the cross on his way to the altar of oblation, and his richest offering will appear totally unworthy of Divine acceptance. When Christ is the object to be honoured, the affection of the pardoned penitent cannot stop to calculate the value of its alabaster box of precious ointment—that is an act to which a Judas only can stoop—its chief and sole regret is that the unction has not a richer perfume and a higher value.—*Ibid.*

THE SUPREME CLAIMS OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

“All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine and of the wheat, the first-fruits of them they shall offer unto the Lord.”

God claims that the first and the best of man’s possessions shall be devoted unto Him.

1. Let us illustrate this claim.

1. *It applies to ourselves.* (1) He claims the best of our *persons*. He asks for our supreme love. “My son give Me thine heart.” “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” &c. (2) He claims the best of our *life*. Youth, with its freshness and enthusiasm and hope, is His. “They that seek Me early, shall find Me.”

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Manhood, with its maturity and strength and firmness and wisdom, is His. He summons men to His service,—“Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.” He condescends by His Apostle to entreat men to comply with His demands. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies,” &c. He will not be satisfied with the dregs of life, or with the fragments of life; He demands its first, and best, and all.

2. *It applies to our possessions.* (1) Our *time* He claims: not the remnant, after the claims of business and pleasure have all been met. He will be served in

all. His demand must be met first, or it is slighted. (2) Our *treasures* also He claims. Man of wealth! God lays His hand upon thy property, and calls it His own. Man of genius! God calls thee to lay thine eloquence and logic, thy poetry and philosophy, upon His altar. Consecrate thy gifts to Him. Even the friend or relative who is more dear than life to us, He asserts His claim upon, and we are bound to submit. He demanded the first-born of Israel as peculiarly His; and He may claim that our first-born, or our Benjamin, shall be entirely surrendered to His service here, or He may call them away to serve Him in higher spheres. The choicest of our possessions and of ourselves; all that we have and all that we are, He asserts His right to.

II. Let us enforce this claim.

We may do this on the following grounds:

1. *He has given to us whatever of good we possess.* "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." &c. "What hast thou that thou didst not

receive?" "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." "He giveth us richly all things to enjoy." He gives to us not absolutely, but as to stewards, &c. (a)

2. *He gave His Best to us.* How dear is His Son to Him! "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yet He gave Him to us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. And He gave Him to humiliation and want, to suffering and sorrow, to shame and death. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Having given His Best so freely to us—and *such a Best!* He surely has an indisputable right to our best. (b)

3. *If we have complied with His great demand, and given ourselves to Him, we shall not hesitate to give Him the best of our possessions.* If we have given our hearts fully to Him, we shall not keep back anything which He requires of us. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Think of the right which He has in all you possess. There is a sense in which no man can be said to possess an exclusive and irresponsible right in property, even in relation to his fellow-creatures. The land which he calls *his own*, is still guarded and watched over by a public law which would hold him responsible for its destruction. But if man thus claims a common interest in the most independent description of property, how much more does God hold a right in your possessions? He created them at first; and hence He has an original and supreme property in them. The world is His, and the fulness thereof. He continues them in existence every moment; and is thus every moment asserting afresh His original rights and establishing a new title to dominion over them. You have not brought into existence a single mite; all that you have done is to collect together what He had made ready to your hands. And whence did you derive the skill and ability to do this? "Thou must remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth." Hence He cautions you against the sin of "saying in your heart, my power, and the might of mine own hand, hath gotten me this wealth," lest you should fall into the consequent sin of forgetting that He is still the supreme Proprietor of all you possess. And

hence too He solemnly reminds you that your enjoyments are His *gifts*, only in the sense that you had nothing wherewith to purchase them, and not in the sense that He has given away His right in them: that they are deposited with you as His steward, not alienated from Him and vested in you as their master; that both they and you are His to do with as seemeth good in His sight.

The moment you lose sight, therefore, of His absolute right to all you possess, you are embezzling your Lord's property, and realizing the character of the unjust steward. You are provoking God to resume His own, and to transfer it to more faithful hands . . . Then hasten to His throne and acknowledge His right. Take all that you have into His presence, and dedicate it afresh to His service. Inscribe His blessed name on all your possessions.—*John Harris, D.D.*

(b) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "Herein is love!" The universe is crowded with proofs of His beneficence; but here is a proof which outweighs them all. How much He loved us we can never compute; we have no line with which to fathom, no standard with which to compare it, but He so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "Herein is love!" "Thanks

be unto God for His unspeakable gift." . . .

Nor is this all: He invites you to advance from the altar of sacrifice to the holiest of all within the veil;—in other words, He hath given you Christ that He may give you Himself. It was by wandering from Him that man first became selfish and unhappy. It was by losing Him that man was reduced to the necessity of looking for happiness in the creature. And, because no single kind of created good can satisfy the soul, man sought to accumulate all kinds, to monopolize every thing—he became selfish. But the blessed God, by offering to bring you back again to Himself, is offering to make you independent of all inferior things; to put you in possession of a good which shall enable you to look down with disdain on those things about which others are selfish; to lead you to an *infinite* good; a good, therefore, about which you need not be selfish, for were all the universe to share and enjoy it with you, it would still be an unexhausted infinite fulness of happiness.

Now let the most miserly individual come suddenly into the possession of great wealth, he would be conscious, at least for a short time, of kind and generous emotions. What then should be your emotions at discovering that, through Christ, you have found a God? And think, *what a God He is!* Enumerate His perfections; call up in your mind His exalted attributes; recollect some of the displays of His glory, the splendours of His throne, the amplitude of His dominions, the angelic orders of His kingdom, the richness of His gifts, the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for His people—and when your mind is filled, repeat to yourself the wondrous truth, "This God is my God for ever and ever." And, then, think what it is to have Him *for your God*: it is to have a real, participating, eternal interest in all that He is; to have Him for your "all in all"; to be "filled with all the fulness of God." Christian, are you aware of your wealth? have you yet awoken to a conscious possession of your infinite wealth? Do you not feel that you could give away the world itself as a trifle, while you stand and gaze at these infinite riches? All who have truly and fully returned to God have felt thus. They gazed on this glory and the world was eclipsed; they thought of it, and their heart became too large for earth; they reached after it, and the world fell from their hands, from their hearts. Having found the true source of happiness, they would fain have had all mankind to come and share it with them. And when He commanded them

to call the world to come to Him and be happy, they gave away everything, even life itself, in the noble employ, and from love to His name.—*Ibid.*

(c) It is related in Roman history, that when the people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ, though not so detailed and specific as this formula, is equally comprehensive. And do you not account these your best moments when you feel constrained to lament that your surrender comprehends no more? Can you recall to mind the way in which He has redeemed you, the misery from which He has snatched you, and the blessedness to which He is conducting you, without feeling that He has bought you a thousand times over? that you are His by the tenderest, weightiest obligations? And when you feel thus, how utterly impossible would it be for you at such a moment to stipulate for an exception in favour of your property!—to harbour a mental reservation in favour of *that!*

Can you think of the blessedness attending the act itself of dedication to God,—that you are wedding yourself to infinite riches, uniting yourself to infinite beauty, allying yourself to infinite excellence; giving yourself to God, and receiving God in return, so that henceforth all His infinite resources, His providence, His Son, His Spirit, His heaven, He Himself, all become yours, to the utmost degree in which you can enjoy them,—can you think of this without often repeating the act? without feeling that had you all the excellencies of a myriad of angels, His love would deserve the eternal devotion of the whole? Realize to your own mind the nature of Christian dedication, and the claims of Him who calls for it, and so far from giving penuriously to His cause, you will take every increase of your substance into His presence and devote it to His praise; you will regard every appeal which is made to your Christian benevolence as an appeal to that solemn treaty which made you His, and you will honour it accordingly; you will deeply feel the penury of all riches as an expression of your love to Him; Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, or the beasts thereof an offering large enough to satisfy the cravings of your love.—*Ibid.*

THE SUPREME PORTION OF MAN.

(Verse 20.)

"The Lord spake unto Aaron; . . .
I am thy part and thine inheritance
among the children of Israel."

"The possession of the priests and Levites did not consist in the revenues assigned to them by God, but in the

possession of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the same sense in which the tribe of Levi was the peculiar possession of Jehovah out of the whole of the people of possession, was Jehovah also the peculiar possession of Levi; and just as the other tribes were to live upon what was afforded by the land assigned them as a possession, Levi was to live upon what Jehovah bestowed upon it. And inasmuch as not only the whole land of the twelve tribes, with which Jehovah had enfeoffed them, but the whole earth belonged to Jehovah (Exod. xix. 5), He was necessarily to be regarded as the greatest possession of all, beyond which nothing greater is conceivable, and in comparison with which every other possession is to be regarded as nothing. Hence it was evidently the greatest privilege and highest honour to have Him for a portion and possession (*Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. p. 44). "For truly," as *Masius* writes (Com. on Josh.) "he who possesses God possesses all things; and the worship (*cultus*) of Him is infinitely fuller of delight, and far more productive, than the cultivation (*cultus*) of any soil"—*Keil and Del.*

God is revealed in His Word as the portion of all godly souls (see *Psa.* xvi. 5; *lxxiii.* 26; *cxix.* 57; *Lam.* iii. 24). This is the pre-eminent portion; no inheritance can be compared with this.

I. This portion is all-sufficient.

God is the portion of His people inasmuch as they possess His *mind*; He has revealed to them His thoughts and will concerning them. They possess His *heart*; He is profoundly and affectionately interested in their welfare; He loves them with an infinite love. Our position is that having Him they have all-sufficiency,—they have—

1. *His wisdom for their direction.* "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye."

2. *His power for their protection.* "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress," &c. (*Psa.* xci. 2-13). "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved," &c. (*Psa.* cxxi. 3-8).

3. *His providence for their supply.* "No good will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "My God shall supply all your need," &c.

4. *His grace for their spiritual support.* "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you," &c. (2 *Cor.* ix. 8).

5. *His Heaven for their home.* "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. (*John* xiv. 2, 3). He has begotten them "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled," &c. (1 *Pet.* iii. 5). "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them," &c. (*Rev.* xxi. 3, 4).

Well did Savonarola enquire, "What must not he possess who possesses the Possessor of all?" (*a*)

II. This portion is joy-inspiring.

In the realization of the presence and love of God there is the highest, holiest joy. "In Thy presence there is fulness of joy," &c. The perfection of the blessedness of heaven is in the full manifestation of His gracious presence. Possessing Him,—

1. The joy of *satisfied affections* is ours. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The heart loves God, and rejoices in being loved by Him who is infinitely true and beautiful and good, who changeth not, and who abideth for ever.

2. The joy of *sweet and sanctified fellowship* is ours. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The influence of this fellowship was well expressed by the two disciples at Emmaus,—“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us?” &c.

3. The joy of *true progress* is ours. Under the influence of His blessed presence all the capacities and faculties of our being are quickened into holy activity, and sustained in continuous progress. Realizing His presence and fellowship our being grows into likeness

to Him; and such growth is unspeakably joyous. Thus the conscious possession of God as our "part and inheritance" is the highest blessedness. (b)

"O this is life, and peace, and joy,
My God, to find Thee so—
Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear
And all Thy love to know."—*Bubier*.

III. This portion is inalienable.

Where shall we find a secure and lasting inheritance. Not in this world; not in anything material, or temporal. *Riches* are not inalienable; they "certainly make themselves wings; they fly away," &c. "Trust not in uncertain riches." *Pleasures* are not inalienable. The pleasures of this world can only be enjoyed for a season, and that a brief one. *Honours* are of very uncertain tenure; the hero of one day is frequently execrated the next. *Friends* are not abiding; sometimes they are lost to us

by our faithfulness; sometimes they are removed from us by death. Our *bodily health* is precarious. Even our *mental sanity and strength* we cannot claim as unchangeably, and for ever ours. There is but one immutable and inalienable "part and inheritance," that is God. He changes not; "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He abideth for ever; He loveth for ever. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Even death cannot deprive us of this inheritance. "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Death rather makes our inheritance more fully and perfectly ours; it introduces us to a more complete and constant realization of His presence. After death "we shall see Him as He is." "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

Is this "part and inheritance" ours?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We have a right, each of us—if we are in Christ—we have a right to expect this sufficiency, because it is promised in the Bible. We gather it from the declarations of Scripture. Listen to them, they are yours. "Thus saith the Lord who created thee, O Jacob, who formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by *thy name*." What a beautiful thought that is! Just get the meaning and beauty out of it. How many thousands of believers, thousands upon thousands of believers, have there been in the world from the beginning of its history until now—thousands in the patriarchal ages who looked through the glass, and who saw, dimly, the streak of the morning in the distance, and, even with that streak of light, were glad—thousands, in the prophetic times, who discerned it in the brightness of a nearer vision—thousands who looked in its full-orbed lustre, when Christ came into the world—thousands upon thousands, since that time, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—thousands who are now upon the earth, working out their salvation with fear and trembling—thousands upon thousands that shall come into the Church in the time of its millennial glory, when the gates of it shall not be shut day nor night, because the porter shall have no chance of shutting them, the people crowd in so fast. Now, get all that mass of believers, past, present, and future, a company that no man can number;

and to each of them God comes in this promise, and says, "I have called thee by thy name, I know all about thee,"—that is, I have not a merely vague, indefinite knowledge of thee; as an individual believer I know thy name, I could single thee out of millions, I could tell the world all thy solitudes, and all thy apprehensions, and all thy hopes, and all thy sorrows—"I have called thee by thy name." Oh, precious promise! Take it to your hearts. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers—deeper than the waters—"they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee."—Listen again. "The Lord God is a sun and shield"—light and protection; that nearly embraces all our wants—"He will give grace and glory." Is there anything left out? And if there are any of you so perversely clever and so mischievously ingenious in multiplying arguments in favour of your own despair, that you can conceive of some rare and precious blessing that is not wrapped up either in grace or glory—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "Cast all thy care" "Nay," the rebel heart says, "there is some little of it I must bear myself; something that has reference to the heart's bitterness, that it alone knoweth;

or to the heart's deep, dark sorrow, with which no stranger intermeddles—that I must bear myself." "Cast *all* thy care upon Me, for I care for thee." What! distrustful still? Can you not take God at His word? Hark! He condescends to expostulate with you upon your unbelief: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord"—now often have you said that in the time of your sorrow! you know you have—"My way is hid from the Lord, my judgment is passed over from my God. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint." He does not merely take his swoon away and leave him weakly; He makes him strong. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength". . . . Brethren, are you in Christ? Then all that belongs to the covenant is yours. Yours is the present heritage, yours is the future recompense of reward.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

(b) Haws, that are for hogs, grow upon every hedge; but roses, that are for men, only grow in pleasant gardens. Though many have counterfeit jewels, yet there are but a few that have the true diamond; though many have their earthly portions, yet there are but a few that have God for their portion. . . . Why have the saints in heaven more joy and delight than the saints on earth, but because they have a clearer and a fuller knowledge of their interest and propriety in God than the others have? The knowledge of a man's propriety in God is the comfort of comforts. Propriety makes every comfort a pleasurable comfort, a delightful comfort. When a man walks in a fair meadow, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a pleasant garden, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a fruitful corn-field, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a stately habitation, and can write *mine* upon it, and into a rich mine, and can write *mine* upon it; oh! how doth it please him? how doth it

delight him? how doth it joy and rejoice him? Of all words, this word *meum* is the sweetest and the comfortablest. Ah! when a man can look upon God and write *meum*; when he can look upon God, and say, "This God is my portion;" when he can look upon God, and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28), how will all the springs of joy rise in his soul! Oh, who can but joy to be owner of that God who fills heaven and earth with His fulness? who can but rejoice to have Him for his portion, in having Whom he hath all things, in having Whom he can want nothing? The serious thoughts of our propriety in God will add much sweet to all our sweets; yea, it will make every bitter sweet."—*Brooks.*

(c) None of your dearest and most cherished loves are at all worthy to sit upon the throne of your heart—far down in the scale must they be placed, when the God who gave them to you is brought into comparison. That broad bosom of your beloved husband beats fondly and faithfully, but when death lays it low, as ere long it must, how wretched will be your condition if you have not an everlasting Comforter upon whose breast to lean! Those dear little sparkling eyes, which are like stars in the heaven of your social joy, if these be the gods of your idolatry, how wretched will you be when their brightness is dim, and the mother's joy is mouldering back to dust! Happy is he who hath an everlasting joy and an undying comfort; and there is none in this respect like unto the God of Jeshurun. There would be fewer broken hearts if hearts were more completely the Lord's. We should have no rebellious spirits if, when we had our joys, we used them lawfully, and did not too much build our hopes upon them. All beneath the moon will wane. Everything on these shores ebbs and flows like the sea. Everything beneath the sun will be eclipsed. You will not find in time that which is only to be discovered in eternity, namely an immutable and unfailing source of comfort.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XIX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

"Ordinances respecting purification from the uncleanness of death."

The association of death with sin (Gen. ii. 17) sufficiently explains the ideas on which these ordinances are based. The principle that death and all pertaining to it, as being the manifestation and result of sin, are defiling, and so lead to interruption of the living relationship between God and

His people, is not now introduced for the first time, nor is it at all peculiar to the Mosaic law. It was, on the contrary, traditional amongst the Israelites from the earliest times, is assumed in various enactments made already (cf. v. 2; ix. 6, sqq.; Lev. x. 1, 7; xi. 8, 11, 24; xxi. 1, sqq.), and is traceable in various forms amongst many nations of antiquity. . . .

The rites of purifying prescribed amongst these various nations have points of similarity to those laid down in this chapter; and indeed sprinklings and washings would naturally form a part in them all (cf. ch. viii. 7) Moses then adopted here, as elsewhere, existing and ancient customs, with significant additions, as helps in the spiritual education of his people.

The ordinance was probably given at this time because the plague, which happened (xvi. 46-50) about the matter of Korah, had spread the defilement of death so widely through the camp as to seem to require some special measures of purification, more particularly as the deaths through it were in an extraordinary manner the penalty of sin. Occasion is accordingly taken to introduce a new ordinance on the whole subject, which might serve to re-assure the affrighted people at the time, supply a ready means of relief from this sort of uncleanness for the future, and by the typical character of its new elements, provide a vehicle for important instruction as to a more real Atonement afterwards to be revealed."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 2. *The ordinance of the law.* Keil and Del.: "A '*statute of instruction*,' or law-statute. This combination of the two words commonly used for law and statute, which is only met with again in chap. xxxi. 21, and there, as here, in connection with a rule relating to purification from the uncleanness of death, is probably intended to give emphasis to the design of the law about to be given, to point it out as one of great importance."

Red heifer "פָּרָה is not a cow generally, but a young cow, a heifer, δάμαλις (lxx.), *juvenca*, between the calf and the full-grown cow. . . . The sacrificial animal was not to be a bullock, as in the case of the ordinary sin-offering of the congregation (Lev. iv. 14), but a female, because the female sex is the bearer of life (Gen. iii. 20), a פָּרָה, i.e., *lit.*, the fruit-bringing; and of a red colour, not because the blood-red colour points to

sin, but as the colour of the most 'intensive life,' which has its seat in the blood, and shows itself in the red colour of the face (the cheeks and lips); and one 'upon which no yoke had ever come,' i.e., whose vital energy had not yet been crippled by labour under the yoke. Lastly, like all the sacrificial animals, it was to be uninjured and free from faults, inasmuch as the idea of representation, which lay at the foundation of all the sacrifices, but more especially of the sin-offerings, demanded natural sinlessness and original purity, quite as much as imputed sin and transferred uncleanness. Whilst the last-mentioned prerequisite showed that the victim was well fitted for bearing sin, the other attributes indicated the fulness of life and power in their highest forms, and qualified it to form a powerful antidote to death. As thus appointed to furnish a re-agent against death and mortal corruption, the sacrificial animal was to possess throughout, viz., in colour, in sex, and in the character of its body, the fulness of life in its greatest freshness and vigour."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Unto Eleazar.* Not unto Aaron, the high priest, because the ordinance was closely connected with death and the uncleanness arising therefrom, and such uncleanness the high priest was commanded to avoid (Lev. xxi. 11).

Without the camp, because the defilement was regarded as transferred to the sacrificial animal.

Slay her. It was not the business of the priest to slay her, but she was to be slain "before his face."

Verse 4. *Sprinkle of her blood directly, &c.* The priest was to sprinkle the blood in the direction of the front of the tabernacle.

Seven times. Seven indicating perfection. Comp. Lev. iv. 6, 17.

Verse 5. *Burn the heifer, &c.* "The defilement, being external, extended to the whole body of the animal: hence the propriety of burning the victim entire and everything connected with it."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 6. *Cedar-wood and hyssop, &c.* "In this sacrifice, the blood, which was generally poured out at the foot of the altar, was burned along with the rest, and the ashes to be obtained were impregnated with the substance thereof. But in order still further to increase the strength of these ashes, which were already well fitted to serve as a powerful antidote to the corruption of death, as being the incorruptible residuum of the sin-offering which had not been destroyed by the fire, cedar-wood was thrown into the fire, as the symbol of the incorruptible continuance of life; and hyssop, as the symbol of purification from the corruption of death; and scarlet-wool, the deep red of which shadowed forth the strongest vital energy—(see Lev. xiv. 6)—so that the ashes might be regarded as the quintessence of all that purified and strengthened life, refined and sublimated by the fire." (*Leyrer.*)—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 7-10. All who had to do with the heifer or her ashes became unclean until the evening, because of the defilement of sin and death which had been transferred to her. Comp. Lev. xvi. 21, 22, 26.

Verse 11. *Unclean seven days.* "How low does this lay man! He who touched a dead *beast* was only unclean for *one day* (Lev. xi. 24, 27, 39); but he who touches a dead *man* is unclean for *seven days*. This was certainly designed to mark the peculiar impurity of man,

and to show his sinfulness—*seven* times worse than the vilest animal! O thou son of the morning, how art thou fallen!"—*Adam Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 17. *Running water shall be put, &c.* Heb. as in margin: "Living waters shall be given." "The waters of wells and fountains are called living waters, and are very much esteemed" (Lev. xiv. 5, 50; Num. xix. 17).—*John Jahn, D.D.*

Verse 19. *On the third day and on the seventh day.* The double purification indicates the depth of the defilement which was to be removed.

Verse 20. *That soul shall be cut off, &c.* This is repeated here from verse 13, to render the warning more impressive. Some interpret the phrase as meaning cut off by death; others, cut off by exclusion from the political and religious privileges of the nation. "In Exodus xxxi. 14, 15, *death* is prescribed as the manner of *cutting off* from among the people the Sabbath-breaker; see also xxxv. 2. In Lev. xvii. 4, *cutting off* from among the people is the penalty of killing a clean beast and not bringing it as an offering; but in xxiv. 17, 'He that killeth any *man* shall surely be *put to death*.' (See also Exod. xxi. 12; Num. xxxv. 31.) In Lev. xviii. 29, *cutting off* is the punishment for unnatural crime; in Exod. xxii. 19, *death*. So that it would appear as if cutting off generally, but not always, implied death at man's hand."—*H. Alford, D.D.*, on Genesis xvii. 14.

THE ORDINANCE OF THE RED HEIFER; A PARABLE OF THE POLLUTION OF SIN AND THE DIVINE METHOD OF CLEANSING THEREFROM.

(Whole Chapter.)

Let us consider—

I. The defiling nature of sin.

On this point the chapter suggests—

1. *Sin is defiling in its nature.* A dead body and everything pertaining thereto are represented as polluting those who came near to them. Death, and the corruption arising from it, are set forth as a Parable of sin and its influence. Most of the deaths which occurred in the

wilderness were literally the punishment of sin. Thousands died by the plague on account of their rebellion (chap. xvi. 49). The whole of one generation, with very few exceptions, was doomed to die in the desert because of unbelief (chap. xiv. 28-30). Thus death would speak to them of the sin which caused it. Sin is a polluting thing. It defiles the soul even in its purest affections; it corrupts

its principles ; it poisons its motives, &c. No one can have anything to do with sin without incurring contamination.

2. *The defiling power of sin is of great virulence.* "The extreme virulence of the uncleanness is taught by the regulations that the victim should be wholly consumed outside the camp, whereas generally certain parts were consumed on the altar, and the offal only outside the camp (comp. Lev. iv. 11, 12); that the blood was sprinkled *towards* and not *before* the sanctuary; that the officiating minister should be neither the high-priest, nor yet simply a priest, but the *presumptive* high priest, the office being too impure for the first, and too important for the second; that even the priest and the person that burnt the heifer were rendered unclean by reason of their contact with the victim; and, lastly, that the purification should be effected, not simply by the use of water, but of water mixed with ashes, which served as a lye, and would therefore have peculiarly cleansing properties." The virulence of the uncleanness is also manifest in the ways in which it was incurred. If a person entered a tent, wherein anyone had died, before it was purified (ver. 14), or touched the bone of a dead man, or a grave (ver. 16), he became unclean; and if he, before his purification, touched anyone, the person so touched also became unclean (ver. 22). We have in this a striking parable of the virulence of the contagion of sin. Association with sinners is perilous. Man's safety is in loathing sin and shunning it in all its forms. (a).

3. *The defiling power of sin is widespread.* Death was present in the tent, and in the open field. The Israelite that would avoid its contamination had need to exercise constant watchfulness. Sin surrounds us. In this world the moral atmosphere is infected with it. The danger of contamination is great and constant. In our amusements, in literature, in society, in business, in politics, in every department of life, sin is present and active.

II. The necessity of cleansing from sin.

The legislation of this chapter was based upon that necessity. If any person failed to cleanse himself from the pollution of death, he was "cut off from among the congregation," he was excluded from the society, and deprived of the privileges of his nation. If sin be not cleansed from the soul, it will prove its ruin. The presence and blessing of God are indispensable to our spiritual well being. But sin separates the soul from God (comp. Isa. lix. 2; Col. i. 21), and so cuts it off from the great Source of life and light. Sin excludes from the fellowship of the people of God. Generally and as a rule it does so in this world; the Church of Christ should be pure, and striving for perfect purity. Sin invariably and infallibly excludes from Heaven (Rev. xxi. 27). We must get rid of sin or be utterly undone.

III. The provision for cleansing from sin.

Regarding this as illustrated by the arrangements for cleansing those who were defiled by death, we notice—

1. *It is Divine in its origin.* God instituted this cleansing ordinance of the Red Heifer; "the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance," &c. The provision for spiritual cleansing is of God. The idea of getting rid of sin came from Him. The sacrifice by which it is put away He bestowed. The agencies which are used in the work He instituted. He gave His Son, His Spirit, Gospel ministries, &c. Human salvation is of Divine origin.

2. *It involves the sacrifice of the most perfect life.* The directions concerning the sacrificial victim, given in verse 2, as to its sex, its colour, and its non-acquaintance with the yoke, all point to intensity and fullness of life and power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 2). Further, it was to be perfect: "wherein is no blemish." Moreover the "cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet," which were burnt with the heifer, indicated strength and continuance of life, and

purifying power (see *Explanatory Notes* on verse 6). All this clearly points to the perfect sacrifice of the perfect life of Jesus Christ. His was the pre-eminent life. "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." His was the perfect life. "He offered Himself without spot to God." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (b). By His self-sacrifice, which exhibits the most perfect obedience and utter devotion to the will of God, and the fullest, sublimest expression of the love of God, Christ cleanseth the souls of men from sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Here is the all-sufficient and the only true provision for purifying the soul of man from moral defilement. (c)

3. *It is invariable in its efficacy.* "He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean" (verse 12). "And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," &c. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 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?" Who shall say "how much more"? The blood of Christ cleanseth completely from all sin all who seek Him in faith.

IV. The application of the provision for cleansing from sin.

The Israelite who was defiled by the dead must purify himself with the "water of separation." "A clean person must take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day," in order that he may be purified. If this were not done, the existence of the provision for cleansing, so far from profiting him, would rather be the occasion of condemnation; he refuses the means of cleansing provided for him, and he "shall be cut off from among the congregation" (verse 20). And if Christ be not received by faith He will profit us nothing. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." If we believe not on Him, we shall not only not be cleansed and saved from sin, but shall be condemned for unbelief (comp. John iii. 18. 36). On Him let us believe; for He alone can cleanse and save us. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The impious lives of the wicked are as contagious as the most fearful plague that infects the air. When the doves of Christ lie among such pots, their yellow feathers are sullied. You may observe that in the oven the fine bread frequently hangs upon the coarse; but the coarse very seldom adheres to the fine. If you mix an equal portion of sour vinegar and sweet wine together, you will find that the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine sweeten the vinegar. That is a sound body that continues healthy in a pest-house. It is a far greater wonder to see a saint maintain his purity among sinners, than it is to behold a sinner becoming pure among saints. Christians are not always like fish, which retain their freshness in a salt sea; or like the rose, which preserves its sweetness among the most noisome weeds; or like the fire, which burns the hottest when the season is coldest. A good man was once heard to lament, "that as often as he went into the company of the wicked, he returned less a man

from them than he was before he joined with them." The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like persons who are much exposed to the sun, insensibly tanned.—*William Secker.*

(b) When you contemplate the Saviour, you find all the virtues enshrined in Him; other men are stars, but He is a constellation, nay, He is the whole universe of stars gathered into one galaxy of splendour; other men are gems and jewels, but He is the crown imperial where every jewel glitters; other men furnish but a part of the picture, and the background is left, or else there is something in the foreground that is but roughly touched, but He furnishes the whole; not the minutest portion is neglected; the character is perfect and matchless. If I look at Peter, I admire his courage; if I look at Paul, I wonder at his industry and devotedness to the cause of God; if I look at John, I see the loveliness and gentleness of his bearing; but when I look to the Saviour, I am not so much attracted by

any one particular virtue as by the singular combination of the whole. There are all the spices—the stacte, the onycha, and the galbanum, and the pure frankincense; the varied perfumes combine to make up one perfect confection.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For an illustration on the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, see p. 141.

(c) It is not because God is indifferent to moral qualities that He loves sinners. His love is medicinal. His life is a world-nursing life. He cleanses whom He loves, that He may love yet more. God's nature is infinitely healing and cleansing. They that are brought in contact with the Divine heart feel it by the growth that instantly begins in them. And His being is so capacious that all the wants of all sinful creatures, through endless ages, neither exhaust nor weary Him. Ten thousand armies might bathe in the ocean, and neither sully its purity, nor exhaust its cleansing power. But the ocean is but a cup by the side of God's heart. Realms and orbs may bathe and rise into purity; no words will ever hint or dimly paint the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. It is love that pours, endless and spontaneous, just as sunlight does—simply because God is love. By the side of Christ, a mother's love—that on earth shines high above all other, as a star above night candles—is in comparison like those glimmering, expiring stars when the sun shines them into radiant eclipse. In the bosom of such a God there is salvation for every one that will trust Him. And what chances of safety or purity are there for

those who reject Him; who light their own candle, and walk in its pale glimmer, rather than in the noonday glory of God in Christ?—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin, and he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed; but when he takes it out again, if his eye be clear, he says, "Alas! it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better; I must add a more pungent salt, I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart." He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time as he takes it out his own eyes become more keen, and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before. Then goeth he and taketh unto himself nitre and much soap, but when he has used it all, when he has gone to his church, when he has gone to his chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done I know not what to prove the genuineness of his repentance, ah! the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be, let him do what he may. Yet what your repentings cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, sinner, and that in one single day.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For illustrations on the appropriation of the provision see pp. 142, 190.

THE LAW OF THE RED HEIFER APPLIED.

(Whole Chapter.)

The symbols of the Jewish worship were instituted at special *times*. God did not put it forth as a system. It is like a house to which have been added rooms and offices and hall as the growth of the family has demanded more scope in which to maintain new and higher thoughts. One of such additions is found in the ordinance promulgated in this chapter. It had its origin in the wish to assuage the vivid fears of the people that they were not able to go near to the tabernacle and live. They had seen a terrible punishment overtake the men who had attempted to interfere with the positions held by Moses and Aaron: they had been awed when a sudden destruction was smiting down thousands in the camp: and they had been made conscious that their sins

rendered them utterly unfitted to be near the Holy One of Israel. But mercy has exhaustless remedies for human defilement. Aaron and the Levites are appointed to bear the sins of the holy things; a red unspotted heifer is commanded to be slain and burned, and its ashes to be used as a means of purifying the flesh from the uncleanness which hindered approach to the Lord of glory. Thus the new symbol is instituted when the people have become conscious that social impurity, impurity shared through and with others, as well as personal transgression, dooms to death. Wider views of what they need towards God cause Him to send out the beams of a light which is to dispel every doubt and fear.

In what ways did this ceremony lead

into such confidence? What were the letters by which the people could spell out God's thoughts of peace?

The chief lessons taught by the ordinance of the Red Heifer seem to be embraced in four propositions:—

I. Liability for social evil.

"All the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron" (chap. xvi. 41, sqq.). Might not the survivors reason thus: "If those who have died did wrong we have been equally wrong; if we are not erased from the roll of the living, there is, notwithstanding, an evil chargeable to us; partakers in a like offence we are worthy of a like condemnation; the evil has not exhausted itself on them, and we are liable in some form for their calamities; we cannot in this state of pollution go into the presence of God—is there not needed a purification for those social ills whose last and most affecting sign is death?" A very similar feeling of liability might be impressed on the men of our own generation. There are houses in narrow streets, badly ventilated, and steaming with the odours of dirt-heaps and cess-pools. Warnings have been given, that such a position is laid open to dangerous attacks on health and life; but the warnings are trifled with or disbelieved. Then comes the "noisome pestilence." Young and old, strong and feeble, degraded and decent, are swept into the abyss of the dead. . . . Viewing those painful scenes, could just men, who had neglected to do as was advised, escape from self-censure and condemnation?

II. The ignominy of death.

The presence of, or contact with, the signs of the death of mankind, separated from communion with God in His sanctuary. Consciously or unconsciously no one could always avoid these. The human body becomes a loathsome thing by the stroke of death, and we are fain to bury it out of our sight. There is reason for believing that death is the openest sign of ignominy in our nature. . . . Only without us and above us, in the death of Christ Jesus, and in His rising from the dead, is that which

shows, along with the fearfulness of sin, the means of its removal.

III. Freedom from the consequences of sin is by application of a prepared remedy.

The several parts in the process of preparing the water of cleansing bear emblems to show what God requires for freeing from sin. The slaying of the Heifer, and the sprinkling of its blood, laid bare the foundation principles that "it is the blood which maketh atonement for the soul," that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." . . . Uncleaness incurred from the dead prevents approach to the holy Lord God. Separated from His presence on earth is a forecasting of an eternal separation—"that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (verse 13). But He has a remedy for this too. He provides means of purification, and thus of renewed access to Himself. Not only is the blood of bulls and goats shed, but the ashes of a heifer is also to "sprinkle the unclean, in order to sanctify to the purifying of the flesh," and render fit for all the privileges of acceptable worship. "He shall purify himself," &c. (verse 12). It is not enough that there are ashes, and water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop at hand; the persons needing the removal of the dangerous uncleaness must get those materials applied in the prescribed manner.

The remedy was not dependent for its efficacy upon its earthly aspects. Human hands made it ready and conveyed it to the recipients; but the sole power to take away the defilement lay in that of God which was in it. It signified to the people that there was another sphere than that in which they moved, and in which they were rendered unworthy to dwell in the Lord's presence; that they must *stand by faith* amid the workings of God. Did the eyes of any amongst them catch a glimpse of another manifestation of the love of God, in which ONE should be made righteousness and sanctification as well as redemption—a coming sacrifice whose blood should be shed, not only to be a "propitiation for sins," but also to

be "sprinkled on the conscience to purge it from dead works to serve the living God?" . . . Jesus has died, &c. The ransom price for our lives has not to be paid—it is paid, &c. "The gift of God is eternal life," &c.

IV. To be without fitness for standing before God acceptably is inexcusable and irretrievable.

Once purified did not do away with the necessity of being purified again when another defilement had been incurred. The new impurity must be removed by a new application, and the cleansing remedy was constantly available (verses 9, 10).

What could justify neglect of this remedy?—*D. G. Watt, M.A.*

THE RED HEIFER AN ANALOGUE OF THE CHRIST.

(Verses 1-10.)

Much has been written on the Red Heifer as a type of Christ which appears to us to be frivolous, and in no sense worthy of regard as an exposition of this portion of Scripture, because of the absence of Scriptural evidence that such things were intended in the ordinance. But we are warranted in looking for an analogy between the Red Heifer and the Christ by the comparison between them instituted in Heb. ix. 13, 14. It appears to us that the Red Heifer is an analogue of the Christ—

I. In its characteristics.

These may be classified thus:

1. *Fulness of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, upon which never came yoke." "The sex of the victim (female, and hence life-giving); its red colour (the colour of blood, the seat of life); its unimpaired vigour (never having borne the yoke); its youth; all these symbolised life in its fulness and freshness as the antidote of death." What Divine fulness of life there was in Jesus Christ! "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "I am He that liveth," or "the living One." He is the great antagonist of death and giver of life. See Acts ii. 24; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xv. 22; John x. 10; Col. iii. 3, 4.

2. *Perfection of life.* "A Red Heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish." "Christ offered Himself without spot to God." He was "the Holy One and the Just;" "tempted in all points like as

we are, yet without sin;" "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" "Christ . . . a lamb without blemish and without spot." (a)

II. In the treatment to which it was subjected.

1. *The heifer was sacrificed.* "One shall slay her before" the face of the priest. She was regarded as bearing the uncleanness of the people, and was slain as "a sin-offering" (חַטָּאת, A. V., "a purification for sin," verses 9, 17) for the people. Christ "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (comp. Isa. liii. 5-9; John vi. 51; Rom. v. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 Thess. v. 10; Heb. x. 10). (b)

2. *The heifer was sacrificed "without the camp."* It was taken outside the camp because it was regarded as bearing the uncleanness for which it was to be sacrificed. Our Lord was crucified "without the gate" of Jerusalem, between two thieves, as if He were the vilest of men (comp. John xix. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 11, 12).

3. *The heifer was completely consumed.* "One shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn." The sacrifice of Christ was unreserved. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He offered Himself wholly, body, soul, and spirit, to God, for the redemption of man from sin.

III. In the purpose for which it was designed.

1. *The red heifer was intended to*

cleansed from ceremonial defilement. The ashes of the heifer were to be put in spring water; this water was to be sprinkled upon the unclean for their purification (comp. Heb. ix. 13, 14). Christ "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

2. *The ashes of the heifer were efficacious for this purpose* (verses 12, 19). The efficacy was not in the ashes themselves, but in the appointment of God, and the faith and obedience of His people. "How much more shall the blood of Christ?" &c. He can cleanse from sins of deepest dye, and make the soul radiant in purity (comp. 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5; vii. 14; Eph. v. 26, 27). (c)

3. *The ashes of the heifer were amply sufficient for this purpose.*

(1) As to number. They were intended for all the congregation of Israel and for the stranger sojourning among them (ver. 10), and were enough for all. Christ "died for all," and His salvation is sufficient for all, free for all, offered to all (1 John ii. 2).

(2) As to time. The Jews say that the ashes of this heifer served till the

captivity, or nearly a thousand years. This statement is very questionable; but they would certainly last for a long time, as it was necessary to use very little at a time. Moreover, ashes are very incorruptible; so they symbolise the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. "He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. . . . For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
 Shall never lose its power,
 Till the whole ransomed Church of God
 Be saved to sin no more."—*Cowper.* (d)

4. *The ashes of the heifer had to be personally applied to be efficacious.* The unclean person must be sprinkled with "the water of separation" on the third day and on the seventh day for his cleansing. Without this, the cleansing element was of no avail to him. So Christ must be accepted by faith, or His sacrificial life and death will profit us nothing.

Conclusion.

We are all defiled by sin: let us seek by faith to be cleansed by "the precious blood of Christ."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In Jesus Christ there was no sin. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His humanity was without stain or flaw, pure and perfect as on the day when "God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good." In Him there were no rebellious insurgences of appetite and passion, no disorderly conflict between the lower nature and the higher, but the flesh was in absolute subjection to the spirit, and His whole mind and heart in entire and strictest harmony with the mind and heart of God. So that there He stood, the very "beauty of holiness," the living human image of God; the perfect embodiment of the Divine ideal of humanity; of all mankind the only genuine Man. The Man on whom all eyes and hearts were to rest and fasten.—*J. H. Smith, M.A.*

(b) As the Son of Man, he took our place under the law, and stood representatively in our stead, that He might satisfy the law in our behalf; that he might render it perfect obedience, and offer Himself a public substitutionary victim to its offended majesty, redeeming us from its curse by "being made a curse for us." He thus "suffered for us," "the just for the unjust," suffered for us, not

merely beneficially, as a nursing-mother may suffer for her child, or a soldier for his country's good, but *substitutionally and penally*, in our place and stead. His person was substituted for our persons, His sufferings for our sufferings. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." He, the sinless, consented to be treated as a sinner, that we sinners might be treated as sinless. In this great, this public capacity, then, He, the Man, officially suffered, and officially died. There on the cross He hung, spotlessly pure and perfect, agonising under the imputation of the world's guilt, the sinless substitute for man's sinful race, the substitutionary Man, the representative sinner! There He hung, a voluntary victim to the violated majesty of the law, and in Him mankind representatively died. "For we thus judge," says St. Paul, "that if one died for all, then all died."—*Ibid.*

(c) "We have some little difficulty," said a scientific lecturer, "with the iron dyes; but the most troublesome of all are Turkey red rags. You see I have dipped this into my

solution, its red is paler, but it is still strong. If I steep it long enough to efface the colour entirely, the fibre will be destroyed; it will be useless for our manufacture. How, then, are we to dispose of our red rags? We leave their indelible dye as it is, and make them into blotting paper. Perhaps you wonder why your writing-pad is red. Now you know the reason."

What a striking illustration of the power of "the precious blood of Christ" to change and cleanse is furnished by the above explanation. The Spirit of God led the prophet Isaiah to write, not "though your sins be as blue as the sky, or as green as the olive leaf, or as black as night." He chose the very colour which modern science, with all its appliances, finds to be indestructible. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—*Sunday Teacher's Treasury*.

(d) I have found it an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think, that although it has been flowing on for six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want. And when I have watched the rise of the sun as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or, in a sky draped with golden curtains, sprang up from his ocean-bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and planted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvest of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliantly as ever; his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his natural floods of light less full, for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these but images of the fulness that is in Christ? Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing! For when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness, or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fulness of Christ shall flow on throughout eternity, in

the bliss of the redeemed.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

Have we outlived the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and is the tale of His Cross a sound from which all the music has gone for ever? We need the sun to-day as we have ever needed it; the wind is still the breath of health to our dying bodies; still we find in the earth the bread without which we cannot live; these are our friends of whom we never tire; can it be that the only thing of which we are weary is God's answer to our souls' deepest need? Shall we keep everything but the blood of Christ? Shall the Cross go, and the sun be left? Verily as the sun withdrew at sight of that Cross and for the moment fled away, he would shine never more were that sacred tree hewn down by furious man. The blood of Christ, it is the fountain of immortality! The blood of Christ, it makes the soul's summer warm and beautiful! The blood of Christ, it binds all heaven, with its many mansions and throngs without number, in holy and indissoluble security! My soul, seek no other stream in which to drown thy leprosy! My lips, seek no other song with which to charge your music! My hands, seek no other task with which to prove your energy! I would be swallowed up in Christ. I would be nailed to His Cross. I would be baptized with His baptism. I would quail under the agony of His pain that I might triumph with Him in the glory of His resurrection. O my Jesus! My Saviour! Thine heart did burst for me, and all its sacred blood flowed for the cleansing of my sin. I need it all I need it every day. I need it more and more. O search out the inmost recesses of my poor wild heart, and let Thy blood remove every stain of evil.

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Mighty Saviour! repeat all Thy miracles by taking away the guilt and torment of my infinite sin.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE RED HEIFER.

(Verses 2, 3.)

The particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and His work, is just this—the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of believers. In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark—

I. That even the true Israelite, the true believer in Christ, is the subject of daily defilement.

We who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the Divine judgment seat. But in the matter of sanctification we are not, as yet, delivered from evil.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact that *we do actually come into contact with sin*, here imaged in the corruption of death (verse 11). We actually touch that dead thing, sin, by overt

acts of transgression. We are in close connection with sin, because sin is in ourselves. Hence we need to be constantly cleansed.

Moreover, we get defilement *from companionship with sinners* (ver. 14). The Great Physician could walk the leper house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us. It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened therewith, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness. Hence we need daily cleansing, &c.

One reason why we are so constantly defiled is *our want of watchfulness* (ver. 15). You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under heaven without receiving defilement, if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness; but it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrow wounds us.

Sin is so desperately evil, that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean (ver. 16). Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul—a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said, that a thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin, &c.

Sin even when it is not seen, defiles, ... a man was defiled who touched a grave. Oh, how many graves there are of sin—things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable, and internally abominable! Many of our customs are but the graves of sin, &c.

The Jew was *in danger in the open fields* (ver. 16). You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. We are in daily danger of defilement.

II. That a purification has been provided.

If it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine. The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord, &c. You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification, for the unclean person had no right to any of these. The ultimate result in the Israelites' case would have been death. And certainly if you and I, though believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us still the daily defilement of sin, ere long it must end in spiritual death.

The Lord must have provided a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were His wisdom, where His love?* He has provided for everything else. But if this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, a failure would have occurred in a most important point. The love, the wisdom of God demands that there should be such a purification supplied.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this. There is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. It is inexhaustible. "If any man sin, we have an advocate." He is constantly an intercessor.

The work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case, for what is His business but constantly to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us; constantly to quicken, to enlighten, and to comfort?

Facts show that there is purification for present guilt. The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David. Peter. *We have tried it ourselves*, &c.

III. The red heifer sets forth, in a most admirable manner, the daily purification for daily sin.

It was a *heifer*. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel—for the whole Church of God; and the Church is always looked upon in Scripture as being the spouse—the bride—always feminine. It was a *red* heifer. Probably the red was chosen from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of

blood, which was always associated with atonement, and putting away of sin. When we think of Christ we always associate Him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. It was a heifer *without spot*. Our Christ had no spot of original sin, no blemish of actual sin. This red heifer was one *whereon never came yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us. "Lo, I come," &c. *The children of Israel provided it*. What for? That every man, and every woman, and every child might say, "I have a share in that heifer," &c. Christ shed His blood for all His people, and they have all a part and all an interest in Him.

There is yet to be observed *what was done with it*. First, *it was taken out of the camp*. Christ suffered without the camp. The red cow *was slain*. A dying Saviour that takes away our sin. *Eleazar dipped his finger in the warm blood*, and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection. Jesus has perfectly presented His bloody sacrifice. All this does not purify. Atonement precedes purification. They then took the body of the slain heifer . . . they consumed it utterly, &c. This sets forth the pangs of the Saviour, how God accounted Him unclean; how He was compelled to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, *the priest threw in cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet*. According to

Maimonides, the cedar-wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop, and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet; so what was seen by the people was the scarlet, which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment—"Though your sins be as scarlet," &c. Everything still continues of the red colour, to set forth atonement for sin. Inside this scarlet there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual, and still within this is the cedar-wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness giving acceptance to the whole.

The pith of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. *The cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones, and dung, and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together, and carried away, and laid by in a clean place*. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*,—the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

It was applied *by hyssop*. Hyssop is always a type of faith. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean."

Here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

RUINOUS NEGLECT.

(Verse 20.)

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation."

The text suggests the following observations:—

I. Man is polluted by sin.

"We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us." And, as Origen said, "Every sin sets a blot upon the soul."

II. God has provided a cleansing element for man's sin.

"There is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

III. To be efficacious this cleansing element must be applied to man.

The unclean person had to "purify

himself" by being sprinkled with "the water of separation." There was no cleansing without the sprinkling. If we would be clean we must repent of the sin which defiles us, confess the sin to the great Cleanser, and pray to Him for pardon and purity. But especially, we must believe in the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ. "Purifying their hearts by faith." "The heart," says Dr. Dykes, "which sets out with a hunger after righteousness; which finds that, to be worth having, righteousness must be from the heart outwards; which strives against inward defilement, and, under such a sense of sin as makes it a gentle censor of other men, carries each fresh stain to the blood of sprinkling at the mercy seat: that heart does by effort and degrees attain to purity."

IV. Man may neglect to avail himself of this cleansing element.

This neglect may arise from—

1. *Self-righteousness.* There are those who do not feel their need of the cleansing of the blood of Christ. (a)

2. *Unbelief.* Under deep conviction of sin, man sometimes feels that the defilement of his heart is so deep as to defy the efficacy of "the precious blood of Christ:" he does not believe that it has power to cleanse to the uttermost.

3. *Procrastination.* Some purpose

to seek to be cleansed from sin at some future time; they defer the great duty until they "have a convenient season."

Such persons often "resolve and re-resolve, and die the same." How great is the folly! and how tremendous the peril of this neglect!

V. Neglecting to avail himself of this cleansing element, man excludes himself from the highest and richest privileges.

"The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation." The man who is guilty of this great neglect excludes himself—

1. *From the Church on earth.* Its privileges are for those only who are "purifying their hearts by faith," and "washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb."

2. *From the blessedness of heaven.* No impurity can enter heaven. The redeemed there constitute "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish." Only "the pure in heart shall see God." "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (comp. *Psa.* xxiv. 3, 4; *Rev.* i. 5; vii. 14; xxi. 27). (b)

Let us not be guilty of this ruinous neglect; but let us by faith hasten to the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and there wash and be clean.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we cannot realise the blood until we have realised the sin. Where there is no conviction of sin—conviction amounting to the very anguish of the lost in hell—there can be no felt need of so extreme a remedy as is offered by the outpouring of the blood of Christ. A self-palliating iniquity may be cleansed by water. The light dust which bespots the outer garments may be removed by gentle means. When a man feels that he has not sinned deeply, he is in no mood to receive what he considers the tragic appeals of the gospel; they exceed the case; they destroy themselves by exaggeration; they speak with self-defeating violence. But let another kind of action be set up in the heart; let the man be brought to talk thus with himself—"I have sinned until my very soul is thrust down into hell; my sins have clouded out the mercy of God, so that I see it no longer; I have wounded the Almighty, I

have cut myself off from the fountain of life, I have blown out every light that was meant to help me upward, I am undone, lost, damned," and *then* he needs no painted cross, no typical sacrament, no ceremonial attitude, no priestly enchantment, he can be met by nothing but the sacrificial blood, the personal blood, the living blood, the precious blood of Christ.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) If a man without religion (supposing it possible) were admitted into heaven, doubtless he would sustain a great disappointment. Before, indeed, he fancied that he could be happy there; but when he arrived there he could find no discourse but that which he had shunned on earth; no pursuits but those he had disliked or despised; nothing which bound him to aught else in the universe, that made him feel at home; nothing which he could enter into and rest upon. He would perceive himself to be an

isolated being, cut away by Supreme Power from those objects which were still entwined about his heart. Nay, he would be in the presence of that Supreme Power whom he never on earth could bring himself steadily to think upon, and whom now he regarded only as the destroyer of all that was precious and dear to him. Ah! he could not bear the face of the Living God; the Holy God would be no object of joy to him. "Let us alone! what have we to do with Thee?" is the sole thought and desire of unclean souls, even while they acknowledge His majesty. None but the holy can look upon the Holy One: without holiness no man can endure to see the Lord.

Holiness, or inward separation from the world, is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is *not* heaven, is not a place of happiness, *except* to the holy. There are bodily indispositions which affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavours become ungrateful to the palate; and indispositions which impair the sight, tinging the fair face of nature with some sickly hue. In like manner there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste, and no man labouring under it is in a condition to enjoy what Scripture calls "the fulness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand for evermore."

Nay, I will venture to say more than this—it is fearful, but it is right to say it—that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man. We know how unhappy we are apt to feel at present, when alone in the midst of strangers, or of men of different tastes and habits to ourselves. How miserable, for example, would it be to have to live in a foreign land, among a people whose faces we never saw before, and whose language we could not learn. And this is but a faint illustration of the loneliness of a man of earthly dispositions and tastes thrown into the society of saints and angels. How forlorn would he wander through the courts of heaven! He would find no one like himself, he would see in every direction the marks of God's holiness, and these would make him shudder. He would feel himself always in His presence. He could no longer turn his thoughts another way, as he does now, when conscience reproaches him. He would know that the eternal eye was ever upon him; and that eye of holiness, which is joy and life to

holy creatures, would seem to him an eye of wrath and punishment. God cannot change His nature. Holy He must ever be. But while He is holy no unholy soul can be happy in heaven. Fire does not inflame iron, but it inflames straw. It would cease to be fire if it did not. And so heaven itself would be fire to those who would fain escape across the great gulf from the torments of hell. The finger of Lazarus would but increase their thirst. The very "heaven that is over their heads" will be "brass" to them.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Have we a hope that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is?" Then must "every man that hath this hope in Him purify himself, even as He is pure." For in at the gates of that City—so unlike the cities of this world—"there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth." That City's streets are of gold that is pure; the river which waters it is a pure river; and the fine linen in which its sainted citizens do walk is clean and white. Even the elder Church could answer its own question,

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in His holy place?"

by saying,

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

Sin-stained and evil-hearted men as we are, it is here, and now, that this purification must be wrought. What need have we to have often upon our lips the prayer,

"O God, make clean our hearts within us!"

Yet let us not be dismayed. Some little purity of heart he must have began to possess who ever looked at all into the face of Jesus Christ as the image of His Father's grace and truth. Now, therefore, let us continue to gaze on *Him*, with whatever openness of eye we have to see His glory; for it is the pure-heartedness of Jesus which maketh the disciple's heart pure; and we all, if "with open face" we do but "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," shall be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." So may God change us like the pure-hearted Son, and bring us one day where with all His servants we shall "see His face" in the endless beatific vision of the Celestial City.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A., D.D.*

CHAPTER XX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the narrative of the third and last stage of the journey of Israel from Sinai to the Promised Land: this narrative is given in this

and the following chapter. This part of the journey commenced at Kadesh, was continued round the land of Edom (chap. xxi. 4), and ended at the heights

of Pisgah, in the country, or fields of Moab (chap. xxi. 20), near the Dead Sea and the Jordan. The events of the Journey seem to be arranged "rather in a classified order than in one that is strictly chronological." Thus the attack upon Israel by the Canaanitish king of Arad (chap. xxi. 1-3) was made during the march from Kadesh to Mount Hor. Chronologically Keil and Del. would place the brief narrative between the first and second clause of ver. 22 of chap. xx.

Verse 1. *The whole congregation.* Probably during the time of their penal wanderings, nearly thirty-eight years, "the congregation" was to some extent broken up and scattered abroad in the wilderness of Paran, so as to facilitate the pasturage of the flocks and herds. Now "the whole congregation" again assembles in the same locality where the sentence of the wandering had been passed upon them.

The desert of Zin (see notes on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21).

In the first month, of the fortieth year from the Exodus (comp. ver. 22-28 with chap. xxxiii. 38).

Kadesh (see notes on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 3. *When our brethren died before the Lord.* It is uncertain to what deaths they refer. Knobel supposes that the reference is to Korah and his company. Keil and Del. say that "the reference is to those who had died one by one during the thirty-seven years."

Verse 6. *They fell upon their faces* (comp. chaps. xiv. 5; xvi. 4).

The glory of the Lord appeared unto them (comp. chaps. xiv. 10; xvi. 19).

Verse 8. *Take the rod.* "Not the budding rod of xvii. 7, but that with which the miracles in Egypt had been wrought, and which had been used on a similar occasion at Rephidim, Exod. xvii. 5, sqq."—*Speaker's Comm.*

The rock. "The word always used for 'the rock' of Kadesh, in describing the second supply of water, is '*sela*' or '*cliff*,' in contradistinction to the usual word '*tzur*'—'*rock*,' which is no less invariably applied to 'the rock' of Horeb—the scene of the first supply. It may

be difficult to determine the relative meaning of the two words. But it is almost certain that of the two, '*sela*,' like our word '*cliff*,' is the grander and more abrupt feature."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

The rock before their eyes. "To the first rock in front of them, and standing in their sight." *M. Nachmanides.*

Verse 9. *Moses took the rod from before the Lord.* The rod seems to have been laid up in the sanctuary, hence it is said to be taken "from before the Lord."

Verses 10, 11. This miraculous supply of water from the "cliff" is different from that from the rock (Exod. xvii. 1-7). "The first happened in the first year of the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt; this, when their journey was about to terminate, thirty-nine years after their departure. The first was an occasion to Moses of obeying punctually the orders of God; this is narrated as a sorrowful period, in which this legislator lost sight of the great motives which ought to have induced him to believe what God had spoken. The first happened in the desert of Sin on the mountain of Horeb; this in the desert of Zin on the frontier of Idumea."—*Saurin.*

Verse 10. *Hear now, ye rebels, &c.* (comp. Psal. cvi. 33).

Verse 12. *Because ye believed Me not, &c.* "What was the offence for which Moses was excluded from the Promised Land? It appears to have consisted in some or all of the following particulars: 1. God had commanded him (ver. 8) to *take the rod in his hand, and go and speak to the rock, and it should give forth water.* It seems Moses did not think *speaking* would be sufficient, therefore he *smote* the rock without any command so to do. 2. He did this *twice*, which certainly in this case indicated a great perturbation of spirit, and want of attention to the presence of God. 3. He permitted his spirit to be carried away by a sense of the people's disobedience, and thus, being *provoked*, he was led to *speak unadvisedly with his lips*: '*Hear now, ye REBELS*' (ver. 10). 4. He did not acknowledge GOD in the

miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honour to himself and Aaron: '*Must we fetch you water out of this rock?*' Thus it plainly appears that they did not properly believe in God and did not honour Him in the sight of the people; for in their presence they seem to express a doubt whether the thing could be possibly done. As Aaron appears to have been consenting in the above particulars, therefore he is also excluded from the Promised Land."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 13. *Meribah, i.e., strife.* In chap. xxvii. 14, it is spoken of as "Meribah in Kadesh," to distinguish it from Meribah in Horeb (Exod. xvii. 7).

He was sanctified in them. He vindicated His own sanctity by putting to shame the unbelieving murmuring of the people by the miraculous supply of water, and by punishing Moses and Aaron for their unbelief.

Verse 14. *Thy brother Israel.* The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob or Israel.

Verse 16. *Sent an angel.* "Of Exod. xiv. 19. The term is to be understood as importing generally the supernatural guidance under which Israel was."—*Speaker's Comm.* Knobel interprets it as signifying the pillar of cloud and fire. "In it was present '*the angel of God*' (Exod. xiv. 19), *i.e.,* the Divine presence, personally; in it appeared '*the glory of Jehovah*' (Exod. xvi. 10; xl. 34; chap. xvi. 42). It was an elementary appearance, made use of by Him who appointed and rules the elements, to signify to His people His immediate presence and guardianship."—*Alford* on Exod. xiii. 21.

Kadesh, a city, i.e., Kadesh-barnea (chap. xxxii. 8). It is probable that Barnea was the older or original name of the town, and that it was called Kadesh because of the events which took place there, and are recorded in chaps. xiii. 26—xiv., or of those which are recorded in this chapter (vers. 7-13), and that in those instances in which we find the name Kadesh in earlier portions of Scripture history it is applied proleptically, or by anticipation. "The

nearest approximation which can be given to a site for the city of Kadesh, may be probably attained by drawing a circle from the pass *Es-Sufa*, at the radius of about a day's journey; its south-western quadrant would intersect the wilderness of Paran, or *Et-Tih*, which is there overhung by the superimposed plateau of the mountain of the Amorites; while its south-eastern one will cross what has been designated as the wilderness of Zin. This seems to satisfy all the conditions of the passages of Genesis, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which refer to it. The nearest site in harmony with this view which has yet been suggested (Robinson, ii. 175), is undoubtedly the *Ain el-Weibeh*."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 17. *Let us pass through thy country.* The entrance to Canaan from the South was very difficult by reason of the intervening mountains, which were lofty and steep. Moses, therefore, proposed to enter it from the east, across the Jordan. "In order to gain the banks of the Jordan by the shortest route they had to march nearly due east from Kadesh, and pass through the heart of the Edomitish mountains. These are lofty and precipitous, traversed by two or three narrow defiles, of which one (the *Wady Ghuweir*) only is practicable for an army. Hence the necessity of the request, v. 17."—*Speaker's Comm.* *Ain el-Weibeh* "is nearly opposite the *Wady Ghuweir*, the great opening into the steep eastern wall of the Arabah, and, therefore, the most probable 'highway' by which to 'pass through the border' of Edom."—*Biblical Dict.*

The King's high way. Heb. "the King's way," *i.e.,* "the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the 'sultan's road' (*Derb es Sultan*) or 'emperor's road,' as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19. *I will only, without, &c.* Heb. "*lit. 'it is nothing at all; I will go through with my feet:' i.e., we want*

no great thing ; we will only make use of the high road."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *And Edom came out against him.* "The Israelites without awaiting at Kadesh the return of their ambassadors, commenced their eastward march. At the tidings of their approach the Edomites mustered their forces to oppose them ; and on crossing the Arabah they found their ascent through the mountains barred. The notice of this is inserted here to complete the narrative ; but in order of time it comes after the march of v. 22."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 22. *Mount Hor.* Heb. lit. "Hor the mountain." הֹר *Hor*, "is an old form for הָר," *Har*.—*Fuerst*. So that the meaning of the name is simply "the mountain of mountains." "It is one of the very few spots connected with the wanderings of the Israelites which admits of no reasonable doubt. The proofs of the identity of *Jebel Harʿn*, as it is now called, with Mount Hor, are—(1) The situation 'by the coast of the land of Edom,' where it is emphatically 'the mountain' (*Hor*) Num. xx. 23. (2) The statement of Josephus (*Ant.* IV. iv. 7), that Aaron's

death occurred on a high mountain enclosing Petra. (3) The modern name and traditional sanctity of the mountain as connected with Aaron's tomb. The mountain is marked far and near by its double top, which rises like a huge castellated building from a lower base, and on one of these is the Mahometan chapel erected out of the remains of some earlier and more sumptuous building over the supposed grave."—*Stanley. Sinai and Pal.*

"It is almost unnecessary to state that it is situated on the eastern side of the great valley of the *Arabah*, the highest and most conspicuous of the whole range of the sandstone mountains of Edom, having close beneath it on its eastern side—though strange to say the two are not visible to each other—the mysterious city of Petra. . . . Its height, according to the latest measurement, is 4800 feet (Eng.) above the Mediterranean, that is to say, about 1700 feet above the town of Petra, 4000 above the level of the *Arabah*, and more than 6000 above the Dead Sea."—*Biblical Dict.*

Verse 26. *Strip Aaron of his garments* (comp. Lev. viii. 7-9).

THE DEATH OF MIRIAM.

(Verse 1.)

Two preliminary points are suggested by the assembling of "the whole congregation in the desert of Zin" :

First : *The loss that sin inflicts upon a people.* After nearly thirty-eight years the entire nation is congregated in the place where the sentence of penal wandering had been passed upon them. For all these years the sin of the rebellious people arrested their national history. Sin, whether in the individual or the nation, checks progress, and inflicts loss and injury.

Second : *The control of God over human history.* When the time fixed in the Divine purposes for the re-assembling of the people arrives, they again gather themselves together. The hand of the

Lord is on the affairs of men, directing, restraining, overruling them for good. "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

The death of Miriam suggests the following observations—

I. Death terminates the most protracted life.

Assuming that Miriam was 10 or 12 years old when Moses was born (and her conduct as watcher over her infant brother [Exod. iii. 4-8] indicates that she was of fully that age), she must have been at the time of her death 130 years old. Hers was a long life ; but death closed it. He whose life-pilgrimage is longest, reaches the end of his journey at last. "Yea, though he live

a thousand years twice told: do not all go to one place?" (a)

II. Death terminates the most eventful life.

Very eventful had been the life of Miriam.

1. *The girl watching over the life of her infant brother* (Exod. iii. 4-8). When we reflect upon the destiny marked out for her brother by God, how important was her duty at that time!

2. *The experienced woman sharing in the interest and action of the stirring events which led to the great emancipation from Egypt.* It appears to us a moral certainty that those events awakened her deep interest and aroused her to earnest effort.

3. *The prophetess leading the exultant songs and dances of a triumphant people* (Exod. xv. 20, 21).

4. *The envious woman aspiring after equality with, and speaking against her greater brother* (chap. xii. 1, 2). She was of a noble nature, yet she was capable of meanness, detraction, &c. Here is the blot upon her otherwise fair reputation.

5. *The guilty woman smitten with leprosy because of the sin* (chap. xii. 9, 10). Her distinguished position and gifts could not avert from her the just punishment of her sin.

6. *The leprous woman healed in answer to the prayer of the brother whom she had spoken against* (chap. xii. 13-15). The most stirring and eventful life is closed by death, as well as the quiet and monotonous one.

III. Death terminates the most distinguished life.

1. *Miriam was distinguished by her gifts.* Prophetic gifts are ascribed to her. "Miriam, the prophetess," is her acknowledged title (Exod. xv. 20). "The prophetic power showed itself in her under the same form as that which it assumed in the days of Samuel and David — poetry, accompanied with music and processions" (comp. Exod. xv. 20, 21; Judg. v.; 1 Sam. x. 5). Death spares not even the most richly gifted of our race. (b)

2. *Miriam was distinguished by her position.* A very high position is given to her in the Sacred Scriptures. In Micah vi. 4, she is spoken of as one of the three deliverers of the enslaved people: "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." "How grand was her position is implied in the cry of anguish which goes up from both her brothers" when she was smitten with leprosy. "Alas, my lord! . . . Let her not be as one dead," &c. (chap. xiii. 11-13). "And it is not less evident in the silent grief of the nation. 'The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.'" It is manifest also in the national mourning on account of her death; for, according to Josephus (Ant. IV. iv. 6), "they mourned for her thirty days." Death brings down persons of the most exalted rank, and lays them low as those of the meanest station (comp. Job. iii. 13-19). (c)

IV. Death, by reason of sin, sometimes terminates life earlier than it otherwise would have done.

Miriam was not of the faithful few who entered the Promised Land. She sinned in murmuring and speaking against Moses; and, therefore, she must die and find a lonely grave in the desert of Zin. How many lives are cut short in our day by violation of sanitary laws, by gluttony, and by drunkenness!

V. Death sometimes terminates life with suggestions of a life beyond.

It was so in the case of Miriam. Can we think that the gifts with which she was so richly endowed, and the treasures of experience which in her long and eventful life she had gathered, were all lost at death? This would be in utter opposition to the analogy of the Divine arrangements in the universe. In nature we can trace no sign of waste; the most scrupulous economy may be observed in all the provinces of the material realm. Can we imagine that, under the rule of the same Divine Being, there exists in the spiritual realm such waste as would be involved in the extinction of those who are gifted

in mind, ripe in experience, and holy in character? The Israelites did not leave Miriam in the desert of Zin: her body only remained there; her spirit, herself, passed swiftly to the great and glorious fellowship of the good "beyond the veil." (d)

"The dead are like the stars by day,
Withdrawn from mortal eye;
But not extinct, they hold their way
In glory through the sky.

Spirits from bondage thus set free
Vanish amidst immensity,
Where human thought, like human sight,
Fails to pursue their trackless flight."

Conclusion.

Since death is inevitable, it is the duty and interest of every one so to live that it shall be the door of admission into endless and blessed life. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All forms recipient of life die sometime. Some few may be privileged to survive the rest, even for thousands of years, as happens with certain trees, but the same death which in regard to the children of men, while it surprises many, skips not one, at last overpowers the most tenacious. "Come like shadows, so depart," is the law of the entire material creation,—in fact, as great a law as that it *lives*. . . . Birth, growth, and arriving at maturity, as completely imply decay and death as the source of a river implies the termination of it, or as spring and summer imply corn-fields and reaping. Hence, whatever the vigour and the powers of repair that may pertain to any given structure, whatever resistance it may offer to the shocks of Ages, Time, sooner or later, dissolves it;—careful, however, to renew whatever it takes away, and to convert, invariably, every end into a new beginning. There is not a grave in the whole circuit of nature that is not at the same moment a cradle.—*L. H. Grindon*.

(b) Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the merest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown, impalpable powder, they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Tophet? Ah! friends, you have to die. Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh! if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap; they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes. The ashes of an oak in a chimney are no epitaph of that, to tell me how high, or how large that was; it tells me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless too; it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing. As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldst not, as of a prince whom thou couldst not look upon, will trouble thine eyes

if the wind blow it thither; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the churchyard into the church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the church into the churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, 'This is the patrician, this is the noble flour, and this the yeoman, this the plebeian bran?'—*Dr. J. Donne*.

(d) We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over, ready to be quenched. Ah! my brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death. The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and ere long even the pitcher shall be so remodelled as to become an aid to that light; its present breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it moulders into dust, shall live again; these weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them; these hands which grasp to-day the sword of conflict shall wave the palm-branch of triumph.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

"Because I live, ye shall live also." That is the end of trouble. Now sorrow is crowned with hope! Now the gate is thrown open! Now the angel sits upon the stone! Now the emergent Christ walks forth, light and glorious as the sun in the heavens! Now the lost is found! Now all the stars hang like gems, and jewels, and treasures for us! Now, since Christ says that out of all these experiences He shall bring forth life, even as his own life was brought forth out of the tomb, what is there that we need trouble ourselves about?—*H. W. Beecher*.

(e) We shall all die! Do not let us postpone the intimation of our need of the Son of God until we are so faint that we can only receive him at the side of our death-bed. Do let us be more decent, more courteous, more civil. We shall all die! That is a fact that men have never been able to reason out of human history. If they could come to me and say, "We will guarantee you shall never die,

you shall always be as you are—young, and strong, and active, and prosperous," then I might incline an ear to their reasonings more deferentially than I am disposed to do at present. But when they are talking to me against religion and against the deeper life, against faith and spiritual love and service of the unseen, what do I behold? Oh, this: Over their shoulder a grim, ghastly spectre alled *Death!*—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Be ready, minister, see to it that thy church be in good order, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee; be ready, parent, see that your children are brought up in the fear of

God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, you that are busy in the world, see that your affairs are correct, see that you serve God with all your heart, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. O may we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE PRIVATIONS OF MAN AND THE RESOURCES OF GOD.

(Verses 2-11.)

I. There are privations in the pilgrimage of human life.

"And there was no water for the congregation." Man is a dependent creature. Every human being has to endure privation in some form or another. Even the wealthiest of men find that there are some desirable things which wealth cannot purchase. But in the case before us the Israelites were suffering from want, not of the luxuries or comforts of life, but of one of its great necessities: there was a great lack of water. In our pilgrimage we are often without things which we have regarded as essential to our life. One man thinks that without *health* his life would be worthless; yet he has to submit to its loss for a time. To another man *prosperity* seems essential; to another, *friendship*, or some one *friend* or *relative*; yet of these they are sometimes deprived. Life, in our view, has many privations. This characteristic of our pilgrimage is for wise and gracious ends. Privation should remind us that we are pilgrims—incite us to confide in God—and discipline our spirits into patience and power.

II. The privations in the pilgrimage of life sometimes develop the evil tendencies of human nature.

"And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses," &c. (vers. 2-5). Here privation is made the occasion of an outrageous

rebellion. The conduct of the people was—

1. *Unreasonable.* Why should they blame Moses and Aaron? Why chide Moses? He was not responsible for the lack of water. And as their leader, he was acting under Divine direction. It was neither reasonable nor fair to assail Moses and Aaron as they did.

2. *Cruel.* Moses and Aaron are of sorrowful heart because of the death of their distinguished sister; they need sympathy and consolation from the people; but instead thereof, they are unjustly and bitterly assailed. The feelings of our common humanity should have effectually restrained the people from treating their bereaved and sorrowing leaders after this fashion.

3. *Ungrateful.* The many and great mercies which God had bestowed upon them seem to be all and utterly lost sight of in their present trial. Not one word of thankfulness, but many words of complaint do they give utterance to. (a)

4. *Degraded.* "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs," &c. How unspeakably mournful is the degradation of manhood when human beings estimate "figs" more highly than freedom! They prefer slavery with figs and vines and pomegranates than liberty without them. Such a preference indicates their lack of true manhood, and the serfdom of their spirits. (b)

5. *Audaciously wicked.* How awful is the impiety to which they gave expression in their insolent interrogations! To wish that they had died by the stroke of God's judgment (ver. 3); to falsely impute the wickedest design to their true-hearted and God-appointed leader (ver. 4); to resent the emancipation which the Lord so graciously and gloriously wrought for them (ver. 5)—how atrociously wicked is all this!

The trials of life never leave us as they find us. Unless they, by the grace of God, are the occasion of blessing to us, they will lead, as in the case of these rebellious Israelites, to deterioration of character by the development of its evil attributes. They will lead either to increased patience and acquiescence in the will of God, or to increased fretfulness and rebellion against His will, &c. (c)

III. The privations in the pilgrimage of life, and the evils which are sometimes occasioned by them, impel the good to seek help of God.

"And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces." In their trial they betook themselves to God in prayer. Their action in this is very suggestive. It implies—

1. *Consciousness of need.* They felt their inability to deal with the disaffected and rebellious people; they sought the direction of Heaven, &c.

2. *Faith in the sufficiency of the Divine help.* The promptitude with which they resorted to the tabernacle, and cast themselves down in prayer to God, indicates their confidence in Him as their Helper. They believed in His wisdom for their guidance, &c.

3. *Faith in the efficacy of prayer to obtain the Divine help.* Moses and Aaron had proved convincingly the power of prayer on several occasions. "Ask, and it shall be given you," &c.

4. *Faith in the efficacy of unspoken prayer.* There is no record of any words addressed by them to God. The probability is, that their feelings and desires were too deep and strong to

be expressed in words. There may be true and effective prayer without speech. The holiest and profoundest longings of our souls cannot be expressed. In this respect they resemble the prayers of the Divine Spirit who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Here, then, at the throne of Divine grace, is the refuge of the godly soul in time of trial. This refuge is (1) ever-accessible; (2) all-sufficient, &c.

IV. The privations in the pilgrimage of life are sometimes removed in answer to the prayer of the good.

"And the glory of the Lord appeared unto them, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod," &c. (vers. 6-11). Thus in answer to the prayer of Moses and Aaron, the privation of the people was removed by this copious supply of water. Concerning this supply of water, notice—

1. It was *Divine*. In a special sense it was the gift of God. Before it was given His "glory appeared;" He directed His servant what to do to obtain it; He bestowed it.

2. It was *miraculous*. Speaking to a cliff, or smiting it with a rod, were not natural means for obtaining water. But this water was supernaturally given. The miracle was manifest and indisputable. It was wrought in the presence of the assembled people. Spiritual blessings transcend nature. Redemption is supernatural in its origin, supernatural in its great Agent, &c.

3. It was *unmerited*. This murmuring, rebellious congregation did not deserve any benefit at the hand of God. He blessed them because He is "rich in mercy." Mankind did not merit redemption. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How great are our demerits! yet God blesses us with the treasures of His grace, &c.

4. It was *abundant*. "The water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts." How abundant are spiritual blessings! God "abundantly pardons"; He "makes all grace abound," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 8, 11). (d)

5. It was *free*. The water, without any charge or any restriction, was available to all. An emblem of the blessings of salvation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c. (Isa. lv. 1). "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (e)

6. It was *bestowed in answer to prayer*. Moses and Aaron sought His help in their extremity, and He stilled the rebellious people by removing the privation from which they suffered. And in all the privations of the pilgrimage of our life, if we seek Him in prayer He will either remove the privation, or give us grace to endure it patiently; He will either lighten our burden or increase our strength. His resources are adequate to all the necessities of our pilgrimage. He is ever ready to communicate freely of these resources to all who seek Him.

"Am I thirsting? He will guide me
Where refreshing waters flow;
Faint or feeble, He'll provide me
Grace for every want I know."

—Monsell.

Conclusion.

1. *Guard against the sin of which Israel was guilty.* In time of trial, do not murmur; be patient, &c.

2. *Believe in and make use of the efficacy of prayer.* "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," &c.

3. *Exercise constant trust in God.* "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

"Then, my soul, since God doth love thee,
Faint not, droop not, do not fear;
Though His heaven is high above thee,
He Himself is ever near."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But we must cease to wonder at them, and learn to confess our own corruption of heart, and proneness to yield and fall down in time of temptation, unless we be stayed up by the mighty hand of God. For albeit He be most gracious and merciful unto us, hedgeth us round about with many blessings, and compasseth us with riches of grace on every side, yet we forget them all if any one cross do any way lie upon us. If the Lord touch us with sickness, as with His little finger; with losses, with crosses, with poverty, or any misery, such is our impatience, that we always dwell upon the meditation of that want, we look upon it with our eyes, we handle it with our hands, we toss it in our minds, and never remember the multitude of His mercies, the peace of a good conscience, the loving countenance of the Lord, the seal of our adoption, the assurance of our salvation, the sweet taste of His love shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; so that one trouble doth more daunt us and strike us to the heart than many blessings can comfort and refresh us. But God, taking away outward blessings, giveth spiritual to His children, and doth sweeten the bitterness of the cross with inward consolation, and doth recompense it with heavenly grace, whereby we gain more in the spirit than we lose in the flesh.—*W. Attersoll*.

I remember in our Baptist martyrology the story of one of the Baptists of Holland escaping from his persecutors. A river was frozen over, and the good man crossed it safely, but his enemy was of greater bulk,

and the ice gave way under him. The Baptist, like a child of God as he was, turned round and rescued his persecutor just as he was sinking beneath the ice to a certain death. And what did the wretch do? As soon as ever he was safely on the shore he seized the man who had saved his life, and dragged him off to the prison from which he was only taken to be put to death! We wonder at such inhumanity; we are indignant at such base returns—but the returns which the ungodly make to God are baser far. I wonder myself as I talk to you—I wonder that I speak so calmly on so terribly humbling a theme; and, remembering our past lives, and our long ingratitude to God, I marvel that we do not turn this place into one vast Bochim, or place of weeping, and mingle our tears in a flood, with expressions of deep shame and self-abhorrence for our dealings towards God.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(b) There are others who seek how much they can call their own, by whatever means; of how much benefit they can hold a monopoly; from how large a place in God's universe they can keep other men off, and how much envy they can rouse in rivals and neighbours. These have never mastered their baser and greedier instincts, and so far have never known the Divine joy of being blessed for their benefactions, and have never tasted of the peace that passeth understanding. Very often God punishes us by letting us have what we seek. . . .

To the seekers of mere material and selfish comfort, one serious consideration is presented

by the progress of history. That kind of search is sinking. Every new day that breaks into the sky degrades it; both because new lights are stationed about it, in our educational and industrial wakefulness, to show its shame, and because the practical tendencies of the time force upon materialism a more and more hard and sottish character. In more imaginative periods, romance threw about idolatry at least the graces of fancy, and made it poetical. Now it is either shrewd or stolid. It is the idolatry of the arithmetic, the stock list, and the palate; not of fable and heroism. The noblest element has vanished. It is bare gluttony. If you are going to worship the animal, then return to the inventions of Egyptian and Grecian genius—"the fair humanities of old religion." Give us back at least the simplicity of fetishism *with* its sensuality. Rebuild the Pantheon. Relight the fires on Pagan altars. Repopulate the woods with dryads, and the water with nymphs. Anything rather than the gross surfeit of appetite, and the clinking creed of dollars! And if you cannot do that, take it as a sober hint that God's providence does not mean to have materialists in the world at all. Seek something worthier of your humanity.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(c) Many men are distressing themselves, when they think of their trials, by imagining that they have done something wrong, or God never could have sent such afflictions to them personally, or to their household. That is a mistake. There are trials that are simply tests—not punishments; trials of faith and patience—not rods sent to scourge men because they have been doing some particular evil thing. God's people are tried. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." The honour is not in the trial; it is in the spirit in which the trial is borne. Take the trial impatiently, with murmuring against God, and we shall be the worse for our trial, the poorer for our suffering. Take the trial as a veiled angel sent by our Father to say things to us which no other messenger could so suitably convey, then even the rod shall be precious to us, and the herald's utterances of God shall have music in them that shall comfort, and revive, and cheer the heart.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) Stand still awhile, and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God! A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head, see it welling up in the cove-

nant of grace, in the eternal purposes of infinite wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fount; it is a very Geyser, leaping aloft in fulness of power; the springs of the sea are not comparable therewith. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love, or measure the depths of infinite grace. Follow now the stream; mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the cross' foot it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash, see how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them, they are made whole! See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wheresoever this stream cometh all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity; these all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with glad eye to note the thousand barques of fairest sail, which scud along the mighty river with colours flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity! Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth, but from its lowest deeps, and all along its unruffled bosom, I hear a voice which saith, "Herein is love."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) Freely, that may be lavishly, ungrudgingly, with fulness and overflow, yet without upbraiding. Or, freely may mean without price or tax, without money as the air is given, without price as the sunlight is poured forth. So "freely given to us of God." Why this is most God-like wholly. No good thing doth he withhold from them that walk uprightly. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us *all* things?" —ALL things,—ALL things! "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." —*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE SIN OF MOSES.

(Verse 10.)

Introduction—

The facts recorded.

I. What there was sinful in Moses.

1. There was disobedience to the Divine command.

2. There was immoderate heat and passion.

3. There was unbelief.

4. It was all publicly done, and so the more dishonouring to God.

II. What we may learn from this tragical story.

1. What a holy and jealous God He is with whom we have to do.

2. The Lord's children need not think it strange if they get abundance to exercise that grace in which they most excel.

3. Let us not be surprised to see or hear the saints failing even in the exercise of that grace wherein they most excel.

4. Never think yourselves secure from falling till ye be at the end of your race.

5. What need we have to guard constantly our unruly passions, and put a bridle on our lips.

6. Though God pardons the iniquity of His servants, yet He will take vengeance on their inventions (Psa. xcix. 8).

7. If God punishes His children thus for falling into the snare, how shall they escape who lay the snare for them?

8. Observe the ingenuousness of the penmen of the Holy Scripture—Moses records his own fault.—*T. Boston.*

THE ROCK AT KADESH, AN EMBLEM OF CHRIST.

(Verse 11, and 1 Cor. x. 4, last clause.)

Jehovah is frequently spoken of by the Sacred Writers as a Rock (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 31; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. xxii. 2; Psa. xviii. 2; xxxviii. 1; xxxi. 2; xlii. 9; *et al.*). And St. Paul, referring to the rock at Horeb, and probably to this one at Kadesh also, says, "That Rock was Christ"—*i.e.*, a type of Christ. *This rock is an emblem of Christ—*

I. In its characteristics.

1. *Permanence.* How firm and stable are the rocks! Generations of men come and go; but the grand old cliffs remain. Of all earthly things they are the most abiding. "The Son abideth for ever." "Christ abideth for ever." "He ever liveth to make intercession." "I am alive for evermore." Jesus Christ is the "sure foundation" (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11; 1. Pet. ii. 6, 7). (a)

2. *Unchangeableness.* Geologists tell us of changes even in the rocks; but apparently and to the ordinary observer they are immutable. They are the best symbols on the earth of the unchangeable. How unchangeable is our Lord and Saviour! "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

II. In the water which flowed from it.

Christianity and its blessings are frequently compared to pure water in the Bible (comp. Isa. lv. 1; John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38; Rev. xxi. 6; xxii. 17). There are several points of analogy between this water and Gospel blessings. Both are—

1. *Necessary.* Water is essential to life. Spiritual life is impossible apart from Christ (1 John v. 12). (b)

2. *Pure.* This water was from a cliff, not from a pond: it had been filtered in the hills, and streamed forth pure and bright to the thirsty multitude. The blessings of Christianity are both pure and purifying.

3. *Refreshing.* Mark how water refreshes the parched earth; how it revives the fading, drooping plant or flower; how it re-animates the pilgrim exhausted by thirst. "A Man shall be as rivers of water in a dry place." (Comp. Isa. xxxv. 6, 7; xli. 18; xliv. 3). (c)

4. *Abundant.* (On this and the following points see on verses 2-11). (d)

5. *Free.* (e)

6. *Supernatural.*

7. *Divine.*

Application.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Here is simple existence, with no note of beginning or end. Our Lord says not, "Before Abraham was, I was," but "I am." He claims pre-existence indeed, but He does not merely claim pre-existence; He unveils a consciousness of Eternal Being. He speaks as one on Whom time has no effect, and for Whom it has no meaning. He is the I AM of ancient Israel; He knows no past, as He knows no future; He is unbeginning, unending Being; He is the eternal "Now."—*Canon Liddon*.

(b) Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day, sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land; what would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life; his tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven, and he himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon Him. Now, Jesus Christ is the water of life, and the bread of life, to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him; and as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Life and the food that sustaineth life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are for your souls stored up in Jesus.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(c) Water typifies the Gospel by its refreshment. How different you feel after you get a glass of cool water, or after you have plunged into the bath! On a hot summer day there is nothing that so soon brings you back from a bad temper or a disturbed spirit, and puts you into a happy frame of mind and body; as cold water. Blessed be God for water! I love to hear it fall in the shower and dash in the cascade, and to see it rush from the ice-pitcher into the clear glass. Thank God for water! Clear water! bright water! beautiful water! But I have to tell you there is a better refreshment even than that. There was a time when you were hounded of convictions. Sinai thundered. The wrath of God cried, "Fly!" Justice cried, "Fly!" Your own fears cried, "Fly!" Mercy said, "Come! Come!" and you plunged like a hart into the waterbrooks, and out of that flood your soul came up cool, and clean, and radiant; and you looked around and said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." There came a time of perplexity in your heart. You lost your property. The gold eagles took wings and flew away. Death, like a black hawk, swooped upon the family brood, and the children were gone. You measured your life from groan to groan, from loss to loss, from tear to tear. You said from your distressed spirit, "Oh! that I had wings like

a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." From the depths of your fevered soul you called out, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" As when you have been walking in a thick wood on a hot summer day you heard the dash of fountains, and your spirit was cheered; so, while you were listening for the answer, the promise of God dropped cool and fresh and sparkling from the Throne: "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." You rejoiced at the thought of the fountain. Your fevered soul thrilled with the cool touch, and you cried, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it. Water! cold water! bright water! everlasting water! bursting from the Throne!"—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(d) Water typifies the Gospel because of its abundance. When we pour the water from the pitcher into the glass we have to be careful or the glass will overflow, and we stop when the water has come to the rim. But when God, in summer, pours out His showers, He keeps pouring on, and pouring on, until the grass-blades cry, "Enough!" and the flowers, "Enough!" and the trees, "Enough!" but God keeps pouring on and pouring on until the fields are soaked, and the rivers overflow, and the cisterns are all filled, and the great reservoirs are supplied, and there is water to turn the wheel, water to slake the thirst of the city, water to cleanse the air, water to wash the hemisphere. Abundance! And so with this glorious Gospel. Enough for one; enough for all. Thousands have come to this fountain, and have drank to the satisfaction of their souls. Other thousands will come; and yet the fountain will not be exhausted.

Just after the battle of Antietam, with some of the other members of the Christian Commission, I went down to help look after the wounded; and on the afternoon of a very hot day I came to a pump of water. I saw a soldier, with musket, guarding the pump. I put out my cup, and he filled it about a quarter full with water. I said, "Why do you not fill my cup?" He replied, "Water is scarce! Here is a great army, and we do not know where to get water after this is gone; and I have orders to give no more than that." What a poor supply for a thirsty man on a hot day! But, glory be to God! that in this Gospel fountain there is water enough for all the armies of the earth, and for all the armies of heaven. You cannot drink it dry. I stand this evening offering this Gospel to all who are here, with just as much confidence that there is enough for them as though there were only two or three persons present.—*Ibid.*

(e) Water typifies the Gospel by its freeness. On this hot Sabbath, after the cows break through the alders into the meadow to drink, how much do they pay for that which they

drink? The humming-bird drinks from the wine glass of the honeysuckle. How much is it a glass? There is a tax on the city water, but no tax upon the great rivers that roll in perpetual volume to the sea. How much will the world pay for all the showers that this summer refreshed the cornfields? Nothing. It is free, and so is this glorious gospel. It is free in its pardon, hope, and salvation, to all who will accept it. Here is a man who says, "I will pay for it, or I will not have it. I am

an independent man; and I will give so much to have my soul redeemed. I will endow a college; or I will establish a school; or I will build a church, and in that way purchase my salvation!" Or he says, "I will do some grand, good works; and God, I know, will accept them." God says, "Away with your good works as a purchase for salvation! Take this Gospel for nothing, or never take it. It is free." "Without money and without price" is this Gospel fountain.—*Ibid.*

THE SINS OF HOLY MEN AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.

(Verses 12, 13.)

The sin of Moses and Aaron seems to have included—

First: *Want of faith.* "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not." "It seems to have been," says Dean Stanley, "a feeling of distrust. 'Can we bring water out of the cliff?' (Num. xx. 10; LXX. *μη ἐξάξομεν*, 'surely we cannot')". The smiting of the cliff twice does not indicate the calmness of faith, but the presence of doubt rather, "as if the promise of God 'would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part.'" There was not, we believe, positive unbelief or distrust of the Divine word; but, on the other hand, there was not the full assurance of faith which they should have manifested.

Second: *Irritation of spirit.* The impatience of Moses is manifest in his speech,—“Hear now, ye rebels;” and in his action,—“He smote the rock twice.” Worn out by the repeated and aggravating perversities of the people, the man of God breaks down, and for a moment his long patience is overborne by petulance. (Comp. *Psa. cvi. 32, 33.*)

Third: *Departure from Divine directions.* (1) They fell short of the Divine orders in not speaking to the cliff. “Speak ye unto the cliff before their eyes,” said the Lord; but they did not do so. (2) They went beyond the Divine directions in speaking to the people, and smiting the rock. The directions of God never exceed His requirements. If His commands are particular and in detail, He requires that

our obedience also shall be particular and in detail.

Fourth: *Assumption of power.* The question, “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” does not give honour to God. It is such as they might have asked if by their own unaided efforts they were about to obtain water for the people.

Fifth: *The publicity of the whole.* “Ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel.” It was an aggravation of their offence that it was committed in the presence of the assembled congregation. They occupied an eminent position; they were the representatives of Jehovah to the people, the eyes of the people were fixed upon them; they should therefore have been more careful to honour God before the people. On a former occasion Moses had been guilty of unbelief towards God (*chap. xi. 22, 23*), and God rebuked him for his sin. That however was in private; while this was in public, and accordingly meets with severer punishment from the Lord.

The text leads us to consider—

I. The liability of the good to sin.

Moses was one of the holiest and noblest men that ever lived, yet here he sins against God. “In him there was a rare combination of intellectual and moral excellences. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. It stands out in bold and impressive relief. His was a noble heart; one purer or truer never beat within a human bosom.

Noble by nature, he was nobler still by the height and force of his virtue." But he was not infallible ; while he remained in this world he was exposed to temptation, and liable to fall into sin. And under the strain of the provocation of these perverse and rebellious people, he did, alas ! fall into sin. Let the great and good be warned. You are safe only as you exercise constant watchfulness, humility, and trust in God. (b)

II. The danger of good men failing in those excellences which most distinguish them.

Moses was pre-eminent for meekness (chap. xii. 3) ; but here his meekness fails, and he is petulant and stern. Abraham was celebrated for his faith in God (Rom. iv. 11 ; Gal. iii. 9) ; yet upon two occasions his faith failed for a time (Gen. xii. 12 ; xx. 2, 11-13). Elijah was one of the most fearless and heroic of men ; yet he fled from the threatened vengeance of Jezebel in a very panic of alarm, and remained for some time in a state of deep dejection (1 Kings xix. 1-4, 10, 14). Peter was unquestionably courageous ; yet the charges of a maid-servant reduced him for a time to an utter coward (Luke xxii. 55-60). Guard well the strong points of your character ; for there the greatest danger often is. This seems paradoxical ; nevertheless it is true. The points of our character which we know are weak we watch and fortify ; in our strong points we feel so secure that we deem it unnecessary to exercise vigilance concerning them ; and this sense of security leads us sometimes to fail in those strong points—in those virtues which are most fully ours. (c)

III. The impartiality of the administration of the Divine government.

Moses and Aaron were both greatly honoured of God—Moses especially so ; yet God punishes them for sin, as well as others. "Because ye believed not Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I gave them." Surely, this was no slight punishment. After all

their brilliant and fondly-cherished hopes of possessing the "good land," after all they had done and borne as leaders of the rebellious people, the honour of leading them into the land shall not be theirs ; they shall not even enter therein. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, and Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." If a saint of God violate His laws, he must bear the penalties which he has incurred. The dark crimes which stained the spirit and life of the man after God's own heart never ceased to trouble him in after days. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." (d)

IV. The great guilt of those who by their wickedness occasion sin in the good.

If Moses and Aaron be "thus punished that sin by other men's occasions, how much more shall they be punished that are the occasions, or give the occasions ! Moses and Aaron had never thus offended had the people not murmured ; and many a sin should be daily uncommitted did not some allure, tempt and provoke, or by some means give occasion thereof."—*Babington*.

"Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." He who not only sins himself, but by temptation or otherwise occasions sin in others, shall be "beaten with many stripes."

V. The means which God uses to deter men from sin.

"This is the water of Meribah ; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." The name was changed from Kadesh-barnea to Meribah-kadesh as a memorial of the sin of the people, and of Moses and Aaron, that others might take warning and shun sin. Many are the means which God uses to keep man from sin ; memorials of human sins and Divine judgments, expostulations with the sinner, warnings against sin, encouragements and aids to obedience, are all so employed. By the voice of history, by the Law from Sinai, by the Gospel of His Son, by the Cross of Jesus Christ, by the influences of His Spirit, God is ever crying to the sinner,

"Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

Application.

Let Christians guard against temptation; let them cultivate a watchful and

prayerful spirit. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Be sober, be vigilant," &c. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If anger arises in thy breast, instantly seal up thy lips, and let it not go forth; for like fire when it wants vent, it will suppress itself. It is good in a fever to have a tender and smooth tongue; but is better that it be in anger; for if it be rough and distempered, there it is an ill sign, but here it is an ill cause. Angry passion is a fire, and angry words are like breath to fan them together; they are like steel and flint, sending out fire by mutual collision.—*Jeremy Taylor*.

(b) Humanity has its weaker side, and when assailed by temptation and the force of evil, is liable to yield, and thus to be overcome. No degree of moral excellence or of spiritual attainment places us beyond the possibility of declension. Imperfection and error attach to us so long as we are in the flesh, and through the weakness and the waywardness of our nature, our highest joys may be marred and limited. If our will could be brought into perfect harmony with the will of God—if we were at all times to move and act in strict conformity with the Revelation of His infinite mind—if there were no contrariety between our inclination and His revealed intimations, deep, and full, and inexpressible would be our joy. It is when our will comes into opposition to His will—it is when we deviate and depart from that which He has prescribed, that our conduct becomes a source of disquietude; and the consciousness that we have preferred our own line of action to the Divinely-prescribed method not only introduces a great disturbing element into our nature, but robs us of purer joy and profounder peace.—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

Human nature has never been perfect in all its qualities, energies, and services; the perfection of human nature can be wrought out only by long-continued and severe probation. In choosing instruments for the representation of His will and the execution of His purposes, God has always chosen men who were best fitted on the whole for such ministry, though in some particulars they have disastrously and pitifully failed.

Consider, knowing human nature as we do, how beneficial a thing it was to the great men themselves to be shown now and again that they were imperfect, and that they were only great and strong as they were good, as they were true to God. To be an illustrious leader, to have power and authority amongst men, always to be in high places, and to be absolutely without a fault of disposition, temper, or desire, is enough to tempt any man to think

that he is more than a man; and even to be without actual social fault, that can be pointed out and blamed, is not unlikely to give a man a false notion of the real state of his own nature. We may learn quite as much from our failures as from our successes. I have seen more truly what I am by my faults than by my graces, and never have I prayed with so glowing a fervour as when I have seen that there is but a step between me and death and that I have nearly taken it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) Abraham, the great man and prophet of the Lord, shows his littleness by giving way to a cowardly fear that strangely divided his heart with the noblest faith found in the ancient world. His fear in one direction was simply ridiculous and pitiful; when he came amongst a powerful people he was always afraid that they would kill him in order to get possession of his wife. On the face of it the thing would seem to be incredible: here is a man who left his kindred and his father's house, who braved the hardships of the wilderness, who arose and pursued kings and slew them, and delivered the prey from the hand of the mighty, tottering like a weak old coward when he thinks that he may be killed. He made a mean figure before Pharaoh, and he makes a meaner still before Abimelech. In one sense I am glad that Abraham made such a fool of himself; for had he been without flaw or blemish, perfect and invincible in faith, and complete in the sanctification of his character, he would have awed me by his supernatural respectability, and I should never have thought of him as an example or a pattern.—*Ibid.*

(d) The punishment of sin is impartial. There is a form of self-deception common to us all, and especially in youth, by which we admit the general law, but try to shirk its personal, its individual, application. It is the old, old story of Eden over and over again in the case of every one of us—the serpent creeping up to us, all glitter and fascination—all dulcet whisper and sinuous lies, and saying to us, "See how fair the fruit is; how much to be desired! Be as God, knowing good and evil. Thou shalt not surely die." And so the boy and the youth—aye, and in his folly the grown man too, believes that it shall not be so with him; that he will repent; that he is the darling of Providence; that he is the favourite of heaven—he the one who shall sin and shall not suffer. If others handle pitch they shall be defiled. If others take fire into their bosom

they shall be burnt; but God will indulge him. And the very spirits of evil laugh at each one going as an ox to the slaughter, when they dupe him into the fancy that, out of special regard for him, that adamant chain of moral gravitation, more lasting and binding than that by which the stars are held in their spheres, will be snapped; that sin, for him only, will change its nature, and at his approach the Gehenna of punishment be transformed into a garden of delight. Is it so, my brethren? Has there ever been any human being yet, since time began, however noble, however beautiful, however gifted, however bright with genius or radiant with fascination, who has sinned with impunity? Ah, no! God is no respecter of persons. Fire burns and water drowns, whether the sufferer be a worthless villain or whether it be a fair and gentle child. And so the moral law works, whether the sin-

ner be a David or a Judas, whether he be a publican or a priest.—*F. W. Farrar, D.D.*

(e) A child would generally stand on its feet in a gust of wind if he knew it was coming; but when the wind happens to come round a corner furiously, he may be taken off his feet. Mind you are well ballasted by prayer every morning before your vessel puts out to sea, or carrying the quantity of sail you do, you may be blown out upon the waves to your perpetual shipwreck. Watch constantly against those things which are thought to be no temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow, and when Cleopatra would have an asp to poison herself, it was brought in a basket of fair flowers. Beware of arrows shot from a golden bow, or by a woman's hand. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

SIN IN THE CHILD OF GOD.

(Verse 12.)

The text gives us the reason why Moses and Aaron were kept from going into the land of Canaan, and it suggests to us some lessons about *Sin in the child of God*. God's people sin. Not a sinless character in the Bible, but Christ. No Perfectionism on earth taught there. Sin in the child of God is—

I. Very painful to God.

There is a tone of intense grief in the text. God hates sin in all; but most of all in His own children. Our own child falling into sin, and a mere acquaintance doing so—how differently we should feel in the one case from what we should in the other! Nothing hurts God more than sin in His own children.

II. Most inexcusable.

Speaking strictly, no sin can be excused. Sin is a crime, not a misfortune; so there can be no sufficient excuse for it. This is emphatically true of the child of God: he has a higher knowledge of duty; he has experienced the evil of sin, and felt its sting; he has a new principle—the Divine life within him struggling against sin; he has God to help him—a God who is ever accessible, &c. God speaks in the text as if Moses and Aaron had nothing whatever to palliate their conduct.

III. Most disastrous in its results.

God's name is dishonoured—brought into disrepute. The text shows that God entrusts His character to the keeping of His people. We have to sanctify Him before men; and in the proportion in which we sin we fail to do so. We are the world's Bible; they learn of God through us; they too often estimate Him from our life. No one can tell the injury which is done by inconsistent professors of religion! The weak stumble; the wicked are encouraged in their sins; the worldly have false impressions of God and His religion. It is an awful thing for a Christian to sin.

IV. Very certain of punishment.

"Be sure your sin will find you out:" this is true of the child of God. His sin will give him pain. None of us shall sin with impunity. Moses was the friend of God (Exod. xxxiii. 11), yet God could not pass by his sin. God's love to us does not blind Him to our faults. There is no weakness in Him towards His children, as there is often in us in our dealings with ours. He has ever visited His people for their sin; and sometimes, as in the text, though He may forgive, they have to suffer for the sin as long as they remain upon earth. The text tells us that sin is a hard and

bitter thing in the child of God. Let this incident—

1. *Make God's people more watchful.*
2. *Lead others to ponder their ways ;*
for if God visits His own children for

sin, *a fortiori*, He will not let the wicked escape.

3. *Let none forget that God can forgive sin—all sin—through Jesus Christ.—*
David Lloyd.

A REASONABLE REQUEST AND AN UNGENEROUS REFUSAL.

(Verses 14-21.)

We have in this paragraph—

I. A reasonable request.

“We are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border : let us pass,” &c. This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself.* They desired to enter Canaan from the east, crossing the Jordan ; and their direct road to the east of the Jordan was through the land of Edom. If they are not permitted to travel by that way, they must take a very circuitous route (chap. xxi. 4). They asked simply for permission to travel “by the king’s way,” and promised neither to depart from that way into the fields or vineyards, nor to make use of the wells of water without payment for the same. Their request was—

2. *Urged by forcible reasons.* (1) By the relationship existing between them. “Thus saith thy brother Israel.” The Israelites and the Edomites were descendants of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. The Israelites desire a renewal of the ancient kindnesses of their ancestors (Gen. xxxiii. 1-15). Brotherhood should promote kindness, increase mutual helpfulness, &c. (a) (2) By the sufferings which the Israelites had endured. “Thou knowest all the travel that hath befallen us : how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time ; and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers.” The sufferings they had borne at the hand of strangers should have induced their kinsfolk to succour and help them. (3) By the mercies which God had shown to Israel. “And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an Angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt,” &c.

The blessings which God had bestowed upon them should have been viewed—

(i.) As an indication that it was His will that others should aid them. His will is binding, &c. (ii.) As an example to encourage others to aid them. (iii.) As an indication of His favour towards them, which suggested that it was to the interest of others to aid them. It is perilous to resist those whom God defends ; it is prudent to further their designs, &c. (4) Because Israel would guarantee Edom against any loss. “We will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells,” &c. (verse 17). “We will go by the highway : and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it,” &c. (verse 19). To nomad chiefs, rich in flocks and herds, wells of water are a most precious and important property. Kalisch : “The possession of a well in arid regions not unfrequently causes strife and warfare between whole tribes, and the protection of his wells is a prominent object of solicitude to an Arab sheikh.” (b) But the Israelites promise to respect these rights of property ; and to cause the Edomites no loss or damage. Thus the arguments by which they enforce their request are conspicuously fair and reasonable.

II. An ungenerous refusal.

“And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. . . . And he said, Thou shalt not go through,” &c. (vers. 20, 21). This refusal of the Edomites probably arose from—

1. *Fear that if they complied with the request of the Israelites the result might be injurious to them.* They did

not believe the promises made by the Israelites; and they feared "what so great an army once got in might do; they are not usually so easily removed." The fear was not unnatural, &c.

2. *Envy at the growing power of Israel.* The Edomites knew of their deliverance from Egypt; of their victory over the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8-13); of their immense number; and of their pretensions in respect to Canaan (Exod. xv. 14-17); and they were envious of their increasing strength.

3. *Remembrance of the ancient injury inflicted by Jacob upon Esau.* "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited." "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The nearer the relationship between the offender and the offended,

the wider is the breach and the more difficult is the reconciliation. The memory of an injury such as that which Jacob inflicted upon Esau it is perhaps impossible to wipe out; it is handed down from generation to generation, &c. The recollection of that injury imparted resoluteness and severity to the refusal of Edom to grant the request of Israel.

Conclusion.

1. *Learn that no alienation is so wide and bitter as that between brethren or other near relations.* (c)

2. *Where such alienation exists, let us seek to bring about reconciliation—a complete healing of the breach.* (d)

3. *Cultivate brotherly kindness.*

4. *Respect the rights of others even when the assertion of those rights is carried to an extreme.* "Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; wherefore Israel turned away from him."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Two days after the terrible battle of Chickamanga, I was passing over the battle-field. In a thick clump of bushes, on the side of a ravine, I saw a young man seated beside a tree with his arm bandaged. Seeing that his arm was badly wounded, I asked why he had not gone to the hospital in the rear. He replied, pointing to a corpse that lay near by, "That is my brother; and I am determined never to leave him until he is buried." I had the dead man buried, and the wounded brother taken care of.—*Memphis Advocate*, quoted in *Dict. of Illust.*

(b) The special necessity of a supply of water in a hot climate has always involved among the Eastern nations questions of property of the highest importance, and sometimes given rise to serious contention. To give a name to a well denoted a right of property, and to stop or destroy one once dug was a military expedient, a mark of conquest or an encroachment on territorial right claimed or existing in its neighbourhood. Thus the well Beersheba was opened, and its possession attested with special formality by Abraham (Gen. xxi. 30, 31). In the hope of expelling Isaac from their neighbourhood, the Philistines stopped up the wells which had been dug in Abraham's time and called by his name, an encroachment which was stoutly resisted by the followers of Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 15-33; see also 2 Kings iii. 19; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10). The Kuran notices abandoned wells as signs of desertion

(Sur. xxii.). To acquire wells which they had not themselves dug, was one of the marks of favour foretold to the Hebrews on their entrance into Canaan (Dout. vi. 11). To possess one is noticed as a mark of independence (Prov. v. 15), and to abstain from the use of wells belonging to others, a disclaimer of interference with their property (Num. xx. 17, 19; xxi. 22). Similar rights of possession, actual and hereditary, exist among the Arabs of the present day. Wells, Burckhardt says, in the interior of the desert, are exclusive property, either of a whole tribe, or of individuals whose ancestors dug the wells. If the well be the property of a tribe, the tents are pitched near it, whenever rain water becomes scarce in the desert; and no other Arabs are then permitted to water their camels. But if the well belongs to an individual, he receives presents from all strange tribes who pass or encamp at the well, and refresh their camels with the water of it. The property of such a well is never alienated; and the Arabs say that the possessor is sure to be fortunate, as all who drink of the water bestow on him their benedictions (comp. Num. xxi. 17, 18; Judg. i. 15).—*H. W. Phillott, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(c) We see by lamentable experience, that every toy and trifle maketh debate, not only between dearest friends, but between nearest kinsfolk, that they can never be reconciled. And as no band knitteth faster, and bindeth closer than this, while love and liking lasteth;

so no contention is so bitter, no hatred so deadly, as that of brethren and others that are near in blood, when the knot is broken and dissolved. The tender glass when it is once broken, will never be set together again. No water proveth so exceeding cold as that which was once heated exceeding hot; so no hatred proveth like to the hatred of brethren, which are often found merciless one toward another, and such as can never be appeased; as we see in the malice of Cain toward Abel. This it is that Solomon pointeth out in Prov. xviii. 19: "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and their contentions are as a bar of a castle." For as they loved most entirely and dearly before, so when once they grow enemies, they hate one another most extremely, whose hearts are as stony walls that cannot be pierced, and as bars of iron that cannot be broken. Now as the Prophet teacheth, that it is a "good and comely thing for brethren to dwell together in unity;" so it is a noisome and unnatural thing to behold greatest envy and most mortal malice, where the greatest and nearest bands of kindred should knit together.—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) A day of reconciliation! A family made one. Brethren coming together again after long separation. It is a beautiful picture. Why should it not be completed, when it needs completion, in our own day amongst ourselves? Ministers sometimes have misunderstandings, and say unkind things about one another, and exile one another from love and confidence for years. Is there never to be a day of reconciliation and Christian forgetfulness of wrong, even when positive wrong has been done? Families and households often get awry. The younger brother differs from his eldest bro-

ther; sisters fall out. One wants more than belongs to him; another is knocked to the wall because he is weak; and there comes into the heart bitterness and alienation; and often brothers and sisters never have a kind word to say about one another. Is it always to be so? Don't merely make it up, don't patch it up, don't cover it up; go right down to the base. You will never be made one, until you meet at the Cross, and bear Him say, "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." It is in Christ's sorrow that we are to forget our woes, in Christ's sacrifice that we find the answer to our sin, in Christ's union with the Father that we are to find all true and lasting reconciliation. But who is to begin? That is the wonderful question that is often asked us. Who is to begin? One would imagine that there were some very nice people about who only wanted somebody to tell them who was to begin. They want to be reconciled, only they don't know *who* is to begin. I can tell you. *You* are! That is exactly how it is. But I am the eldest,—yes, and *therefore* ought to begin. But I am the youngest. Then why should the youngest be an obstinate, pig-headed child? Who are you that you should not go and throw yourself down at your brother's feet and say, "I have done you wrong, pardon me"? Who is to begin? *You!* Which? *Both!* When? *Now!* Oh! beware of the morality which says, "I am looking for the opportunity, and if things should so get together—" Sir! death may be upon you before you get to the end of your long melancholy process of self-laudation and anti-Christian logic.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE DEATH OF AARON.

(Verses 22-29.)

Let us notice—

I. The death of Aaron.

Concerning the death of this distinguished man there are three things which we may profitably consider.

(a) He died—

1. *As a consequence of sin.* His death was not the result of disease, or of the exhaustion of the vitality of his body. It is true that he was an aged man; "Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in Mount Hor;" yet he died not by reason of old age and its infirmities; his death was not in the ordinary course of nature; but was a direct consequence of sin. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the

land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against My Word at the water of Meribah." He is distinctly called "the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16); yet now he must die because of his sin, without entering the Promised Land, without even beholding it. God is rigidly impartial in His dealings with His creatures. "There is no respect of persons with God." If His people sin, they must suffer for their sin.

2. *By the appointment of God.* There was nothing accidental in the death of Aaron; everything connected with it was arranged by the Lord. He determined the *time* of his death. "Is there not an appointed time to man

upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." "My times are in Thy hand." The Lord determined the *place* of his death. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; . . . and Aaron shall die there." The *circumstances* of his death were also arranged by the Lord. "Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments," &c. Nothing is left to accident, or chance, or human choice; all was Divinely appointed. Our Lord hath "the keys of Hades and of death." His people cannot die prematurely or accidentally. All who seek to live in harmony with His will, all who are moving in the line of His purposes, pass hence in accordance with His arrangements. (b)

3. The death of Aaron was his *introduction to life and to congenial society*. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." "Aaron, though he dies for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease and in honour. He is not 'cut off from his people,' as the expression usually is concerning those that die by the hand of Divine justice, but he is 'gathered to his people,' as one that died in the arms of Divine grace." The expression "gathered unto his people" suggests two ideas:—(1) Death is the way to life. The expression under consideration cannot be a mere poetical phrase for death; for in many places it is specified over and above the fact of death (see Gen. xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33; ver. 26; Deut. xxxii. 50). Nor can the expression relate to burial; for in this sense it would not be true of Aaron, nor yet of Abraham, to whom it was also applied, nor yet of Moses.

Besides which the fact of burial is in many places specified over and above the being "gathered unto his people" (see Gen. xv. 15; xxv. 8, 9; xxxv. 29; 1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43, &c.). "The only assignable sense, therefore, is," as Dean Alford says, "that of reference to a state of further personal existence beyond death; and the expression thus forms a remarkable testimony to the Old Testament belief in a future state." When Aaron died he did not cease to be; but rather entered upon a larger, intenser, fuller life. When his lifeless body lay upon Mount Hor, his living spirit passed to the great assembly of the good in the presence of God. At death the body "returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." (2) Death is the way to congenial social life. "Gathered unto his people." Aaron at death passed neither into isolation nor into the uncongenial society of strangers or aliens; but to his own people, to persons of kindred sympathies and purposes and interests. After death men go to their own place, and to their own company. The good pass swiftly to their "Father's house," and to the great multitude who are gathered there. O, death is not terrible to the good! It is the way by which they pass to the holy and blessed fellowship of glorified saints, the way to our permanent and joyous home, the way to the presence of our God. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." (c)

II. The appointment of Aaron's successor.

"Strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son. . . . And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son." The sacred high-priestly vestments were taken off Aaron before his death, that they might not be defiled by contact with the dead. By putting them upon Eleazar, he was invested with the office to which they belonged. In this arrangement I discover—

1. *Kindness to Aaron*. It assured him—(1) That his office would be filled; that his work would be carried

on, &c. Interested in the religious welfare of the people as he was, this must have been cheering to him. (2) That this office would be filled by his own son; that the high-priesthood would continue in his own family. This must have been a gratification to the fatherly instincts of his nature.

2. *A guarantee of the continuance of the Church of God.* Aaron dies; but God has a successor at hand to take Aaron's place and to carry on his work. Moses dies leaving his great work incomplete, but Joshua, a brave and noble man, is ready to take up the great leader's enterprise, and carry it onward to a triumphant close. The whirlwind carries the faithful and heroic Prophet of Horeb, as on the wings of some swift and strong angel, to his well-earned rest; but Elisha, a worthy successor even of so distinguished a servant of the Lord, waits to catch the falling of his master's mantle and to prosecute his master's mission. And now, good and faithful ministers are gathered to their fathers; but the Lord Christ ever lives, and ever raises up worthy successors to fill the vacant places. The continuance of the Church depends not upon the services of even its most gifted and holy ministers, but upon its Divine Head. This is—(1) Humbling to our pride. God can carry on His work without our poor services. Our place will soon be filled by another, and perhaps better filled than it ever was by us. (2) Encouraging to our faith. The work so dear to us will be carried on when we have passed away. Though the human workers die, the Divine Master and Supreme Worker ever lives, and ever carries forward His cause towards its final triumph.

III. The mourning because of Aaron's death.

"And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel." This national mourning suggests—

1. *The worth of faithful ministers.* Aaron had rendered valuable services to the Israelites; he had rendered essen-

tial service in the work of their emancipation from Egyptian bondage; he had entreated God again and again for them in their rebellions; he had stood between the more than fourteen thousand dead, and the living, and by his intercession stayed the progress of the dreadful plague. But now he has gone: he will serve them no more. Well may they weep. The loss of faithful ministers is one of the greatest losses that can befall society. They render the most valuable services, they exercise the most salutary and inspiring influence in society. (d)

2. *The appreciation of blessings when they are withdrawn from us, which were not valued when they were ours.* While Aaron was with them the Israelites "were often murmuring against him, threatening indeed to kill him, wishing that there was an end of him, speaking against him, and in every way discouraging him in his work. But when he was dead they mourned for him; they found their loss when it was too late to value him. This is but an example of human nature. We very seldom value our chiefest blessings until we are made to feel their worth by the loss of them. It has often happened in the case of the Christian minister and congregation, that he has been undervalued while he was testifying God's truth, and has been much mourned for when taken away." (Comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33).

"Like birds whose beauties languish, half-conceal'd
Till mounted on the wing, their glossy
plumes
Expanded, shine with azure, green, and
gold;
How blessings brighten as they take their
flight!"—*Young.*

Shakspeare also gives luminous expression to this truth:—

"It so falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth,
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours."

Let us appreciate the gifts of Heaven while we have them, &c.

In conclusion, learn—

1. *The universality of death.* The

gifted, the great, the beautiful, the holy, all die. We must die. Let us live that death shall be to us great gain. (e)

2. *The imperfection of the Aaronic*

priesthood (see Heb. vii. 11, 18, 19, 23, 28; viii. 7; ix. 25; x. 1-4, 11).

3. *The perfection of the Priesthood of Christ* (see Heb. vii. 22-28; viii. 6; ix. 23-28; x. 10-14).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Behold then the three persons, Aaron, Moses, and Eleazar, going up the mountain. The first is distinguished by his priestly habit. He is clad in the mitre, the ephod, the fine linen, the Urim and the Thummim, and those bells, which formerly when heard within the holy of holies told of his life, now seem sounding the signal for Death to meet him on the summit, and their tinkle lessening up the mountain strikes like a death-watch in the ear of the people of the great congregation assembled before their tents to trace the progress and to witness the event, not a murmur or groan heard throughout them all, but millions, it may be, weeping in silence. See with what calm, majestic, uninterrupted and un-reverted steps the three pursue their journey, talking perhaps of that Promised Land which one of them is never to see, which another is to see from a mountain in Moab, and which the third only is to enter, or talking of that Better Country to which the first is so near. Mark the eager look cast forward by Aaron toward the top of the hill, as if he expected the Angel of Death to be waiting for him there; but when he gains the summit, lo! all is empty and sternly silent, the victim is there but no wood and no fire for the offering; one mighty sacrificer has arrived, but the other is not yet come to keep the dread engagement. Turn then ere he comes, and see from the mount ten thousand times ten thousand torn, ruptured, rent, serrated and savage hills standing up as witnesses to the covenanted meeting and catastrophe at hand; not a blade of grass or drop of water in view, nothing but a bare and blasted wilderness of sand and stone, and thunder-split crag, as if a flood of fire had crossed, and torn, and tortured it into the similitude of hell; including the vast valley of Arabah which unites the Red and the Dead Seas, both of which are visible, and on its western side the great sandy desert, surmounted in the extreme distance by the Sinaitic range. Mark the last glance cast by Aaron to the camp and the multitude far below, a glance speaking of sorrow and of remorse too, since it is owing to his sin at Meribah that he is dying so soon, and dying so publicly, but speaking still more of submission, confidence, and hope in the mercy of God. See the slow and solemn manner in which the hand of Moses, although the younger brother, tenderly, like a mother her babe at eventide, strips Aaron of his garments. And behold now the high priest clothed only with his long grey hair, as is that ardent sun overhead with his old beams, laying himself down

upon the hill, watching with an eye of love and pride his son Eleazar, as Moses arrays him with ephod, and linen, and breast-plate, and mitre; and as the bright rays from the Urim and Thummim flash for the last time upon his dim and dying eye, blessing his noble son whose ornament they are henceforward to be, and blessing the brother with whom he has so long held sweet counsel and united in marvellous achievement; and then fixing his look upward as if waiting for the advent and the dart of his adversary, who comes not; but instead there is heard a "still, small voice," saying, "Come up hither," and lo! a dead body lies on the granite of Mount Hor, and a living soul, suddenly clothed by the hands of angels with robes that shall never be stripped away, has joined the great assembly in the heavens.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) We strive, oftentimes almost unconsciously perhaps, to re-arrange or re-ordain particular circumstances, and even whole scenes in our life and in the lives of others. And with a still more importunate and sorrowful eagerness do we seek to have some power in arranging for life's close. We would not dare to take the key of death in our own hand, but we would touch it while it lies in His. *Not now, or not there, or not thus*, we are always saying.

"*Nor now*," we say, when the father is called to leave the family of which he is the whole stay. "Let him live, let a few weeks elapse, let his family be provided for, let his work be done!" It is done, is the answer, His fatherless children are provided for; I have taught him to leave them with Me. "The Father of the fatherless, the Husband of the widow, is God in His holy habitation."

"*Not now*," we say, when the mother has heard the home-call, and with a calmness and courage greater than those of the soldier in battle, is rising above all her cares, and becoming a child again, at the threshold of the heavenly home. "Oh, not now! Who will check the waywardness, encourage the virtues, receive the confidences, soothe the little sorrows, and train the loves of those infant hearts? Who will teach the evening prayer, and listen to the Sabbath hymn? Who can give a mother's care, and feel a mother's love?" "I," saith the Shepherd, "I will gather the lambs with mine arm, and carry them in *My* bosom. I will forget no prayer of the dying mother's heart. I will treasure in *My* heart the yearnings of her life over her children, and the unutterable compassions of her dying hour; and when many years have

sped, and she has been long in heaven, these children will remember her in their holiest and happiest moments, and by their walk and their work will be proving that she did not live in vain, that she 'finished the work that was given her to do.'

Or, we say, "*Not there*, oh, not there! away on the sea—a thousand miles from land—let him not die there, and be dropped into the unfathomed grave, where the unstable waves must be his only monument, and the winds the sole mourners of the place! Or not in some distant city or far-off land—strangers around his bed, strangers closing his eyes, and then carrying him to a stranger's grave. Let him come home and die amid the whisperings and breathings of the old unquenchable love." "He is going home," is the answer, "and going by the best and only way. I can open the gate Beautiful in any part of the earth or sea. I can set up the mystic ladder, the top of which reaches to heaven, in the loneliest island, at the furthest ends of the earth, and your friends will flee to the shelter of *My* presence all the more fully because yours is far away."

Or, we say, "*Not thus*, not through such agonies of body, or faintings of spirit, or tremblings of faith—not in unconsciousness—not without dying testimonies. Let there be outward as well as inward peace. Let mention be made of Thy goodness. Let there be foretellings and foreshadowings of the glory to which, as we trust, they are going. Oh, shed down the light, the fragrantcy of heaven upon their dying bed!" The answer is, "They are there, and you are so dull of sense that you perceive them not. Your friend is filled with the 'peace that passeth understanding,' and safe in the everlasting arms."

Thus, brethren, the *time*, and the *place*, and the *circumstances*, are all arranged by the wisdom and the will of Him who holds the keys, and we could not, even if we had our own will and way, make anything better than it is in the perfect plan. Better! everything would be worse—inconceivably worse if we had the keys. Let us trust them, with a loyal loving trust, with Him who graciously says to us, "Fear not;" One who, in this as in all other things, will treat us and give us according to our faith.—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) Death is but a going home. A child is away at school, and the vacation is near at hand; and you may be sure that the father and mother long to see the child more than the child wants to see father and mother. So, according to the good old custom, the father takes the carriage, and wends his way to the school, perhaps with, perhaps without, intimations to the child of his coming. In the midst of his tasks on the last day, the child is suddenly greeted by the voice and presence of his father; and no sooner are the first salutations exchanged than the father says, "Are your things ready? We go to-morrow." Wine is not so sparkling as the joy in the child's heart. He can neither eat,

nor sleep, nor play. The thought that his father has come, and that he is going home to see his mother, and brothers, and sisters, has quite intoxicated him. By such glorious images as this God is pleased to represent our departure from the present life. The Lord Jesus Christ shall come to our poor old weather-beaten school-house in this world, and say to us, "Come home! you are wanted."

Heaven is not, then, a great bleak shore to which you are driven by the storm, and where you are cast among savage inhabitants. Heaven is a blessed place of rest. It is your home. You have friends there, the chiefest among whom is He that loved you, that gave Himself for you, that has ever watched over you during your earthly pilgrimage, and that soon, very soon, will come for you, as already He has for yours. They are glorious there; and in all their glory, if they could but speak a word to us, would it be such a poor stumbling word as that which they spoke in the hour of death? If they could speak to us from the eternal world, what hope and consolation would they give us!—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) Death is, in every case, an event of most momentous consequences. . . . But the death of a minister of the Gospel, in addition to the consequences which affect his own destiny, involves others which extend to his flock. If he has been faithful unto death, his decease is in mercy to himself, but it must at the same time be in judgment to his church. The testimony of a witness for God to an unbelieving generation is finished—a herald of salvation is withdrawn—an ambassador of Christ is recalled—a light of the world, which has guided many, and might have guided more, into the haven of eternal peace, is extinguished. It is not the death of a friend merely, however valued, or a relative, however dear, whose affection soothed the sorrows of time, and softened the rugged path of life; but it is the removal of one whose solicitude watched for the soul, promoted its salvation, and diffused, or aimed to diffuse, a beneficial influence over its eternal existence. What arithmetic can estimate the greatness of such a calamity? Instead of that living voice which, both by the eloquence of preaching, and the still holier and more elevating eloquence of prayer, often lifted the rapt hearers to heaven, and matured them for its glories, they have nothing now but the cold and silent marble, which perpetuates, with his honoured name, their own incalculable loss.—*J. Angell James.*

(e) All must die. The fact is so old and every day, that, like the sun, few people think of it or look at it. It is otherwise, indeed, with those who see the solemn reality approaching themselves, and who then, for the first time, feel its strangeness, its importance, its awfulness, and how little prepared they are for it. They resemble one who has fallen asleep on a railway, and, starting up, sees the engine just upon him, and has hardly time,

by one wild cry, to commend himself to the mercy of God, ere he is crushed into non-existence. Something like this was the cry of Hoffman, the German writer, who, when after a thoughtless career he felt himself approaching his end, and was told to prepare for death, turned his face away and said, "*And must I at last begin to think about God?*" Truly says his biographer, "Sorrowfuller words were never spoken by man." Far from

us be it to say that these cries are never answered—we believe that, when sincere, they always are. But, alas! how foolish to delay their utterance! how foolish to expect that there shall always be time given to utter them! and how much wiser to close with Christ's offer of mercy now, and now, ere it be too late, to begin to think seriously, lovingly, prayerfully, and hopefully of God!—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT.

(Verses 23-29.)

I. The common destiny of man.

"Aaron shall be gathered unto his people." At death the body is gathered to the generations that are gone. One generation is buried in the dust of another, and future generations will be entombed in our dust. When one thinks of this, how worthless appear all the mere secular distinctions of this world! There are "kings and counsellors of the earth," &c. (Job. iii. 14, 15, 19). Thither you and I are going. But not as to a final resting place. This Bible assures me that all that ever have left us are living now—thinking, active, conscious; and that the good who are living are living in the conscious presence of Infinite Love—in the heaven of the blest. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13).

II. The rigorousness of moral law.

Aaron was to die. Why? Because of a certain something which took place at Meribah, Moses and Aaron were both excluded from the Promised Land. The law demands punishment for sin even in a good man. Moral law seems to be as immutable as God Himself. Aaron went up into Mount Hor, and there he died. And his death proclaims in thunder the fact that however distinguished a man may be for his excellencies, however high he may be in the Church of God, his sin shall not go unpunished.

III. The termination of life in the midst of labour.

The work entrusted to Moses and Aaron was to conduct the children of Israel through the wilderness into the

Promised Land; and this work was unfinished. We nearly all die with our work unfinished. The farmer dies when he has only half ploughed his field; the merchant dies, &c. We are not surprised when an old tree, though prolific in its day, dies, for it dies by the law of decay; nor are we astonished that an unfruitful tree should be cut down, for it is a cumberer of the ground; but we are astonished that a tree, with its branches full of sap, with its boughs laden with fruit, with thousands reposing under its shadow, should be struck with a thunderbolt from heaven. "Thy path," O God, "is in the great waters," &c.

IV. God's agency in man's dissolution.

Why did Aaron die? He was not worn out with age. Not because there was disease rankling in his system; not because there was any external violence applied to him. Why, then, did he die? The Great One determines that he shall die, and he dies. This is always the philosophy of a man's death. Philosophy, the Bible, and reason all say, "man dies because the Great One has determined that he should die." If God has determined that the frailest organisation shall live for ever, that organisation will live for ever; and so also, if He determines it, the most robust, the strong and vigorous, dies in a moment (see Job vii. 1; xiv. 5, 20; Psa. xc. 3; Job i. 21).

V. The promptitude with which Providence supplies the places of the dead.

Aaron must die, but there is Eleazar standing by his side ready to step into

his place. This is the order of Providence. A merchant dies, and another man stands by his side ready to carry on his business. A lawyer dies, &c. A statesman dies, &c. A minister leaves a pulpit, his voice becomes silent in death, and the people mourn; but God has another minister standing by ready to step into the place of the departed, and to carry on his work. Oh, how this encourages my faith in the progress of Divine truth in this world!

But it is certainly humbling to our pride. My friend, the world can do without thee. Thou art but a blade in the field; the landscape will bloom without thee.

VI. The trial of human friendships.

Moses and Eleazar were very closely related to Aaron. Moses was more than a brother to Aaron. There was a spiritual kindredship between them. There were mental affinities and spiritual affections. They were devoted to the same great purpose, they had the same plan, they were the children of the same God; and here is their trial—Aaron must die. . . .

Can it be that the great God of love, who has made us to love, and who has disposed us to give our affections to certain persons, should, by our love, make us so often wretched? There is to be a renewal of real spiritual friendship. The separation which takes place in the death of true Christian friends is more in form than in reality. In truth we become more really friends by the death separation. Death cannot destroy our loving memories of them. Death does not kill—nay, it seems but to intensify

our affection. We are one—for ever one.

VII. The painful recognition by society of its greatest losses.

The people “mourned for Aaron thirty days.”

The two greatest blessings on this earth are—the Bible and good men. I need not tell you the value of the Bible, for you know it. Glorious Book for the intellect, for the imagination, for the heart, for the world, for all ages! Blessed be God for the Bible! But next to the Bible, we value good men. Good men are as fountains welling up in the desert through which you are passing; they are lights in abounding darkness; they are salt which counteracts our tendency to corruption. But the Christian minister is the best of all men, and his loss is the greatest of all losses. A man who not only has the spirit of the Bible in him, but who has given his intellect, his genius, his powers of mind to the study of the Word of God, in order to present that Word to all classes of men, dealing out a word in season to each—a word of advice to the enquiring, of counsel to the thoughtless, of caution to the young, of comfort and help to the poor and suffering—I know of no man who is rendering such a service to society and to humanity as he. Such a man was Aaron. He was more; he was an orator. God says, “My servant Aaron can speak well.” But he dies. His eloquent tongue is silent in death; and they wept thirty days.—*David Thomas, D.D. Abridged from “The Christian World,” March 28th, 1861.*

THE REMOVAL OF A DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD.

(Verses 25-29.)

In this death there were—

I. The express appointment and arrangement of God.

The departure of God's servants is never accidental or unforeseen.

II. The last attentions and ministrations of pious friendship.

Such ministrations and attentions are a privilege to—

1. *Those about to depart.*

2. *Those who for a season are to survive.*

III. The tokens of Divine favour.

In one respect Aaron's death was a sign of Divine displeasure, but this displeasure was only partial. He was allowed to go to the place of his death in his robes of office.

III. The pledge of perpetuity to the Divine cause.

A successor was immediately, authoritatively, and unquestionably secured to the office that Aaron held.

V. The prospect of immortal happiness.

Mount Hor was near enough to permit a vision of Canaan.—*J. Parsons.* From "*The Biblical Museum.*"

THE SORROWS OF BEREAVEMENT.

(Verse 29.)

What an impressive scene is this! a whole nation bowed down by one common grief. The many thousands of Israel are mourning the death of one of the most noble and useful of men.

We too shall soon "be gathered unto our people." Like waves which chase each other to the shore, or like clouds which on the heels of each other fast travel o'er the face of the blue heavens, are we treading in the wake of "the great departed," and soon shall arrive at the solemn bourne of our pilgrimage.

"Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."
—*Longfellow.*

The tears of this vast congregation are sadly suggestive. Let us look into the reasons of the mourning of this nation.

I. A great and good man had been removed from their midst.

"Aaron was dead."

1. He was *a holy man*. The lustre of his life is clouded by a few imperfections and sins; but he was unquestionably a good man. "Aaron, the saint of the Lord" (Psa. cvi. 16).

2. He was *an eloquent man*. "Aaron the Levite—I know that he can speak well" (Exod. iv. 14). This great gift he had used in the highest service. It had been employed in obtaining the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage; in speaking unto them words of reproof, counsel, instruction, and exhortation; and in speaking unto God on their behalf.

3. He filled a position of the highest honour and of the greatest importance.

Under God he was the religious head of this nation. To him was granted to approach nearer to the Most High than any man of that age, except Moses. More than once his intercessions had averted the Divine anger from the guilty people. But at the summons of God he has left them for ever. "Aaron was dead." (a)

II. A great and good man had been removed while toiling for their welfare.

Aaron was not a useless member of this great congregation; he had not become unfit for service; he was fulfilling the important functions of his sacred office. Yet God called him away, and his "purposes were broken off." And still men are called away by God in the midst of service and usefulness. The statesman, the minister, the author, the physician, the parent, are sometimes thus summoned hence. To us there is much mystery in this. We cannot explain it; but we can reverently bow before it. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." (b)

III. A great and good man had been removed when apparently his services could hardly be spared.

To our poor mind it seems that Israel could not afford to lose Aaron. We think that they needed his experience to counsel them, his faith to plead with God for them, his brave spirit to encourage them and to assist in leading them to the Promised Land. But God is independent of even the most distinguished and useful men. When such men are removed, here is our encouragement—God ever lives and works; Christ

over lives and works ; and "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." (c)

IV. A great and good man had been removed, and in his removal many had parted with a true and loving friend.

In that sorrowing nation, I have no doubt, there were not a few who had found in Aaron a kindred spirit, and rejoiced in the friendship of his affectionate heart. And more than this, Moses was his brother, and Eleazar and Ithamar were his sons. But the brother, the sons, the friends of Aaron, must all take their leave of him for ever in this world. The death of a true friend is one of the sorest sorrows that our hearts are called upon to suffer ; and wrings from us the bitterest tears.

Conclusion.

1. *Prize the friends and the great and*

good men whom God sends amongst us while they are yet with us. Israel did not feel the worth of Aaron until he was taken from them. Let us avoid their error, &c.

2. *Be thankful for Christianity.* It takes the sting and the bitterness from death. It reveals a blessed immortality, and bestows the title to it. (d)

3. *Remember that we too must pass away from this world.* "It is appointed unto men once to die." "Here have we no continuing city."

4. *Live as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth."* Our home is not here ; our rest is not here. "Our citizenship is in heaven." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c. (Matt. vi. 19-21). "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." So death will be great gain.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The world can have no greater or richer boon conferred on it than the gift of a great man. The history of the world is but the history of its great men. God carries on society by such. They are the hinges on which it has turned. They measure whole ages for themselves. They are the mountain summits in the great path of human progress—the most towering landmarks of the past, and the hopes of the future. Such, too, are the princes in Israel—great men who are not the property of a denomination but of the Church, with a breadth and richness of intellect, with a nobleness of character, and a devotion to great principles that cannot be confined to the range of one sect, whose movements stir the whole Church of God, and whose departure leaves a mighty gap. We admire and honour such men wherever we find them. We thank God for every great, noble-hearted, and honest servant of Christ. In proportion as the service rendered by such persons is real and valuable, do we learn to think highly of them, to depend on them, and to feel as if we knew not how their loss is to be supplied.—*John Riddell.*

(b) If we believe in God, in a God of order and wisdom, and especially if we believe in Jesus, the infinite support of our life, we dare not doubt for one moment, that when a great or good man dies, his whole appointed work on earth was done, that Providence had no more for him to do, that all he had to do for the world, or for his family, was completed and summed up. Now a worthy and beloved parent does not cease his influence when he dies ; he rules

his children still, in many cases with mightier power than by his living voice. Well may we feel that he has left such memories and impressions of his views and principles written on their hearts, and now hallowed to perpetual remembrance by the sanctifying power of death, that he, though dead, shall guide them by their very relation to him. Their very love to him indeed must make them mourn ; but still, no loss is irreparable ; no human loss is absolute.—*Ibid.*

(c) Let all this carry up our love, and trust, and loyalty, to Jesus alone. It is the visible mark of inferiority of all others, *that they die.* However great, they are limited in their greatness. They have had but a certain work to do, a limited power to put forth. They could not serve the continuous wants of the world—they do their little work or their great work, and then they are removed. Their longer continuance might turn out a hindrance. It is the unapproachable distinction of Jesus, that He remains for ever the Prince of Peace, the grand Head of the nation, to whom all earthly princes are subject. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Over him death hath no power ; the taint of corruption cannot infect Him. No voice shall bewail His failure, no nation weep His funeral, no cry of a pierced world tell that its hope and star is gone. He liveth and reigneth for ever. He is our refuge still in times of trouble. Friends die and great men disappear from the stage ; but the Saviour remains with sympathy to dry up all our tears, with power to sustain under the loss of earthly supports. As the hearts we cling

to become still, then He opens all His heart to us, and in contact with it our own heart grows still and calm, and learns that, in taking from us the earthly prop. He was but drawing us nearer Himself.—*Ibid.*

(d) Life and immortality have been brought clearly to light in the Gospel—in Him who hath Himself risen “the firstfruits of them that sleep.” And hence the Christian alone looks with cheerful hopefulness in death. Others may face it with steadfastness or calm—he alone lies down to sleep in hope. Not only without fear, but in joy he enters the dark valley, and friends lay him in the narrow prison-house, “dust to dust, in the hope of a joyful resurrection.” “For this corruptible must put on incorruption,” &c. (1 Cor. xv. 53-57).

It is this fact of Resurrection which leads the apostle to say that we who remain alive should not sorrow for our dead ones, “even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13). Why, indeed, should we thus sorrow, who believe that as “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him?” They who had no such faith, might well weep as they buried their Dead out of sight, and knew not whether they should evermore see the light of life. But why should we hopelessly weep for those who are resting with the Lord—who have gone before to be for ever with Him? Why, indeed, but for the faintness of our hearts and the weakness of our flesh? Let us sorrow

rather for ourselves, that our sight is so dim and our faith so dull—that we are so little able to look beyond things which are “seen and temporal” to those which are “unseen and eternal.” The Living, rather than the Dead, may have a claim upon our sorrowful regard. For the Dead have gone beyond our anxiety. They have entered into their rest. They are asleep in Jesus; while the Living, who are around us, and with us, may be wandering far from Him, may be wounding Him by their sins, may be “crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame.” It is as if we were to weep for the child resting in its father’s bosom, sheltered in a happy home, rather than for the child who has gone astray in darkness, and cannot find its homeward way. It is as if we were to sorrow for the mariner who has found a safe harbour, and rests in peace, rather than for the storm-tossed sailor in the open main, around whom the billows may be heaving high, and over whom the sky may be darkening to his doom. No, brethren, let us not sorrow for those who are with God, safe in a Father’s house, sheltered in the haven of eternal rest. But let us be anxious and careful for the living, that we may help them, and guide them by God’s blessing in a right way; and for ourselves, that we may “know the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes.”—*Principal Tulloch, D.D.*

CHAPTER XXI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *King Arad the Canaanite.* Rather, “the Canaanite King of Arad.” Arad was a royal city of the Canaanites (Josh. xii. 14), and was situated on a hill called *Tell Arad*, twenty Roman miles south of Hebron. Of the city nothing remains save some ruins.

Which dwelt in the south. Heb. “in the Negeb.” See on chap. xiii. 17.

By the way of the spies. הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלְלוֹת, an expression of uncertain meaning. Fuerst says that *Atharim* is the plural of *Athar*, a place, district; and is the “proper name of a place in the south of Palestine.” So also the LXX., A. Clarke, Horsley, Patrick. “But the *Chaldee*, *Samar*, and *Syr.* render it with much greater probability as an appellative noun formed from הָרַר with א prosthet., and synonymous with

הַדֶּרֶךְ הַלְלוֹת, the spies (chap. xiv. 6). The way of the spies was the way through the desert of Zin, which the Israelitish spies had previously taken to Canaan (chap. xiii. 21). The territory of the King of Arad extended to the southern frontier of Canaan, to the desert of Zin, through which the Israelites went from Kadesh to Mount Hor.”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Hormah.* Margin: “utter destruction” (see on chap. xiv. 45). “The seeming inconsistency between Num. xxi. 3, and Judg. i. 17, may be relieved by supposing that the vow made at the former period was fulfilled at the latter, and the name (the root of which הָרַם constantly occurs in the sense of, to devote to destruction, or utterly to destroy) given by anticipa-

tion."—*Dr. H. Hayman, in Bible Dict.* The Canaanites seem to have resumed possession after the departure of the Israelites, and to have restored the ancient name. It was not until the time of the Judges that the vow, which Moses and the Israelites made at this time, was completely executed.

Verse 4. *And they journeyed from Mount Hor, &c.* The Edomites having refused them a passage through their land, they were compelled to turn their steps towards the Red Sea, and go round the land of Edom. Their way was down the Arabah until they drew near to Akabah (Ezion-Geber, Deut. ii. 8), then "they turned up one of the Wadys on the left, and so made their way by the back of the mountain of Seir to the land of Moab on the east of the Dead Sea."

The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. Travelling in the Arabah was likely to produce discouragement. Mr. Grove thus writes of it: "The surface is dreary and desolate in the extreme. 'A more frightful desert,' says Dr. Robinson, 'it had hardly been our lot to behold . . . loose gravel and stones everywhere furrowed with the beds of torrents . . . blocks of porphyry brought down by the torrents among which the camels picked their way with great difficulty . . . a lone shrub of the ghûdah the almost only trace of vegetation.' This was at the ascent from the *Wady el-Jeib* to the floor of the great valley itself. Further south, near Ain el-Weibeh, it is a rolling gravelly desert with round naked hills of considerable elevation. At Wady Ghurundel it is 'an expanse of shifting sands, broken by innumerable undulations and low hills,' and 'countersected by a hundred water-courses' . . . Nor is the heat less terrible than the desolation, and all travellers, almost without exception, bear testimony to the difficulties of journeying in a region where the sirocco appears to blow almost without intermission."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 5. *This light bread; i.e., the*

manna. According to Fuerst, the adjective in the Heb. when applied to food, conveys the idea of *contemptible, starving*.

Verse 6. *Fiery serpents.* Heb., lit., burning snakes. The adjective does not point to the bright colour of the snakes, but to the inflammatory effect of their bite. Venomous reptiles of various kinds abound in the neighbourhood (comp. Deut. viii. 15). The burning snake must not be identified with the "fiery flying serpent" of Isa. xiv. 29; xxx. 6.

Verse 8. *Make thee a fiery serpent; i.e., a serpent of a similar appearance to those which had bitten the people.* This similarity of aspect was an essential element of the symbolism.

Upon a pole. Heb., a standard or ensign.

Verse 10. *Oboth.* In chap. xxxii., 41-43, two other stations are mentioned in this part of their journey before Oboth. From Hor they went to Zalmonah, from Zalmonah to Punon, and from Punon to Oboth. The exact site of those places is not very certain. Zalmonah was probably in the Wâdy Ithm, "a low gap in the hills, which turns the eastern range of the Arabah, and through which the Israelites must have passed on their way to Moab. It is still one of the regular roads to Petra, and in ancient times seems to have been the main approach from Elath or Akaba, as it is the only road from the south which enters Petra through the Sik."—*Stanley. Sin. and Pal.* Entering the Wâdy Ithm, "the route of the Israelites took a sharp turn, and ran thenceforward in a north-easterly direction." Punon or Phinon, according to Eusebius and Jerome, "was situated between Petra and Zoar." This locality suits the requirements of the history. "Oboth was north of Punon, east of the northern part of Edom, and is pretty certainly the same as the present pilgrim halting-place el-Ahsa."—*Speaker's Comm.* But really the exact site cannot be determined.

Verse 11. *Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, &c.* Margin: "Heaps of Abarim." The name is

generally interpreted as signifying, "the heaps, or ruins, of the further regions." Keil and Del.: "ruins of the crossings over." "Ije-abarim," says Mr. Grove, "was on the S.E. boundary of the territory of Moab; not on the pasture-downs of the Mishor, the modern *Belka*, but in the *midbar*, the waste uncultivated 'wilderness' on its skirts. No identification of its situation has been attempted, nor has the name been found lingering in the locality, which, however, has yet to be explored. If there is any connexion between the Ije-Abarim and the Har-Abarim, the mountain-range opposite Jericho, then Abarim is doubtless a general appellation for the whole of the highland east of the Dead Sea."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 12. *Valley of Zared*. More correctly: "the brook of Zered." Dr. Hayman says, this is "a brook or valley running into the Dead Sea near its S.E. corner, which Dr. Robinson with some probability suggests as identical with the *Wady el Ahsy*. It lay between Moab and Edom, and is the limit of the proper term of the Israelites' wandering (Deut. ii. 14)."—*Bibl. Dict.* Keil and Del., however, suggest that "the *Wady el Ahsy* must already have been crossed when they came to the border of Moab (verse 11). In all probability it was the *Wady Kerek*, in the upper part of its course, not far from Katrane, on the pilgrim road."

Verse 13. *The other side of Arnon*, &c. Arnon, the present *Wady el Mojob*, is a torrent which rises in the mountains of Arabia, flows through the wilderness, and falls into the Dead Sea. It "formed the boundary between Moab and the Amorites, on the north of Moab, and afterwards between Moab and Israel (Reuben). From Judges xi. 18, it would seem to have been also the east border of Moab."—*Bibl. Dict.* The Israelites could not have crossed the *Mojob* itself—"so dreadfully wild and so deep a valley." The encampment of Israel must have been in the upper part of the Arnon and on its south side; apparently opposite to Kede-

moth (Deut. ii. 24, 26); and here they effected their passage across.

Verse 14. *The book of the wars of Jehovah*. "This was probably," says Dean Perowne, "a collection of ballads and songs composed on different occasions by the watch-fires of the camp, and for the most part, though not perhaps exclusively, in commemoration of the victories of the Israelites over their enemies. The title shows us that these were written by men imbued with a deep sense of religion, and who were therefore foremost to acknowledge that not their own prowess, but Jehovah's Right Hand, had given them the victory when they went forth to battle. Hence it was called, not 'The Book of the Wars of Israel,' but 'The Book of the Wars of Jehovah.' Possibly this is the book referred to in Exod. xvii. 14, especially as we read (ver. 16), that when Moses built the altar which he called *Jehovah-Nissi* (Jehovah is my banner), he exclaimed 'Jehovah will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' This expression may have given the name to the book.

"The fragment quoted from this collection is difficult, because the allusions in it are obscure . . . 'Wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of Jehovah,

"'Vaheb in Suphah and the torrent-beds;
Arnon and the slope of the torrent-beds
Which turneth to where Ar lieth,
And which leaneth upon the border of
Moab.'"—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 15. *The dwelling of Ar*, &c. "Ar was on the bank of the Arnon, lower down the stream than where the Israelites crossed. And near the spot where the upper Arnon (*Seil Saideh*) receives the tributary *Nahaliel* (ver. 19), there rises, in the midst of the meadow-land between the two torrents, a hill covered with what are doubtless the ruins of the ancient city. A neighbouring aqueduct testifies to its former importance. The peculiarity of the site points to it as 'the city that is in the midst of the river' (Josh. xiii. 9, 16; cf. Deut. ii. 36). It had been,

perhaps, heretofore the chief city of the Moabites; it now marked the limit of their territory; and it was hither accordingly that the king of Moab went to welcome Balaam (xxii. 36). It was respected by the Israelites (Deut. ii. 9, 29), as being still a frontier city of Moab, although it lay on the northern bank of what was elsewhere the boundary stream; but it had not escaped the ravages of the Amorites in the recent war (ver. 28).—*Speaker's Comm.*

This Ar is not to be identified with Rabbath-Moab, which is still called Rabbah, in the midst of the land of Moab, about midway between *Kerek* and *Wady Mojeb*.

Verse 16. *Beer*; i.e., a well; and is probably the same as Beer-elim, the "well of heroes" (Isa xv. 8).

Verses 17, 18. *Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, &c.* Perowne translates:

"Spring up, O well! sing ye to it:
Well, which the princes dug,
Which the nobles of the people bored
With the sceptre-of-office, with their staves."

Mattanah, the name of the next halting-place, signifies a gift. The site has not been identified with certainty.

Verse 19. *Nahaliet*; i.e., "torrent of God." Probably corresponded with the *Wady Encheileh*, "which runs into the *Mojeb*, the ancient Arnon, a short distance to the east of the place at which the road between Rabbah and Aroer crosses the ravine of the latter river." The name *Encheileh* is the same as *Nahaliet* with a slight alteration in its form.

Bamoth is a shorter form of *Bamoth-Baal*, i.e., the high places of Baal (chap. xxii. 41; Josh. xiii. 17). In the next verse it is spoken of as "Bamoth in the ravine." According to Josh. xiii. 17 it was near to Dibon-Gad and Beth-Baal-Meon.

Verse 20. *The country of Moab*. The margin is more correct, "the field of Moab." The expression in this place denotes a portion of the tableland having Rabbath-Ammon on the

north, and the Arnon on the south. It corresponds with "all the plain from *Medeba* to Dibon . . . and all the plain by *Medeba*" (Josh. xiii. 9, 16).

The top of Pisgah. Margin: Or "the hill." Heb.: "The top, or head, of the Pisgah." "'The Pisgah,'" says Mr. Grove, "must have been a mountain range or district, the same as, or a part of, that called the mountains of Abarim (comp. Deut. xxxii. 49, with xxxiv. 1). It lay on the east of Jordan, contiguous to the field of Moab, and immediately opposite Jericho. The field of Zophim was situated on it, and its highest point or summit—its 'head'—was the Mount Nebo. If it was a proper name we can only conjecture that it denoted the whole or part of the range of the highlands on the east of the lower Jordan."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Which looketh toward Jeshimon. Margin: "Towards the wilderness." Keil and Del.: "'looks across the face of the desert.' *Jeshimon*, the desert, is the plain of *Ghor-el-Belka*, i.e., the valley of desolation on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea."

Verse 21. *Amorites*, i.e., mountaineers. One of the chief nations of the Canaanites (Gen. x. 15, 16).

Verse 22. Comp. chap. xx. 17.

Verse 23. *Jahaz*. "From the terms of the narrative in Num. xxi and Deut. ii.," says Mr. Grove, "we should expect that Jahaz was in the extreme south part of the territory of Sihon, but yet north of the river Arnon (see Deut. ii. 24, 36; and the words in 31, 'begin to possess'), and in exactly this position a site named *Jazaza* is mentioned by Schwarz (227), though by him only. But this does not agree with the statements of Eusebius, who says it was existing in his day between *Medeba* and *Δηβοῦς*, by which he probably intends Dibon, which would place Jahaz considerably too far to the north. Like many others relating to the places east of the Dead Sea, this question must await further research."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 24. *Unto Jabbok*, now called *Wady Zerka*, a stream which intersects

the mountain range of Gilead, as it was afterwards called (comp. Josh. xii. 2, 5), and falls into the Jordan about 45 miles north of the Arnon.

For the border of the children of Ammon was strong. This was the reason why Sihon had not carried his conquests further and taken the territory of the Ammonites. The reason why the Israelites did not enter the land of the Ammonites is given in Deut. ii. 19.

Verse 25. *Heshbon.* This city was situated 20 miles due east of the Jordan at the point where it falls into the Dead Sea. The city is now in ruins, which are situated on a low hill, and are more than a mile in circumference. Its modern name is *Heshbân*.

All the villages thereof. Heb., as in margin: "the daughters," i.e., the smaller towns, which are enumerated in chap. xxxii. 34-38; and Josh. xiii. 15-28. Heshbon, as we see from the next verse, being the capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites.

Verse 26. *All his land.* "Evidently that to the north of the Arnon alone is intended."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 27-30. Dean Perowne speaks of this as "a song of victory composed after a defeat of the Moabites and the occupation of their territory. It is in a taunting, mocking strain; and is commonly considered to have been written by some *Israelitish* bard on the occupation of the Amorite territory. Yet the manner in which it is introduced would rather lead to the belief that we have here the translation of an old Amorite ballad. . . . Then follows a little scrap of Amorite history: 'For Heshbon is the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and he had waged war with the former king of Moab, and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon. Wherefore the ballad-singers (המשלים) say:—

"Come ye to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon be built and established!
For fire went from Heshbon,

A flame out of the stronghold (קריה)
of Sihon,

Which devoured Ar of Moab,
The lords of the high places of Arnon.
Woe to thee, Moab!

Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh!
He (i.e., Chemosh thy god) hath given up his
sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
To Sihon, king of the Amorites.
Then we cast them down; Heshbon perished
even unto Dibon,
And we laid (it) waste unto Nophah, which
(reacheth) unto Medeba.'

If the song is of Hebrew origin, then the former part of it is a biting taunt, 'Come, ye Amorites, into your city of Heshbon, and build it up again. Ye boasted that ye had burnt it with fire, and driven out its Moabite inhabitants; but now we are come in our turn and have burnt Heshbon, and driven you out as ye once burnt it and drove out its Moabite possessors.'—*Bibl. Dict.*

Another interpretation is given in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "In the first six lines (vers. 27, 28) the poet imagines for the Amorites a song of exultation for their victories over Moab, and for the consequent glories of Heshbon, their own capital. In the next three lines (ver. 29), he himself joins in this strain; which now becomes one of half-real, half-ironical compassion for the Moabites, whom their idol, Chemosh, was unable to save. But in the last two lines (ver. 30), a startling change takes place; and the new and decisive triumph of the poet's own countrymen is abruptly introduced; and the boastings of the Amorites fade utterly away."

Verse 29. *Chemosh*, i.e., the national deity of the Moabites (Jer. xlviii. 7, 13, 46), and of the Ammonites (Judg. xi. 24).

Verse 30. *Dibon*, afterwards called Dibon-Gad, "lay four miles north of the Arnon; and its extensive ruins still bear the name Dhîbân. It was here that the Moabite stone was discovered by the Rev. T. Klein in 1868."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Nophah "is unknown, unless it be Arneibah, 10 miles to the eastward of Medeba."—*Ibid.*

Medeba is now called *Madeba*, and is situated upon the top of a hill, about 4 miles S.E. of *Heshbon*.

Verse 32. *Jaazer* or *Jazer* is probably to be identified with the ruins of

es Szir, about 9 miles west of *Rabbath-Ammon*, and about 12 miles north of *Heshbon*.

Verse 33. *Bashan*. "The limits of Bashan are very strictly defined. It extended from the border of Gilead on the south to Mount Hermon on the north (Deut. iii. 3, 10, 14; Josh. xii. 5; 1. Chron. v. 23), and from the Arabah or Jordan valley on the west to Salchah (*Sulkhad*) and the borders of the Geshurites, and the Maacathites on the east (Josh. xii. 3-5; Deut. iii. 10)." —*Bibl. Dict.*

Edrei. "Now Edhra'âh, vulgarly *Der'a*; situate on a branch of the Jar-

muk. This river is not mentioned in Scripture, but formed the boundary between Gilead and Bashan. The identification of Edrei rests on the frontier position of the site, on the modern name, and on the testimony of Eusebius; but it is only recently that the explorations of Wetzstein ('*Reisebericht*,' pp. 47, 8) have disclosed the facts that the original city was subterranean, and that its streets may still be seen running in all directions beneath the present inhabited town, which is built on the ground above."—*Speaker's Comm.*

THE BENEFIT OF REVERSES.

(Verses 1-3.)

These verses suggest:—

I. That reverses are sometimes encountered in the path of duty.

"And when the Canaanite king of Arad, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners." An illustration of the opposition and the reverses with which we often meet in the way of duty. With our present characters and in our present circumstances duty is not always easy. In an evil world to tread the path of truth and right must always involve more or less of difficulty and trial. In following the Divine direction we are sure to meet with some "Canaanite king of Arad" and his allies. This is true of—

1. *The individual Christian life*. We have Canaanites in ourselves, in our carnal appetites and passions, &c. These resist the progress of the soul in holiness. Worthy spiritual attainments or achievements are never made without earnest effort and severe struggle.

2. *Christian enterprise*. Workers in the cause of Jesus Christ amongst men have to contend against opposition, and sometimes, like Israel at this time, sustain temporary repulse and

loss. This is true of Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, ministers of the Gospel, and Christian missionaries to the heathen both at home and abroad.

II. Reverses encountered in the path of duty arouse the true-hearted to more vigorous effort.

"And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." Repulse and loss stirred them up to take resolute measures to obtain a complete victory. That which utterly appals the cowardly, acts as a challenge to the courageous. Where the one cowers in dismay, the other rises into the exertion of conquering strength. To the true-hearted, reverses are a trumpet-call to renewed and more determined effort. In this instance the reverse led Israel to put forth:—

1. *Earnest prayer for success*. "And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord," &c. It has been well said that "this spirit would have been intolerable in the people of 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' had it not been that Divine justice had resolved to extirpate the awfully filthy and idolatrous nations of Canaan, to give their

land to the Israelites among whom His worship was preserved, and to make them the *executioners* of righteous wrath." The idea of this vow, by which they urged their prayer for victory, seems to be this, that if God would grant their request they would take to themselves no gain or glory from the conquest, but give all the honour to Him. True prayer is an excellent preparation for work or for warfare.

2. *Vigorous effort to succeed.* That Israel made such an effort is very clearly implied in the brief record.

To these two things united—wise and determined effort, and earnest believing prayer, all things are possible. "Is there one whom difficulties dishearten—who bends to the storm? He will do little. Is there one who *will* conquer? That kind of man never fails." And this especially when his will is "strong in the Lord." (a)

III. When reverses in the path of duty thus arouse the true-hearted to effort they contribute to their complete triumph.

It was so in this case. "And the

Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites," &c.

1. *Earnest prayer was answered by God.* He inspired them with determination and courage, and so granted their request. True prayer is always heard and answered by Him.

2. *Wise and resolute effort achieved success.* "They utterly destroyed them and their cities." Thus a slight reverse stirred them up to such efforts as resulted in a complete triumph. (b) Apply this to Christian life and work. (c)

Conclusion.

1. *Warning to those who oppose any true and good cause.* "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

2. *Encouragement to those who are toiling in good but difficult enterprises.* Be not disheartened by difficulties. Let reverses rouse you to more powerful and persistent efforts, and they will thus urge you onward to the achievement of more complete and splendid conquests. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) It is not ease, but effort—not facility, but difficulty—that makes men. There is, perhaps, no station in life in which difficulties have not to be encountered and overcome before any decided measure of success can be achieved. Those difficulties are, however, our best instructors, as our mistakes often form our best experience. We learn wisdom from failure more than from success—we often discover what *will* do by finding out what will not do; and he who never made a mistake never made a discovery. Horne Tooke used to say of his studies in intellectual philosophy, that he had become all the better acquainted with the country, through having had the good luck sometimes to lose his way. And a distinguished investigator of physical science has left it on record that whenever in the course of his researches he encountered an apparently insuperable obstacle, he generally found himself on the brink of some novel discovery. The very greatest things—great thoughts, discoveries, inventions—have generally been nurtured in hardship, often pondered over in sorrow, and at length established with difficulty.—*Samuel Smiles.*

(b) It has been said and truly, that it is the

defeat that tries the general more than the victory. Washington lost far more battles than he gained; but he succeeded in the end. The Romans, in their most victorious campaigns, almost invariably began with defeats. Moreau used to be compared, by his companions, to a drum, which nobody hears of except it be beaten. Wellington's military genius was perfected by encounter with difficulties of, apparently, the most overwhelming character, but which only served to nerve his resolution, and bring out more prominently his great qualities as a man and a general. So the skillful mariner obtains his best experience amidst storms and tempests, which train him to self-reliance, courage, and the highest discipline; and we probably owe to rough seas and wintry nights, the best training of our race of British seamen, who are certainly not surpassed by any in the world.

The battle of life, in by far the greater number of cases, must necessarily be fought up-hill; and to win it without a struggle were perhaps to win it without honour. If there were no difficulties there would be no success; if there were nothing to struggle for, there would be nothing to be achieved.

Difficulties may intimidate the weak, but they act only as a wholesome stimulus to men of pluck and resolution. All experience of life, indeed, serves to prove that the impediments thrown in the way of human advancement may, for the most part, be overcome by steady good conduct, honest zeal, activity, perseverance, and, above all, by a determined resolution to surmount difficulties, and stand up manfully against misfortune. When Columbus was threatened by the mutineers amongst his crew, he himself, hopeful and unsubdued, bore up against all opposition. "Give me but three days," he said; and before the three days had passed, he trod the shores of the New World. —*Ibid.*

(c) Need any one be discouraged who has begun to live a Christian life because so often he has failed and fallen into backsliding? Is a true pupil discouraged because so many of his lessons are imperfect, because he has forced holidays which have broken up the impetus of study, if still the purpose to be a student remains with him? Whatever may have been the arguments of the past, let them be forgotten. Try again. There are thousands of Christians who too soon grow discouraged,

saying, "I have proved that I was mistaken. I have proved that the root of the matter was not in me. There is no use; I have tried and failed." There is all the use in the world. No man ever fails until death settles the great conflict. Because you have begun and lagged, because you have begun and stumbled, because you have begun and gone back a little way, do not give up the whole contest. —*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) There is nothing but what you can make a way through if you can find something harder to bore with. Look at the Mont Cenis tunnel, made through one of the hardest of known rocks: with a sharp tool, edged with a diamond, they have pierced the heart of the Alps, and made a passage for the commerce of nations. As St. Bernard says: "Is thy work hard? set a harder resolution against it, for there is nothing so hard that it cannot be cut by something harder still." May the Spirit of God work in thee invincible resolution and unconquerable perseverance. Let not the iron break the northern iron and the steel. Under persecutions and difficulties, let God's people resolve on victory, and by faith they shall have it, for according to our faith so shall it be unto us. —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

A DEADLY PLAGUE AND A DIVINE ANTIDOTE.

(Verses 4-9.)

Let us notice—

I. The sin of the people.

They fall once more into the sin of which they had so often been guilty in former times—that of murmuring. "The people spake against God and against Moses," &c. But let us consider—

1. *The occasion of their sin.* (1) The circuitous route by which they journeyed. "They journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom." Their direct way would have been through the land of Edom; but the King of Edom opposed this; so they were compelled to travel by this circuitous route, compassing the land of Edom (see notes on chap. xx. 14-21). (2) The trying country over which they journeyed. "The low-lying plain of Arabah on the whole is a terrible desert, with a loose, sandy soil, and drifts of granite and other stones, where terrible sand-storms sometimes arise from the neighbourhood of the Red Sea." "And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the

way" (see *Explanatory Notes* on ver.

4). (3) The privations which they encountered on their journey. The Arabah was not likely to furnish them with much food; so they were almost or altogether dependent upon the manna with which they were supplied by God. And it is very probable that there would be a great scarcity of drinkable water. Hence "the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" &c.

2. *The nature of their sin.* (1) Murmuring. They "spake against God and against Moses." (a) (2) Unbelief. How sinful was the want of faith which they manifested in speaking of dying in the wilderness, after all they had experienced of the protection and provision of God! (b) (3) Ingratitude. The goodness of God in supplying their wants is altogether disregarded by them. They speak as though they were utterly destitute: "There is no bread, neither is there any water." (c) (4) Contempt of Divine blessings.

"And our soul loatheth this light bread,"—"a word of excessive scorn; as if they had said, 'This innutritive, unsubstantial, cheat-stomach stuff.'"—*A. Clark.* Thus their rebellion was one of great heinousness, involving several sins.

II. The punishment of their sin.

"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." The punishment was,

1. *Severe.* The bite of the serpent poisoned the body of its victim, causing intense and burning pain, and resulting in death. "Much people of Israel died."

2. *Just.* Their heinous sin called for a severe punishment. "They had unjustly complained for want of water (ver. 5), to chastise them for which God sends upon them this thirst, which no water would quench. Those that cry without cause have justly cause given them to cry out. They distrustfully concluded that they must 'die in the wilderness,' and God took them at their word, chose their delusions, and brought their unbelieving fears upon them; many of them did die."—*M. Henry.*

3. *Divine.* Their punishment was from God. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people." In the Arabah, venomous reptiles abound (comp. Deut. viii. 15). "Yet we never hear of their being bitten or killed by them till now. From this we infer that they had been marvelously protected hitherto from this as from other dangers of the way; but the protection which they had experienced being now withdrawn, the serpents—in this part of the desert unusually numerous—had their poisonous jaws unbound, and smote them at their will."—*Kitto.* (d)

III. The penitence of the people.

Let us mark how their penitence was awakened, and developed, and led to their relief.

1. *Their punishment led to their penitence.* "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said we have sinned, for we

have spoken against the Lord, and against thee." "When he slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and inquired early after God." The penitence which is begotten of punishment seldom leads to moral improvement. (e)

2. *Their penitence led them to appeal to Moses for help.* They said unto him, "Pray unto the Lord for us, that he take away the serpents from us." This request implies,—(1) Consciousness of their moral unfitness to approach God acceptably. (2) Faith in the efficacy of intercessory prayer. (3) The persuasion that intercessory prayer to be efficacious must be offered by the good. Thus their request to Moses to "pray unto the Lord for" them was an undesigned and convincing testimony to the excellence of his character and conduct.

3. *In answer to their appeal Moses entreated God on their behalf.* "And Moses prayed for the people." He manifested in this the true magnanimity of a godly soul. He blesses them who reviled him, and prays for them who spitefully used him (comp. Matt. v. 44). (g)

IV. The Divine antidote for the deadly plague.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole;" &c. (vers. 8, 9). That this had a typical significance is placed beyond dispute by the words of our Lord to Nicodemus in John iii. 14, 15. This application of the incident we shall endeavour to make hereafter. At present we confine our attention to four facts concerning Heaven's antidote for the deadly bite of the serpents.

1. *It was prescribed by God.* Man could not stay the dread ravages of these serpents. Their bite was poisonous and deadly. And in answer to the prayer of His servant, Jehovah interposed for the salvation of the people. He directed Moses what to do to arrest the onward march of death. "Jehovah said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent," &c. Human salvation from sin is of Divine origin; it is an outcome of infinite wisdom and love.

2. *It resembled the poisonous serpents.* "Make thee a fiery serpent," &c. The brazen serpent was made to resemble the fiery serpents which had bitten them, but it was without venom and thoroughly harmless. The disease and death came by the serpents, and the healing and life were to come by this serpent. So "God sent his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3). "Since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead" (comp. 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22-24).

3. *Its efficacy was conditional.* "It shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." It was not the mere look that saved. The look involved—(1) Faith in the Divine promise that every one

who looked upon the brazen serpent should live. If they questioned and criticised the fitness of the remedy they perished; if they believed the promise and looked to the serpent, they were healed (*h*). (2) Obedience to the Divine direction. How simple are these conditions! How universally available! He who looks in faith to Jesus Christ shall be saved from sin. Comp. Isa. xlv. 22; John iii. 14, 15. (*i*)

4. *Its efficacy was infallible.* "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Whoever complied with the Divine condition was healed by the Divine power. Whosoever looked lived. And whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life (John iii. 15, 16, 36).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 267.

(b) For illustrations on *Unbelief*, see p. 252.

(c) For illustrations on *Ingratitude*, see pp. 247, 368.

(d) For illustrations on *The Punishment of Sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 258, 312, 318, 374.

(e) For an illustration on *Penitence Begotten of Punishment*, see p. 269.

(f) For illustrations on *The Power of Prayer*, see pp. 183, 225.

(g) The brave only know how to forgive—it is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue that human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good and kind actions; cowards have even fought, nay, sometimes conquered; but a coward never forgave—it is not his nature.—*L. Sterne.*

There are some persons that can forgive others, but will never be friends with them any more—an everlasting pique remaining; and they cannot but discover a great shyness, shun them, baulk them, decline them, and think and speak hardly of them on all occasions. But the Divine nature in the regenerate inclines a person to the renewal of friendship; they can easily fall in again, who are regenerate, if there have been breaks, if there have been strifes, if there have been fallings out, they can presently fall in, because they have been so taught by nature—by that nature which is imparted to them in being born of God.—*John Howe.*

For another illustration on the *Forgiving spirit*, see p. 317.

(h) As a dim, dazzled eye, that looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness, was of

more avail to a poor Israelite, when stung with a fiery serpent, than any use that could possibly be made of all his other members—little could the swiftness of his feet, strength of his body, nimbleness of hands, volubility of tongue, quickness of ear, or anything else have availed, had there not been an eye to have looked on it—so, without faith, we lie dead in trespasses and sins, and cannot but perish of the mortal stings which Satan hath blistered us withal; so that had we perfect repentance, sound knowledge, and sincere love, not one of them, nor all of them together, could possibly cure us if there were not faith to apprehend Christ for our satisfaction, and a propitiation for all our sins. It is only our faith in Christ—a true faith, though a weak, dim-sighted faith—that looking up to the typified serpent, Christ Jesus, can cure our wounded, sin-sick souls, and make us here to live to God, and hereafter in all happiness with Him.—*Paul Bayne.*

Sight is the noblest sense; it is quick—we can look from earth to heaven in a moment; it is large—we can see the hemisphere of the heavens at one view; it is sure and certain (in hearing, we may be deceived), and, lastly, it is the most affecting sense. Even so, faith is the quickest, the largest, the most certain, the most affecting grace: like an eagle in the clouds, at one view it sees Christ in heaven, and looks down upon the world; it looks backwards and forwards; it sees things past, present, and to come. Therefore this grace is said (2 Cor. iv. 18) to behold things unseen and eternal.—*Richard Sibbs.*

(i) God did not require of every Israelite,

or of any of them that were stung by the fiery serpents, that they should understand or be able to discourse of the nature and qualities of that brass of which the serpent upon the pole was made, or by what art that serpent was formed, or in what manner the sight of it did operate in them for their cure; it was enough that they did believe the institution and precept of God, and that their own cure was assured by it: it was enough if they cast their eyes upon it according to the direction. The understandings of men are of several sizes and elevations, one higher than another: if the condition of this covenant had been a greatness of knowledge, the most acute men had only enjoyed the benefits of it. But it is "faith," which is as easy to be performed by the ignorant and simple, as by the strongest and

most towering mind; it is that which is within the compass of every man's understanding. God did not require that every one within the verge of the covenant should be able to discourse of it to the reasons of men; He required not that every man should be a philosopher or an orator, but a believer. What could be more easy than to lift up the eye to the brazen serpent to be cured of a fiery sting? What could be more facile than a glance, which is done without any pain, and in a moment? It is a condition may be performed by the weakest as well as the strongest: could those that were bitten in the most vital part cast up their eyes, though at the last gasp, they would arise to health by the expulsion of the venom.—*Charnocke.*

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF PIOUS MEN.

(Verse 4.)

"And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

The present life is a way; it is not the end of our being: it is not our rest, it is not our abode, but the place of our pilgrimage, a passage to eternity.

I. Point out the discouragements in the way.

1. *The way is circuitous.* This is suggested by the beginning of this verse: "And they journeyed from Mount Hor," &c. . . . Thus, souls that are brought to Jesus, in their first ardour overlook trials, and think of nothing but enjoyments; they do not anticipate the fightings and tears that are the portion of God's Israel. After a time, through want of watchfulness and care, the love of their espousals begins to decline, the world regains a degree of influence, the Spirit is grieved, and they fear God has become their enemy; they seem to themselves to go backward, and, indeed, are in danger of doing so, if they neglect to watch and pray; and much time is spent in mourning, retracing and recovering the ground that has been lost.

2. *The way is through a wilderness.* Moses reminded Israel of this in Deut. viii. 15, 16. A wilderness is distinguished by the absence of necessary sustenance: there was no corn, &c. Thus, this world is a state of great

privations; men are often literally straitened with poverty, &c. In a spiritual sense, this world is also a wilderness. It has no natural tendency to nourish the spiritual life: though spiritual blessings are enjoyed in it, the Christian knows they are not the produce of the soil. Again: there is much intricacy in the Christian's pilgrimage. There were no paths in the wilderness: so the Christian often knows not how to explore his path. We must "search the Scriptures," and ask the guidance of the Spirit. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c.

3. *The way lies through a hostile country.* The Israelites were obliged to unite the courage of the military with the assiduity of the pilgrim's life; they had to fight as well as travel. And so must we: during our pilgrimage we must gird on "the whole armour of God," &c. There are three great enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil: these are allied, and combine their efforts for our destruction.

4. *The false steps that are taken in the pilgrimage are discouraging.* There are so many errors and iniquities for which the Lord chastens His people, though He pardons sin as to its eternal consequences. These chastenings of the Lord often drink up or oppress the spirit, and overwhelm the soul.

5. *The total defection of men from the path is a great discouragement to those who still continue in the way.* I do not think that all that died in the wilderness were cut off as rebels; indeed it could not be, for Moses and Aaron were of the number: yet they were set forth as types to warn us of the danger of not entering into rest. Here was a shadow of the greater loss of them that "turn back to perdition" (comp. Gal. iv. 9; 2 Pet. ii. 21). Nothing weakens the confidence of the Christian army more than the failure of those who appeared brave in the day of battle, and conspicuous in the ranks.

6. *The length of the way is discouraging.* The time occupied by the Israelites from their entering to their leaving the wilderness, was forty years. This was a tedious journey: a type of the journeys of the church militant. The whole of human life, with all its toils and cares, is comprehended in this journey. Now, though human life is short in itself, yet to our limited conception it appears long; especially when passed in suffering and pain. We must hold out unto the end.

II. Direct you to some considerations to remove your discouragements.

1. *It is "a right way."* Infinite Wisdom has ordained it: and if you

reach the end, you will be well repaid for all your toil, and will admire the whole of the pilgrimage; no sorrow will appear to have been too heavy; no path too gloomy. Our sufferings are necessary to wean us from the world and to deliver us from sin.

2. *God is with His people in the way.* He was with Israel to guide and defend them (comp. Matt. xxviii. 20). God is in the world as the great upholder, governor, and benefactor; but He is in the Church by His special grace, as a vital principle, and ever-living friend, to sustain, animate, and influence.

3. *There is no other way that leads to heaven.* You cannot reconcile the service of sin and the world with the hope of heaven and the enjoyment of everlasting life in that holy state, and in the presence of the holy God. There is no other way to heaven than the way to which the Scriptures of truth direct you.

Go forward, then, Christian; go forward; "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before."

If any of you have not yet entered on this way, to such we would affectionately say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good," &c.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

THE UNDESIGNED TESTIMONY OF THE UNGODLY TO THE PRECIOUSNESS AND POWER OF PIETY.

(Verse 7.)

Briefly narrate the facts and circumstances.

In their trouble the Israelites come to Moses, confessing their sin, and asking him to intercede for them with God; and in this request of the text we have an illustration of—*The striking testimony which the ungodly often bear to the value and importance of piety.* It is ever true that vice pays homage to virtue, and that the good ever command the respect and the conscience of the evil. His life condemns theirs; they feel that he

is a better and a nobler man than they are. They may hate his religion; but they testify to its value in the esteem in which their consciences hold him. It was so here; the people had been speaking against Moses, and yet they come to him, and ask him to pray for them. They witness to the value of piety.

I. By showing that the want of it is weakness—

The wicked man often swaggers and boasts; but he is an arrant coward in trouble. A guilty "conscience doth

make cowards of us all." The people here were in great danger, and they were full of alarm. They felt that they could not pray, and they were afraid to die. They were pitifully weak because they were ungodly, &c.

II. By seeking help from him whom they knew to be "a man of God."

They owned that Moses could help them, though they could not help themselves. They had spoken against Moses, and had treated him badly; yet they expect him to forgive them and to pray for them. Men of the world expect God's people to be better than themselves. Is not this a grand testimony to the value and importance of piety?

III. By confessing that Moses had nothing to fear from God, while they had everything to fear.

They ask him to pray to God for them; they were in dread of God. By this they own that piety is best to approach God; and by seeking help from God through Moses, they confess that their past conduct was wrong. They condemned themselves.

IV. By acknowledging that Moses could get from God what they could not.

Their act testified to their belief that Moses had power with God, and that they had not. It is a grand thing for man to have access to God; for sinful, weak man, to have power with the Almighty! The wicked dreads God; the godly pleads with Him as a child with his father. God hears and answers him; he has power with God. The wicked feels this and seeks his help when he has been brought into distress. There is no treasure for man like piety. All feel this when, as in

the text, they are in trouble and in the presence of death.

Thus by their request to Moses the Israelites condemned their own life, and bore striking, though unconscious, testimony to the value of piety and the importance of religion. This has been the testimony of the ungodly in all ages;—e.g., Moses and Pharaoh; Samuel and the people (1 Sam. xiii. 19); Herod and John the Baptist. And to-day the ungodly bear striking testimony to the value of piety:—

1. *By expecting Christians to be better than themselves.* They ought to be so; but the point now is, that worldly men expect them to be so. Why should they be better, unless it be for their piety?

2. *By seeking the help of Christians when they are in trouble or in the presence of death.* It is religion that they think of then. It is those whom they believe to be God's people that they send for to help them. They send not for old associates in sin; they feel that they cannot help them. But they send for the minister or for some other Christian to pray with them. They thus testify that piety is best for life, and best for death, and best for all. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Conclusion.

1. *Let Christians live so as to commend the conscience of the Christian.* Let their life commend religion, &c.

2. *Let the Christian be true to himself by living up to his convictions.* Set for one to live a life his conscience tells him is wrong. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."—David Lloyd.

A TERRIBLE CALAMITY AND AN EARNEST PRAYER.

(Verse 7.)

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us."

In the memorable conversation Christ held with Nicodemus (John iii. 1-21), He refers to the circumstance of the

Brass Serpent erected by Moses as a painted illustration of His own death—as illustrating the method of forgiving sin. He also refers to the grace of the Spirit as the effective

method of subduing sin. And the recollection of these important doctrines will be of great service to us in the contemplation of the important history now before us.

I. A terrible calamity; the just consequence of sin.

"The Lord sent fiery serpents," &c. They existed in that part of the wilderness before, but were not permitted to invade the camp. The restraint was taken off now, and they were sent to do the work of death amidst the guilty thousands of the congregation. "*Fiery serpents*," from their colour and aspect, or from the intense heat of their sting, as though the current of blood were changed into tides of fire in the sufferer's veins.

Why sent? For Israel's sin. What sin? Sin of murmuring; sin of unbelief; sin of rebellion. Seven times Israel murmured and mutinied against Moses; and seven times were they threatened or punished. A discontented man will find or make something to repine at everywhere. Sometimes the way was too long; then no water—or it was bitter; then no bread—or it was light bread. Either way, "The people spake against God, and against Moses."

In Israel's history we see our own. Human nature is not improved, as some wines grow mellow with age, for we find ourselves just as perverse and rebellious as they were. If any change it must be for the worse rather than the better. Our sins are against greater light and greater love; not against the Law only, but the Gospel too; not against Moses, but Christ.

Learn, that *sin brings sorrow*. Sin flatters like a serpent at the beginning, but stings like one at last (comp. Prov. xxiii. 32).

See the *resemblance between sin and its punishment*. The Israelites had been like serpents to Moses and Aaron, always ready to nip and sting; now God sends serpents among them. "Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord;" and they were destroyed by fire. The Jews crucified our Lord; the Romans crucified them in vast numbers. Many an undutiful

child has found his parent's wrongs avenged in his own offspring.

The serpents in the camp were *very numerous*; not here and there one, but in great numbers. Alas, how many evils does sin produce in all the relations and engagements of life! How many *serpents* follow in the train of sin! They follow you at home and abroad, in the family and in the world, in your lying down and rising up.

There is the serpent of *remorse in the conscience*—a serpent very difficult to untwine from the folds of the heart. The serpent of *discord in the family*, when a man's vices follow him home, and he finds the effects of his own misconduct breaking up the peace of home (comp. Prov. xi. 29). The serpent of *treachery among your friendships*; for the world shakes from it those whom it cannot trust. The serpent of *disgrace and contempt*, the consequences of the vices of the character and the violation of integrity and uprightness. "What fruit had ye then in those things?" &c. (Rom. vi. 21). Then there is the serpent of endless agony and despair in "hell, where their worm dieth not," &c.

II. An earnest resolution and prayer; the result of sanctified affliction.

"Pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." Their sufferings led to humiliation, repentance, and prayer. They knew that none but He who sent the affliction could take it away, and, therefore, they did not ask Moses to try what he could do by any process of legislation or human device, but—"Pray unto the Lord," &c. Prayer is your only remedy for the serpent brood of sin. "We have sinned, for," &c. Sanctified affliction leads to this. Examples: Job, Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 18), the prodigal (Luke xv. 14 sqq.).

III. A mysterious appointment, the result of Divine grace.

"And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent," &c.

Samuel Thodey.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 8, 9.)

"A type," says Mr. Steward, "is a fact precedent to some other greater than itself, designed to prepare the way for it, and to be a voucher for it, as pre-ordained and brought to pass by the Divine wisdom and power. It is the shadow of a coming truth projected far before it, showing its figure rather than its substance, its image, not its properties."

The words of our Lord in John iii. 14, 15, are our warrant for regarding the brazen serpent as a type of Himself. In the serpent-bitten Israelites we have an illustration of the condition of sinful men, and in the brazen serpent we have an illustration of the remedy for the sad condition of sinful men. We discover an analogy in:—

I. The malady.

1. In both cases it was *communicated*. It was communicated to the Israelites by the bite of the serpent. Sin was imparted to man by "that old serpent, which is the devil." It is not native to human nature, but a foul and terrible importation.

2. In both it is *painful*. The bite of the serpent caused the most distressing pain; the poison burned and tormented the victims. So the venom of sin rankles in human nature; sin causes discord, guilt, dread, anguish; it is an element of torment.

3. In both it is *deadly*. Great numbers of the Israelites died from its effects. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death."

4. In both, *human remedies are un-availing*. It is said that the effects of the bite of the serpents were so rapid that "no remedy for the most virulent poison could, had it even been at hand, have been administered with sufficient rapidity and efficiency to have saved the people." No human means can arrest the deadly progress of the poison of sin, impart spiritual life and health, &c.

It must not be overlooked that the malady and its consequences in the one case were physical and temporal; in the other, spiritual and everlasting. Death would end the one; it is powerless to end the other.

II. The remedy.

In respect of this there is a twofold analogy.

1. The remedy in both cases was of *Divine origin*. No man could have devised a remedy for human sin and suffering. No angel could have grappled with the disease. In His sovereign grace God originated the method of human salvation.

2. There is an analogy as to *the means by which the remedy was effected*. (1) The serpent-bitten Israelites were healed by means of a serpent of similar appearance to those through whose bites they were perishing, but entirely free from venom. We are healed of sin and saved from death, by "God sending His Own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin, and for sin" (Rom. viii. 3), yet Himself perfectly free from sin. (2) The serpent without poison was uplifted to overcome the dire effects of the bite of the poisonous ones; so He who was made "in the likeness of the flesh of sin," "yet without sin," took upon Him the curse of the world by dying upon the cross, that He might thereby destroy death and the curse. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" &c.

III. The appropriation.

The bitten Israelites had to look to the Brazen Serpent, and looking they were saved. The sinner has to believe in Jesus Christ, and believing he is saved. The look of the Israelites is a remarkable illustration of faith. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved," &c. This method of appropriation—

1. *Is simple and easy*. Look, and be saved. Believe, and live. The little child, and the hoary patriarch; the

ignorant plebeian, and the educated philosopher, can and do believe. We are naturally credulous ; we often believe too readily. As all can believe, the remedy is within the reach of all. Take heed lest the very simplicity of the appropriation be made by you an occasion of stumbling. (a)

2. *Is unmeritorious.* The dying Israelite did not merit healing and life by his look to the Brazen Serpent. Our faith cannot merit salvation. Faith excludes the idea of merit. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

3. *Is indispensable.* If the bitten Israelite refused to look to the Brazen Serpent he speedily died, notwithstanding the remedy. So faith is indispensable to salvation (comp. John iii. 18, 26). (b)

IV. The result.

"It came to pass, that if a serpent

had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." The serpent-bitten Israelites, who looked to the brazen serpent, were saved from physical anguish and death ; the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ is saved from spiritual anguish and eternal death. The Israelite, saved for the time, would die soon or late ; but the believer in Christ has everlasting and ever-glorious life.

Conclusion.

This world is like the camp of Israel. Sin is doing its terrible work. There is but one method of deliverance. Believe, and be saved. This one method is gloriously available to every one. "Whosoever believeth in Him," &c. Hence, if any one perish, he perishes by his own guilty neglect of the free and glorious remedy.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) By the term *looking*, we mean not an examination of the proofs which establish the truth of the Christian religion, although the testimony borne in its favour has been confirmed by wonders and miracles, and divers other effects of Divine power (Heb. ii. 4). We mean not by the term *looking*, the study of the Scriptures, although the word of prophecy, which is most sure, bears testimony throughout to Jesus. All this study is commendable and necessary, and far be it from us to dissuade you from a study which is in the present day too much neglected, and without which it is to be feared many will never come to look at Jesus Christ. But still all these labours together are not worth and cannot supersede the look for which we plead, whereas this look alone has often superseded them. No doubt "faith cometh by hearing ;" in other words, hearing is the origin of faith, its starting point ; but it belongs to the eye to finish the uncompleted work of hearing. Where, in your opinion, is there a man who has heard much, and read much, but not looked ? a man who has carefully examined the proofs of the divinity of Christ, a man who has admitted them, and yet not looked at Christ ? a man whom these proofs have convinced, that is to say vanquished, forced to believe, but whose faith, wholly passive, though it receives and yields to the truth, does not embrace it, and become united to it by a proper movement, and to whom, strange to say, the truth at once is

and is not ? a man who, conducted by his studies to the very foot of the cross, remains there with downcast eyes, never raising them towards the cross, nor towards Him whom it bears, and whose adorable blood is running down this accursed tree ? Others have not been able to believe until they lifted their eyes and looked at Christ. Those, I admit, have believed but with a forced faith, on the account of the whole world, and not on their own personal account ; with a faith which is to them only a yoke and burden ; a faith which they support, but which does not support them until, passing beyond this terminated labour, this exhausted spring, they begin to look simply at Jesus. Are we rash in speaking of this look as a condition of true faith, when Jesus Christ Himself has said, "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in Him" (i.e., every one who, having seen the Son, hath believed in Him), "hath everlasting life." These words, brethren, decidedly annex life to a look, not indeed to every kind of look, but to an attentive, earnest, prolonged look ; a look more simple than that of observation ; a look which looks, and does nothing more ; a lively, unaffected, childlike look ; a look in which the whole soul appears ; a look of the heart and not of the intellect ; one which does not seek to decompound its object, but receives it into the soul in all its entirety through the eye. — *Alex. Vinet, D.D.*

(b) The look of faith is saving. You can-

not turn a trustful eye to Him and not receive fullest salvation. Did any wounded Israelite look and not live? So no beholding sinner dies. . . . You never can have health, but from the cross. The rich must look; for riches cannot save. The poor must look; for poverty is no cloak for guilt. The learned must look; for learning can devise no other

help. The ignorant must look; for ignorance is not heaven's key. None ever lived without soul-sickness. None regains strength apart from Christ. But His cross stands uplifted high, even as the pole in Israel's camp. And it is not a vain voice which cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." —*H. Law, D.D.*

THE BRAZEN SERPENT; OR, THE TERRORS OF EXISTENCE FACED IN FAITH.

(Verses 8, 9.)

The story of the Brazen Serpent actually took place, we cannot doubt, as recorded by Moses. The notion of a "myth," which rationalistic interpreters might here suggest, is in this case absolutely inadmissible. For in the subsequent history, many hundreds of years later, we read of King Hezekiah being moved to destroy it, and to grind it to powder, because it had become an object of idolatrous veneration to the Israelites in his day. This fact, however, is not in the least inconsistent with its having been intended by the Divine mind to be *also* an embodied image or parable of spiritual and eternal truths—as true now in England in this nineteenth century of our era, as in Israel thousands of years ago.

This incident of the Brazen Serpent is recorded in a part of the Sacred Story which we are specially authorized to consider as typical—I mean the story of the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness (see 1 Cor. x. 11). It is therefore probable, at least, that any event recorded in this part of the Sacred History will repay study in that view. And with regard to this particular incident in that journey, it should be noted that our Lord Himself, in His conversation with Nicodemus, selected it out of all history to stand as a symbol of some of the highest mysteries of redemption.

What then is the primary and simplest meaning of the incident? It is a fundamental principle of all sound interpretation of inspired sayings, that all other and deeper lessons which they may be intended or adapted to teach,

must have their root in, and take their form and outline from, its primary and original sense. Now it is, I think, clear that the Brazen Serpent was primarily intended simply to represent and vividly picture to the suffering Israelites those terrible and repulsive instruments of God's avenging justice through which He was at that time inflicting suffering upon them for their sins. In the course of their wanderings they were brought into a region of great suffering and want. Under the pressure of their sufferings, they were led to murmur against Moses and Aaron; they looked back with regret and longing to the days when they "sat by the flesh-pots of Egypt." The spiritual degradation and misery of their life at that time, and their condition as slaves in a heathen land, were forgotten; nothing but the fleshly comforts and ease which they enjoyed there, compared with their present sufferings, was remembered. Their high calling and destiny as God's chosen people was overlooked or held cheap. This spirit of mind, like that of him "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and, caring for the present, despised the greater future, would, if it had become habitual, have brought them to destruction and utter alienation from God. A sharp remedy was therefore needed, and was applied by God's judicial providence. Fiery serpents were sent amongst them, from whose bite many of them died. It was in this state of things that Moses was directed to make a Brazen Serpent—that is, an actual image of the serpents from which they were at the time suf-

fering; and to set it up on a pole before their eyes. And he was to teach them that if they contemplated this image in faith, they should be healed. How can we doubt what was the primary meaning of this? Surely it must have been intended simply to teach the great and pregnant truth, that if, when any of the terrors of God set themselves in array against us, we have the courage, instead of turning away our eyes and thoughts from them, to *look deliberately at them in faith*; to hold them up, as it were, firmly between ourselves and heaven, and to contemplate them as God's appointments, and therefore certainly good under the circumstances, and if used aright; then the sting will be taken from these afflictions, and they will be turned into sources of spiritual blessing. It was a call to face God's terrible dispensation in faith and submission.

It is our duty and our wisdom to do so. To do otherwise, to keep any dark corner of our consciousness unlooked at, is to lay up a store of fears and uncertainties for our weaker moments, and to allow the enemy to lay an ambush against our peace. And even if the terror be one that affects only other men, not ourselves directly, yet when we become aware of it our wisdom and our duty is to face it, holding to the hand of God. Not to do so is selfishness. To suffer in other men's suffering is to have the mind of Christ; and all that is not that is sin. And, besides, unless we do dare to look all terrors in the face, we can never feel safe, even for ourselves. For if we believe in injustice or cruelty in God towards any creature, how can we be

sure He will not be unjust to us too, and to those we love?

Job is a great example of such courage in facing stern and mysterious facts in God's providence. . . . This powerful delineation of the terrible mysteries of evil and of sorrow that met him, clearly shows that he saw them in all their extremest terror—that he felt them in all their acuteness. And yet, nevertheless, he did, in the end, submit in absolute resignation and meekness to God. It was not, then, in blindness or darkness that he did so; but with eyes wide open and a heart keenly sensitive to all. Thus did he hold up his Brazen Serpent to the light; thus did he at last learn in full sight of it to acknowledge the Divine justice and goodness. This alone is true faith. Easy it is in sunny times, while sailing in sunny seas, . . . to call God, "Father," and believe that He is a Father. But the difficulty is to do so when all things seem against us, or when, though we ourselves are in prosperity, we see others round us in pain, in distress, in agony; to call God Father, as the Divine Man of Sorrows did, while hanging on a cross of torture, or from out of an agony of bloody sweat; when man is felt to be cruel and unjust; when the earth beneath our feet trembles; when the midday sky over our heads is darkened; when God Himself seems to have forsaken us, and we cannot see the reason. To cry then too, "Abba, Father," and believe what we say, is true faith—the only faith that fits the world as it is, and will carry us through life with eyes open.—*Canon Lyttelton, M.A., in "Good Words."*

UNEVENTFUL STAGES IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE

(Verses 10-15.)

These verses yield the following homiletical observations:—

I. That many scenes in the pilgrimage of life are quiet and uneventful.

From their encampment in the Ara-

bah, with its events of intense and painful interest, the Israelites proceed to Obboth, or rather to Zalmonah, then to Punon, and then to Obboth (chap. xxxiii. 41-43), then to Ije-abarim, &c. At these

places nothing occurs to detain the historian, nothing which calls for record; the life of the people was ordinary and uneventful. So now, the greater portion of the life of the great majority of men is common-place, ordinary, and prosaic. This is a wise and kind arrangement of Providence, for—

1. *We are not fitted to bear the strain of continued and deep interest and excitement.* Our mental and our emotional natures would both suffer by the undue tension of such excitement. Both brain and heart would soon succumb to the strain. If the bow be always tightly strung it will be injured, and perhaps destroyed.

2. *The healthiest minds find pleasure and progress in quiet scenes and duties.* Craving for constant excitement is a characteristic of a diseased mind. Restlessness and love of change are indications of mental superficiality and poverty. Active and healthy minds find satisfaction and delight in the ordinary scenes and duties of daily life. (a)

II. That in the quiet and uneventful scenes of life we should follow the Divine directions.

The Israelites did so at this time. They were commanded (Deut. ii. 9) not to contend with the Moabites in battle, and for this reason they passed along the eastern border of the land of Moab, without entering into that land.

1. *The teachings of the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit are given to us for our whole life.* The directions of the former and the inspiration of the latter, are for life's ordinary seasons as well as for its epochs and crises. The plan of God covers our entire life. His will is binding upon us at all times, and in all places and circumstances.

2. *We can most effectually illustrate the principles and the power of godliness in the ordinary and uneventful scenes of life.* The testimony of our life in such seasons is—(1) *More natural* than in exciting and critical seasons. On the red-letter days of our life we are specially watchful and wise and diligent,

&c.—(2) *More continuous.* Seasons of great interest and importance occur but seldom in human lives; they are rare exceptions; as a rule, life is uneventful, prosaic. And consequently the testimony of our life in its ordinary seasons is—(3) *More influential* than in its few and exceptional seasons. Hence, the necessity of following the Divine directions at such times, and at all times. (b)

III. That many of the records of the pilgrimage of life are transient.

In "the book of the wars of Jehovah" many interesting records were probably written. It was a book which was of a religious spirit. The honour of their victories it ascribed to Jehovah (see *Explanatory Notes* on this verse). But it is lost. Nought of it remains save one or two brief quotations. "It was not," says Trapp, "any part of the Canon,—for God hath provided, that not one hair of that sacred head is diminished,—but as the chronicles of England, or some famous poem." How many human writings perish! Even good books do not always live. All material things pass away; but the spiritual abides. Books perish; but truth is imperishable. The records which exist only in books are doomed to oblivion, but those which exist in human hearts will live for ever. Books are perishable; souls are immortal. What is written "in fleshy tables of the heart" can never be erased. Let us, therefore, seek to communicate truth unto men, and to inspire men with the passion for the attainment of truth.

IV. That present progress is promoted by the recollection of God's past doings.

We infer this from the use which the Israelites made of "the book of the wars of Jehovah." The quotation from this book is very obscure. Of the first clause Dr. A. Clarke says, "This clause is impenetrably obscure." The passage from the book is "a reference rather than a quotation. Contemporaries who had 'the Book of the Wars of Jehovah' at hand, could of

course supply the context." But supposing the book was what we take it to have been, a collection of odes celebrating the glorious acts of Jehovah for the Israelites; then we are warranted in affirming that they took courage in the present by the consideration of what He had done for them in the past.

Former victories inspired them with resolution and hope. (c)

In our pilgrimage let us cultivate this spirit. Let the light which shines from the mercies already received cheer our spirits as we advance to meet the duties and difficulties, the burdens and battles, that lie before us.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When we look back over a lengthened series of years, we seldom find that remembrance clings fondly to moments in which the mind has been most agitated, the passions most active, but rather to the intervals in which hour stole on hour with the same quiet tread. The transitory fever of the senses it is only a diseased imagination that ponders over and recalls; the triumphs which flatter our self-esteem look pale and obsolete from the distance of years, as arches of lath and plaster, thrown up in haste for the march of a conqueror, seem frail and tawdry when we see them in after time, spanning the solid thoroughfares with columns already mouldering, and stripped of the banners and the garlands that had clad them in the bravery of an hour.

However varied the course of our life, whatsoever the phases of pleasure and ambition through which it has swept along, still, when in memory we would revive the times that were comparatively the happiest, those times would be found to have been the calmest.

As the body for health needs regularity in habits, and will even reconcile itself to habits not in themselves best fitted for longevity, with less injury to the system than might result from abrupt changes to the training by which athletes attain their vigour—so the mind for health needs a certain clockwork of routine; we like to look forward with a certain tranquil sentiment of security; when we pause from the occupation of to-day, which custom has made dear to us, there is a charm in the mechanical confidence with which we think that the same occupation will be renewed at the same hour to-morrow. And thus monotony itself is a cause and element of happiness which, amidst the shifting tumults of the world, we are apt to ignore. Plutarch, indeed, says truly that "the shoe takes the form of the foot, not the foot the form of the shoe," meaning thereby that "man's life is moulded by the disposition of his soul." But new shoes chafe the feet, new customs the soul. The stoutest pedestrian would flag on a long walk if he put on new shoes at every second mile.

It is with a sentiment of misplaced pity, perhaps of contempt still more irrational, that the busy man, whose existence is loud and noisy, views another who seems to him less to live than to vegetate. The traveller, whirled from capital to capital, stops for a night's

lodging at some convent rising lone amidst unfrequented hills. He witnesses the discipline of the monastic life drilled into unvarying forms, day and year portioned out, according to inch scale, by the chimes of the undeviating bell. He re-enters his carriage with a sense of relief; how dreary must be the existence he leaves behind! Why dreary? Because so monotonous. Shallow reasoner! it is the monotony that has reconciled the monk to his cell. Even prisoners, after long years, have grown attached to the sameness of their prison, and have shrunk back from the novelty of freedom when turned loose upon the world. Not that these illustrations constitute a plea for monastery or prison; they but serve to show that monotony, even under circumstances least favourable to the usual elements of happiness, becomes a happiness in itself, growing, as it were, unseen, out of the undisturbed certainty of peculiar customs. As the pleasure the ear finds in rhyme is said to arise from its recurrence at measured periods—from the gratified expectation that at certain intervals certain effects will be repeated—so it is in life: the recurrence of things same or similar, the content in the fulfilment of expectations so familiar and so gentle that we are scarcely conscious that they were formed, have a harmony and a charm, and, where life is enriched by no loftier genius, often make the only difference between its poetry and its prose.—*From "Caxtoniana," by Lord Lytton.*

(b) Day by day, hour by hour, the work goes on—well or ill—to His praise or to His shame. We must build. We are building. We are very apt sometimes to think that we have done nothing, and that that is the worst of it. That is *not* the worst of it. The worst of it is that *we have* done something very poor or very ill. I come home at night, and say, with sad relenting, as the shadows of reflection deepen around me, "I have done nothing at the great building to-day!" O yes, but I have. I have been putting in "the wood, the hay, the stubble," where "the silver and the gold and the precious stones" should have been. I have been piling up fuel for the last fires in my own life. I cannot be a cipher even for one day. I must be a man. Nay, I must be a Christian man, faithful or unfaithful. I must grow, and build, and work, and live in some way. Oh, then, let me see that

I live for Christ, that I grow into His image, and that I work a work in the moral construction of my own life which angels will crown and God will bless !—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(c) The way to enrich life is to keep a retentive memory in the heart. Look over a period of twenty years, and see the all-covering and ever-shining mercy of God ! How many special providences have you observed ? How many narrow escapes have you experienced ? How many difficulties have you surmounted ? How often have you found a pool

in unexpected places ? We should lay up some memory of the Divine triumphs which have gladdened our lives, and fall back upon it for inspiration and courage in the dark and cloudy day. Go into your yesterdays to find God ! Search for Him in the paths along which you have come, and if you dare, under the teaching of your own memories, deny His goodness, then betake yourselves to the infamous luxury of distrust and reproach.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

A SONG OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

(Verses 16-20.)

Dean Perowne makes the following remarks concerning this song which Israel sang at Beer :—"The next is a song which was sung on the digging of a well at a spot where they were encamped, and which from this circumstance was called Beër, or 'The Well.' It runs as follows :—

"Spring up, O well ! sing ye to it ;
Well, which the princes dug,
Which the nobles of the people bored
With the sceptre-of-office, with their
staves."

This song, first sung at the digging of the well, was afterwards no doubt commonly used by those who came to draw water. The maidens of Israel chanted it to one another, verse by verse, as they toiled at the bucket, and thus beguiled their labour. 'Spring up, O well !' was the burden or refrain of the song, which would pass from one mouth to another at each fresh coil of the rope, till the full bucket reached the well's mouth. But the peculiar charm of the song lies not only in its antiquity, but in the characteristic touch which so manifestly connects it with the life of the time to which the narrative assigns it. The one point which is dwelt upon is, that the leaders of the people took their part in the work, that they themselves helped to dig the well. In the new generation who were about to enter the Land of Promise, a strong feeling of sympathy between the people and their rulers had sprung up,

which augured well for the future, and which left its stamp even on the ballads and songs of the time. This little carol is fresh and lusty with young life ; it sparkles like the water of the well whose springing up first occasioned it ; it is the expression on the part of those who sung it, of lively confidence in the sympathy and co-operation of their leaders, which, manifested in this one instance, might be relied upon in all emergencies (*Ewald, Gesch. ii. 264, 5*).—*Bibl. Dict.*

Three homiletic points are suggested by the verses under consideration.

I. The needs of human pilgrimage.

The people at Beer wanted water. They were receiving reminders of their dependence almost constantly. It is so with the pilgrimages of human life to-day. We pass from place to place, but we never cease to be dependent. Notice—

1. How *indispensable* are the things which we need ! The Israelites wanted water, a thing which is absolutely essential to human existence. We are dependent upon God for many things, both for the body and for the soul, which are thoroughly necessary to our well-being, and even to our life.

2. How *many* are the things which we need ! Who could write the catalogue of man's necessities ? (a)

3. How *constant* are our needs ! We may change our place and our circumstances, but we never change our dependent condition. Both physically and

spiritually we are ever drawing from the fountain of Divine blessings. (b)

Our constant dependence should beget constant humility.

II. The Divine provision for the needs of human pilgrimage.

The Divine provision for the Israelites at Beer—

1. *Was promised by God.* “The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” Jehovah anticipated the need of His people. “Thou comest to meet him with the blessings of goodness.” God designed and promised the provision before it was asked. How munificent is the provision which He makes for the needs of His creatures! (1) In material things. The earth and sea bring forth an abundant supply for the needs of all men. “He giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” (c) (2) In spiritual things. “He will abundantly pardon.” “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,” &c. (Psa. ciii. 3-5, 8). “God is able to make all grace abound toward you,” &c. (2 Cor. ix. 8, 11). “The unsearchable riches of Christ.” He “is able to do exceeding abundantly,” &c. The fountain of Gospel blessings is inexhaustible, infinite. (d) And, as in the water of Beer, so also in the blessings of salvation, the provision preceded the need. Redemption was not an afterthought of the Divine mind. The cross was set up in eternity. “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

2. *Was bestowed in connection with human effort.* A well was dug under the direction of Moses, who was himself directed by God, and in this way the Lord fulfilled His promise to give them water. God provides for man by means of man’s own efforts. If man would obtain temporal blessings, the Divine rule is that he must work for them. “If any man would not work, neither should he eat” (comp. 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 2 Thess. iii. 8-13). In spiritual things also God blesses man by the use of the means of blessing. If we would enjoy the bounteous provision of the Heavenly Father for the supply of our

spiritual needs, we must read, meditate, pray, work, &c.

It is noteworthy that the princes and nobles took a prominent part in the effort to obtain this water (see the remarks of Perowne on this point, quoted above). A glad zeal and a hearty co-operation amongst all ranks seemed to have possessed the people. It is well when the leading people of a community are leaders in excellent service, &c. (e)

3. *Enkindled human joy; and this joy was expressed in this song.* The music of our pilgrimage which honours God is that of songs, not dirges. Our glad and grateful anthems are acceptable unto Him. (f)

4. *Was suitably commemorated.* The name of the place was called *Beër*, the well. We commemorate our *Marahs*, let us do the same with our *Beërs*. Let us be eager to perpetuate the memory of our mercies.

III. The continuousness of human pilgrimage.

“And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; and from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.” Even scenes of refreshment and joy must not detain them. The well which afforded them so much satisfaction and pleasure was not the goal of their pilgrimage. *Beër* was not *Canaan*. Onward must they go until they reach the Promised Land. In our life-pilgrimage we may, as it were, halt, but we must not settle in this world. If we attempt to settle here God speedily sends some messenger crying to us, “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.” “Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” (g)

“Onward then, right onward !
This our watchword still,
Till we reach the glory
Of the wondrous hill.

“On through waste and blackness,
O’er this desert road :
On till Salem greets us,
City of our God.”

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Does not one man require in his own experience the whole scheme of Divine redemption? Is it not with this as with the light, the atmosphere, and the whole mechanism of the world? Were there but one man upon the globe, he would as much require the sun, the summer, the harvest, as do the millions who now exist upon it.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) We never wake up in the morning but we want strength for the day, and we never go to bed at night without needing grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life: when we begin with Christ in our young days we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth; in middle life our needs are greater still, lest the cares of this world should eat as doth a canker; and in old age we are needy still, and need preserving grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die we need our last bed to be made for us by mercy, and our last hour to be cheered by grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity we should have no place to dwell in. We are as full of wants as the sea is full of water. We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door, and we must go out a-begging again. Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment, and dog our heels in every place.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) There is not a word on our tongue; there is not a thought in our heart, but lo! O Jesus, Son of man, Thou knowest it *altogether!* And, knowing it, has He left it unprovided for? See what He has done for the recruiting of man's physical strength, and then say if He who can be so careful about restoring the body would leave the recovery of the mind and soul altogether unprovided for. He has answered that every day and eventide. He sends a cooling shadow over the earth, and, as it wraps all things in its darkness, it seems to say, "Rest awhile." See how above every weekday He has set that singing, shining Sabbath Day of His, to quiet men, to give them a moment's rest in the great strife and chase of life! If He has made an evening to each day—a sabbath to each week—if He has in many ways shown an interest in men's bones, muscles, nerves, and sinews, has He forgotten the immortal soul? has He made no answer to the cry of the heart when it is weary and sad, when it sighs for release and rest? His whole life is an answer to that enquiry. "Come unto Me," said He, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He meets us, therefore, at every point. He provides for the aching limb, and answers the sigh of the weary heart!—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) It is no small task to water one garden, in the heat of the summer time, so that every flower shall be refreshed, and no plant overlooked. How great is the might of Him, who

from the salt sea extracts the precious clouds of sweet rain, to fall not only on gardens, but on the pastures of the wilderness, and the wild forest trees, till all nature laughs for joy, the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and the trees of the field clap their hands! Brethren, it is a great thing to put a cup of cold water to the lips of a disciple; it shall not lose its reward. To refresh the bowels of one of God's saints is no mean thing; but how great is God's goodness, which puts a cup of salvation to every Christian's lips, which waters every plant of His right hand planting, so that every one can have his leaf continually green, and his fruit ever brought forth in due season.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(e) For an illustration on the point see p. 13.

(f) It is always a token of a revival of religion, it is said, when there is a revival of psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear ploughmen at the plough-tail singing Luther's psalms. Whitfield and Wesley had never done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry, and for the singing of such men as Toplady, and Scott, and Newton, and many others of the same class; and even now we mark that since there has been somewhat of a religious revival in our denominations, there are more hymn books than ever there were, and far more attention is paid to Christian psalmody than before. When your heart is full of Christ, you will want to sing. It is a blessed thing to sing at your labour and work, if you are in a place where you can do so; and if the world should laugh at you, you must tell them that you have as good a right to sing the songs that delight your heart as they have to sing any of the songs in which their hearts delight. Praise His name, Christians; be not dumb; sing aloud unto Jesus the Lamb; and if we as Englishmen can sometimes sing our national air, let us as believers have our national hymn, and sing—

"Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all."

—*Ibid.*

(g) A father with his little son is journeying overland to California; and when, at night, he pitches his tent in some pleasant valley, the child is charmed with the spot, and begs his father to rear a house and remain there; and he begins to make a little fence about the tent, and digs up the wild-flowers, and plants them within the enclosure. But the father says, "No, my son. Our home is far distant. Let these things go; for to-morrow we must depart." Now, God is taking us, His children, as pilgrims and strangers, homewards; but we desire to build here, and must be often overthrown before we can learn to seek the "city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."—*H. W. Beecher.*

A stranger is very well known, not perhaps in the great city where there are always thousands of such, but in a country town or on a

country road. See him as he enters the village at nightfall ; you can see at once he is not of the place. The dust is on his raiment ; he is footsore and weary ; yet he has no mind to stay—he will be away again before the inhabitants are up. His language is different ; his questions

are those of one who has but a superficial and momentary interest in the answer that may be given ; his very look is the life spelling of the word “onward ;” his home, wherever it may be, is not here.—*A. Raleigh, D.D.*

A SONG AT THE WELLHEAD.

(Verses 16-18.)

I. These people required water as we greatly need grace, and there was a promise given concerning the supply.

“The Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

1. The supply promised here *was a Divine supply*. “I will give them water.” The supply of grace that you are to receive in your time of need is a Divine supply. Hence, knowing the attributes of God, you will understand that however much you may require, there will be an all-sufficient supply ; however long you may require it, there will be an everlasting supply ; at whatever hours you may want it, there will be an available supply.

2. *It was a suitable supply*. The people were thirsty, and the promise was, “I will give them water.” Like a father, God understands His children better than His children understand themselves, and He gives not according to their foolish guesses of what they need, but according to His wise apprehension of what they require.

3. The supply promised was *an abundant supply*. “I will give them water.” It included every child of Israel, every babe that needed it, as well as every strong man that thirsted after it. No child of God shall be left to perish for want of the necessary supplies.

4. *It was a sure supply*. “I will give them water.” We do not go forward on the strength of “ifs,” and “buts,” and “peradventures ;” but we advance confidently, invigorated and inflamed, as to our courage, by “wills” and “shalls.” God must undeify Himself before He can break His promises.

II. Observe, the song.

The children of Israel sing this song,

“Spring up, O well ; sing ye unto it.”

1. This song may be looked upon as *the voice of cheerfulness*. There was no water, but they were still in good spirits. Cheerfulness in want, cheerfulness upon the bed of pain, cheerfulness under slander, singing, like the nightingale, in the night, praising God when the thorn is in the breast, this is a high Christian attainment, which we should seek after and not be content without.

2. I like, too, the look of these children of Israel, *singing to the Lord before the water came*, praising Him while they were yet thirsty. Let us pitch a tune and join with them, however low our estate may be.

3. This song was the voice of *cheerfulness sustained by faith*. They believed the promise, “Gather the people together,” &c. They sang the song of expectation. Sing of the mercy yet to come, which your faith can see, although as yet you have not received it.

4. This song was no doubt *greatly increased in its volume, and more elevated in its tone, when the water did begin to spring*. All ye who have received anything of Divine grace, sing ye unto it ! Bless God by singing and praising His name while you are receiving His favours.

III. The song was a prayer.

“Spring up, O well,” was Faith’s way of singing her prayer.

1. This prayer *went at once to the work, and sought for that which was required*. What was needed ? Not a well, but water. Now what we need is not the means of grace, but the grace of the means. You are retired for your private devotions ; you have opened the Bible ; you begin to

read. Now, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter. Words are nothing: the letter killeth. The business of the believer with his Bible open is to pray, "Here is the well: spring up, O well; Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of Thy Word," &c. Or perhaps you are about to kneel down to pray. You want in prayer not the well so much as the springing up of the well. And it is just the same when you go to the ordinances. . . . And is it not the same when you come to the public assembly? Let our prayer be like the song of the text, direct and to the point. Lord, do not put me off with the husks of ordinances and means of grace; give me Thyself.

2. *This prayer was the prayer of faith*, like the song. Faith gives wings to our prayers, so that they fly heaven-high; but unbelief clogs and chains our prayers to earth. If you want some well to spring up to supply the needs of yourself and your family, pray in faith; the rock, if needs be, shall flow with rivers of water.

3. It was *united prayer*. All the people prayed, "Spring up, O well!" The prayer was a unanimous one.

IV. Then they went to work.

"I will give them water," but "the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it," &c.

1. When God intends to bless a people, *effort is always esteemed to be honourable*. "The princes digged," &c. They were not ashamed of the work. And when God shall bless a church and people, they must all feel that it is a very great honour to do anything in the service of God. Our highest dignity is to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It was *effort which was accomplished by very feeble means*. They digged the well with their staves—not very first-class tools. But they did as they were told. We must dig as we can. We must use what abilities we have. If you have but one talent, use that one talent.

3. It was *effort in God's order*. They digged the well "by the direction of the lawgiver." We must not forget in everything we do for God, to go to work in God's way.

4. It was *effort made in faith*. They digged the well, but as they digged it they felt so certain that the water would come that they sang at the work, "Spring up, O well!" This is the true way to work if we would get a blessing.—C. H. Spurgeon.

THE OVERTHROW OF THE AMORITES; OR, THE DEFEAT OF "THE PEOPLE THAT DELIGHT IN WAR."

(Verses 21-26.)

The following points in this portion of the history may be considered with advantage.

I. A reasonable request preferred.

"And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, let me pass," &c. (vers. 21, 22). The same request was sent by them on a former occasion to the king of Edom (chap. xx. 17). This request was—

1. *Reasonable in itself*. "Let me pass through thy land." (On this and the next subdivision see pp. 376, 377.)

2. *Enforced by satisfactory assurances*. "We will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; we will go

along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders."

II. A hostile refusal returned.

"And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together," &c. (ver. 23). The reasons which led the king of the Amorites to adopt this line of action were probably partly those which led the king of the Edomites to oppose their passing through his country; e.g., fear that they should receive some injury from the Israelites if they granted their request, and envy of their growing power (see pp. 376, 377). On receiving the request Sihon gathered his people together, and marched against Israel.

Not content with opposing their march through his territory, "he went out against Israel into the wilderness; and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel." He was the aggressor in the war; and his assault was entirely unprovoked. It is an evil thing when kings and their advisers are so eager to make war. (a)

III. An unprovoked assault ending in an unmitigated defeat.

"And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land," &c. (vers. 24, 25). If, like one in modern times, Sihon entered upon the conflict "with a light heart," he soon exchanged it for a heavy and bitter heart. The battle was his last. He and all his host were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." His defeat and destruction were a just retribution for his unprovoked and hasty assault upon Israel. (b)

IV. A great victory obtained by those who had in vain asked for a small favour.

Israel had asked as a favour that they might be allowed to pass through

the land of the Amorites, who in reply went out to war against them; "and Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok," &c. Their modest request for permission to pass through the land was brutally refused, and, now having been forced into battle, they take possession of the land as their own. Moderation of request or demand is far more likely to be followed by large attainments than unreasonable requests or extravagant demands. An attitude of bluster and swagger generally leads to defeat and humiliation.

V. A territory which had been obtained by conquest lost by defeat.

"For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon." A policy of aggression often leads to enforced retrogression. That which has been obtained by force is often lost by reason of the opposition of a superior force. Righteous and beneficent government is the best security of an empire. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well

To extort their truncheons from the puny hands
Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world.

—Cowper.

(b) Moses sent messengers unto Sihon, desiring that he would grant his army a passage, upon what security he should please to require; he promised that he should be no way injured, neither as to that country which Sihon governed, nor as to its inhabitants; and that he would buy his provisions at such a price as should be to their advantage, even though he should desire to sell them their very water. But Sihon refused his offer, and put his army into battle array, and was preparing everything in order to hinder their passing over Arnon.

When Moses saw that the Amorite king was disposed to enter upon hostilities with them, he thought he ought not to bear that insult; and, determining to wean the Hebrews from their indolent temper, and prevent the disorders which arose thence, which had been the occasion of their former sedition (nor indeed were they

now thoroughly easy in their minds), he inquired of God, whether he would give him leave to fight? which when he had done, and God also promised him the victory, he was himself very courageous, and ready to proceed to fighting. Accordingly he encouraged the soldiers; and he desired of them that they would take the pleasure of fighting, now God gave them leave so to do. They then upon the receipt of this permission, which they so much longed for, put on their whole armour, and set about the work without delay. But the Amorite king was not now like to himself when the Hebrews were ready to attack him; but both he himself was affrighted at the Hebrews, and his army, which before had showed themselves to be of good courage, were then found to be timorous: so they could not sustain the first onset, nor bear up against the Hebrews, but fled away, as thinking this would afford them a more likely way for their escape than fighting; for they depended upon their cities, which were strong, from which yet they reaped no advantage when they were forced to fly to them; for as soon as the Hebrews saw them giving ground, they immediately pursued them close; and when they had broken their ranks, they greatly terrified them, and some of

them broke off from the rest, and ran away to the cities. Now the Hebrews pursued them briskly, and obstinately persevered in the labours they had already undergone; and being very skilful in slinging, and very dexterous in throwing of darts, or anything else of that kind; and also having nothing but light armour, which made them quick in the pursuit, they overtook their enemies; and for those that were most remote, and could not be overtaken, they reached them by their slings and their bows, so that many were slain; and those that escaped the slaughter were sorely wounded, and these were more distressed with thirst than with any of those that fought against them, for it was the summer season; and when the greatest number of them were brought down to the river out of a desire to drink, as also when others fled away by troops, the Hebrews came round them, and shot at them; so that, what with darts and what with arrows, they made a slaughter of them all. Sihon their king was also slain. So the Hebrews spoiled the dead bodies, and took their prey. The land also which they took was full of abundance of fruits, and the army went all over it without fear, and fed their cattle upon it; and they took the enemies prisoners, for they could no way put a stop to them, since all the fighting

men were destroyed. Such was the destruction which overtook the Amorites, who were neither sagacious in counsel, nor courageous in action. Hereupon the Hebrews took possession of their land, which is a country situate between three rivers, and naturally resembling an island: the river Arnon being its southern limit; the river Jabbok determining its northern side, which, running into the Jordan, loses its own name, and takes the other; while Jordan itself runs along by it on its western coast.—*Josephus, Ant. v. 5.*

(c) There is one thing too apt to be forgotten, which it much behoves us to remember: in the Colonies, as everywhere else in this world, the vital point is not who decides, but what is decided on! That measures tending really to the best advantage, temporal and spiritual, of the Colony be adopted, and strenuously put in execution; there lies the grand interest of every good citizen, British and Colonial. Such measures, whosoever have originated and prescribed them, will gradually be sanctioned by all men and gods; and clamours of every kind in reference to them may safely to a great extent be neglected, as clamorous merely, and sure to be transient.—*Thomas Carlyle.*

LESSONS FROM AN ANCIENT WAR SONG.

(Verses 27-32.)

For the interpretation of these verses see *Explanatory and Critical Notes.*

These verses suggest reflections on—

I. The triumphs of warriors.

1. *Their selfishness.* “Come ye to Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and established.” Warriors think only of their own cities and of the interests of their own country and people; to secure these they do not hesitate to outrage the most sacred rights of other peoples. (a)

2. *Their destructiveness.* “For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it hath consumed Ar of Moab.” (b)

3. *Their cruelty.* “It hath consumed the lords of the high places of Arnon.” (c).

II. The vanity of idols.

“Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh! he hath given up his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, unto Sihon king of the Amorites.” Chemosh, the

national god of the Moabites, in whom they trusted, failed to deliver them from the power of the Amorites (comp. *Psa. cxxxv. 15-18; Isa. xlv. 9-20*). An illustration of every object in which man reposes his supreme trust, except the Lord God. The idols of our age and country are wealth, power, pleasure, friendship, knowledge, wisdom; excellent things in themselves and in their place; but utterly vain when pursued and trusted as the chief good of man. They cannot deliver in the day of trouble, &c. Only God is worthy of our entire and unlimited confidence.

III. The discomfiture of conquerors.

“We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there.” The Amorites had vanquished the

Moabites and seized much of their territory; they also went out against Israel; but now Israel has vanquished them and taken their territory. The victor is now vanquished; the spoiler is now spoiled. How often has this been repeated in subsequent times! What

a striking illustration we have of it in Napoleon Bonaparte! (*d*)

IV. The insecurity of earthly possessions.

"Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites." "Worldly inheritances are continually changing their masters."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(*a*) The spirit of all rulers and nations towards foreign states is partial, unjust. Individuals may be disinterested; but nations have no feeling of the tie of brotherhood to their race. A base selfishness is the principle on which the affairs of nations are commonly conducted. A statesman is expected to take advantage of the weaknesses and wants of other countries. How loose a morality governs the intercourse of states! What falsehoods and intrigues are licenced by diplomacy! What nation regards another with true friendship? What nation makes sacrifices to another's good? What nation is as anxious to perform its duties, as to assert its rights? What nation chooses to suffer wrong rather than inflict it? What nation lays down the everlasting law of right, casts itself fearlessly on its principles, and chooses to be poor or to perish rather than to do wrong? Can communities so selfish, so unfriendly, so unprincipled, so unjust, be expected to wage righteous wars? Especially if with this selfishness are joined national prejudices, antipathies, and exasperated passions, what else can be expected in the public policy but inhumanity and crime? An individual, we know, cannot be trusted in his own cause to measure his own claims, to avenge his own wrongs; and the civil magistrate, an impartial umpire, has been substituted as the only means of justice. But nations are even more unfit than individuals to judge in their own cause; more prone to push their rights to excess, and to trample on the rights of others; because nations are crowds, and crowds are unawed by opinion, and more easily inflamed by sympathy into madness. Is there not, then, always a presumption against the justice of war?—*W. E. Channing, D.D.*

(*b*) Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villagers in this neighbourhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathise with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of Heaven and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves but their infants; the inhabitants

flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

(*c*) You may see what war is, as you mark tens and hundreds of thousands of men, made after the image of God, rushing together to tear and destroy each other with more than the fury of wild beasts. You may see what it is in the miserable crowds of innocent men, women, and children that are flying from their homes to perish, in too many instances, by famine, and the pestilence which famine breeds. You may see what it is, in devastated fields, where the bounty of Providence had blessed man with abundance, which now lies trampled into the mire, or remains rotting and ungathered, because the tide of war has rolled over the country. You will see what it is, in the bombarded towns, in the sacked and desolate houses, in the burned and battered villages, where a few of the unfortunate inhabitants may be seen prowling like famished wolves amid the ruins of their homes, to see if they can pick some morsel of food to save themselves from starvation. You may see what it is, in the heaps of decaying human corpses that taint the air with corruption, or are eaten by dogs which won't be scared away from their loathsome feast. You may see what it is, in the still sadder spectacle of scores and hundreds of wounded men lying for hours and days where they fell, with no eye to pity and no hand to succour, and sometimes slain in their wounds by men worse than wild beasts, who haunt the battle-field for plunder and spoil. You may hear what war is in the wild cry of vengeance and fury, more terrible than the howl of the wolf or the roar of the lion as he springs on his prey, with which men hurl themselves into deadly strife; in the groans of the wounded, as they lie, mercilessly trampled beneath the feet of their comrades or the prancing hoofs of horses that rush over them unheeded; in the shrieks of women, rushing with dishevelled hair and eyes starting out of their sockets in the agony of terror, as they flee

from outrage worse than death before the face of brutal soldiers, drunk with blood and lust; in the piteous wails of little infants tossed on the points of bayonets, or nailed alive to the doors of their parents' houses. This is war. Yes; this is war. It is not the minister of justice; it is not the redresser of wrong; it is not the vindicator of right. To borrow Coleridge's words:—

"War is a monster all with blood defiled,
That from the aged father tears his child:
A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,

Who slays the sire and starves the son,
The husband slays, and from her hoard

Steals what his widow's toil hath won.
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day."

—Henry Richard.

(d) Where is the man at whose nod nations lately trembled, at whose pleasure kings held their thrones, and whose voice, more desolating

than the whirlwind, directed the progress of ravaging armies? A little island now holds this conqueror of the world. No crowd is there to do him homage. His ear is no longer soothed with praise. The glare which power threw around him is vanished. The terror of his name is past. His abject fall has even robbed him of that admiration which is sometimes forced upon us by the stern, proud spirit, which adversity cannot subdue. Contempt and pity are all the tribute he now receives from the world he subdued. If we can suppose that his life of guilt has left him any moral feeling, what anguish must he carry into the silence and solitude to which he is doomed. From the fields of battle which he has strewn with wounded and slain, from the kingdoms and families which he has desolated; the groans of the dying, the curses of the injured, the wailing of the bereaved, must pierce his retreat, and overwhelm him with remorse and agony.
—W. E. Channing, D.D.

THE BATTLE OF EDREI, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

(Verses 33-35.)

We have here an illustration of the following great truths—

I. The Christian has to contend against a most formidable adversary.

"Og the king of Bashan and all his people" were a most powerful enemy to encounter. Many of their "cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars." The message of Jehovah unto Moses, "Fear him not," &c., implies that the Israelites were deeply sensible that they were about to encounter a powerful antagonist. In battling against evil the Christian has to do with a mighty foe. Thoughtless persons may speak lightly of the vitality and strength of evil; but no one who has ever earnestly contended with it can do so. See St. Paul's estimate of it (Eph. vi. 10-18). And St. Peter's (1 Pet. v. 8, 9). And St. Jude's (Jude 3, 20-24). The formidableness of the adversary of the Christian may be seen as regards,—

1. *Sin in ourselves.* The complete victory of the Christian life often involves painful and protracted warfare (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; 2 Cor. ix. 3-5; Heb. xii. 1-4). (a)

2. *Evil in the world.* Think of the moral darkness and death in heathen

lands; and in our own country, of the criminal classes; of the multitudes who, though not criminal, are irreligious; of the drunkenness, the commercial dishonesty, the social corruptions, the religious formality, &c. Let any one attempt to grapple with any one of these forms of evil, and he will need no argument to convince him that true Christians are battling against a mighty adversary. (b)

II. The Christian in his conflict is inspired with the most encouraging assurance.

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, Fear him not;" &c. It has been well pointed out in the *Biblical Museum*, that "they were likely to fear, since—1. They had before them a powerful foe, warlike and well posted; 2. They were weakened by previous battles; 3. They had enemies behind and before them." And we know as a matter of fact that they did fear the encounter. "The giant stature of Og, and the power and bravery of his people, excited a dread which God Himself alleviated by His encouragement to Moses before the battle, and the memory of this victory lingered long in the national memory (Ps. cxxxv. 11; cxxxvi. 20)." The encouragement given to Israel illus-

trates that which is given to Christians in their conflict with evil. Notice—

1. *The assurance.* "I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land." Christians are assured of victory over sin (comp. John xvi. 33; Rom. viii. 35-39; xvi. 20; 1 John iv. 4; v. 4, 5). (c)

2. *The example.* "Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon, king of the Amorites," &c. Past victories should inspire us with courage and fortitude in present conflicts (comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 34-37; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18). (d)

3. *The exhortation.* "Fear him not." Enforced by such an assurance from such a Being, and by so recent and striking an example, this exhortation must have carried with it great power. Christian soldier, "fear not! for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

III. The Christian in his conflict shall obtain a most complete victory.

"So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people," &c. This illustrates the Christian victory in at least two respects:—

1. *The destruction of their enemies.* The Christian shall be victorious over evil in himself. He shall be presented "faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And the Christian cause shall triumph in the world. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under His feet." "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire."

2. *Their enrichment by the destruction of their enemies.* "And they possessed his land." "All the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took a prey to ourselves" (Deut. iii. 7). So Christians "are more than conquerors through Him that loved" them. The Christian is a gainer by reason of his moral battles; he comes out of the conflict greatly enriched with the most precious spiritual spoils. His wisdom, his strength, his courage, the very noblest qualities of his manhood, are all increased and perfected in the arduous strife with sin.

Christian soldiers, onward bravely to the battle, and quail not in its fiercest strife; for through the Captain of your salvation, a splendid triumph shall be yours. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When men are swimming with the tide, how easy it is! They seem to themselves, oh! how lithe and springy. But let them turn round and attempt to swim back, and they will find that it is quite a different matter. There is many and many a man whose conviction of danger comes with his attempt to turn back on habit.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease, wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them; the dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood, these are for those who go a soldiering; and swords all hacked, and dented armour, and bruised shields, these are the things that mark the good, the practical soldier. Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a life-work for Christ, actually to win souls, this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian. A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night perhaps the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle, just at the time when he is most weary, and he must away to the attack just when he would

best prefer to take his rest in sleep. The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country; always needing to stand on his watch-tower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood, with far worse foes, namely, with spiritual wickednesses in high places.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The fight may seem to hang in the scales to-day, but the conquest is sure to come unto Him whose right it is. He shall gather all the sceptres of kings beneath his arm in one mighty sheaf, and take their diadems from off their brows, and be Himself crowned with many crowns, for God hath said it, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but every promise of His must and shall be fulfilled. Push on, then, through hosts of enemies, ye warriors of the Cross. Fight up the hill, ye soldiers of Christ, through the smoke and through the dust. Ye may not see your banner just now, neither do ye hear the trumpet that rings out the note of victory, but the mist shall clear away, and you shall gain the summit of the hill, and your foes shall fly before you, and the King Himself shall come, and you shall be rewarded who have continued steadfast in His service.—*Ibid.*

(d) The desert was to Christ a holy place,

after the initial battle; the sight of the old footmarks inspired His depressed heart; the echoes of the victorious quotations became as voices of promise. In the first instance, He was led up of the Spirit to be tempted: often afterwards He was led up of the Spirit into the same wilderness to be comforted. So all through human life; recollection becomes inspiration, and memory speaks to the soul like a prophet of the Lord.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 407.

Sir Francis Drake, being in a dangerous storm in the Thames, was heard to say, "Must I, who have escaped the rage of the ocean, be drowned in a ditch!" Will you, experienced saints, who have passed through a world of tribulation, lie down and die of despair, or give up your profession because you are at the present moment passing through some light affliction? Let your past preservation inspire you with courage and constrain you to brave all storms for Jesus' sake.—*C. H. Surgeon.*

(e) Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world. The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb; the swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords. What! soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory, wouldst thou have it said that thou didst turn thy back in the day of battle? Dost thou not wish to have a share in the conflict, that thou mayest have a share in the victory? If thou hast even the hottest part of the battle, wilt thou flinch and fly? Thou shalt have the brightest part of the victory if thou art in the fiercest of the conflict. Wilt thou turn and lose thy laurels? Wilt thou throw down thy sword? Shall it be with thee as when a standard-bearer fainteth? Nay, man, up to arms again! for the victory is certain. Though the conflict be severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, ye lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more! for ye shall yet be crowned with immortal glory.—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

We now enter upon the last division of this Book, which comprises fifteen chapters (xxii.-xxxvi.).

"In the steppes of Moab the Israelites encamped upon the border of the Promised Land, from which they were only separated by the Jordan. But before this boundary line could be passed, there were many preparations that had to be made. In the first place, the whole congregation was to pass through a trial of great importance to all future generations, as bearing upon the relation in which it stood to the heathen world; and in the second place, it was here that Moses, who was not to enter Canaan because of his sin at the water of strife, was to bring the work of legislation to a close before his death, and not only to issue the requisite instructions concerning the conquest of the promised inheritance, and the division of it among the tribes of Israel, but to impress once more upon the hearts of the whole congregation the essential contents of the whole law, with all that the Lord had done for Israel, that they might be confirmed in their fidelity to the Lord, and pre-

served from the danger of apostasy. This last work of the faithful servant of God, with which he brought his mediatorial work to a close, is described in the book of Deuteronomy; whilst the laws relating to the conquest and partition of Canaan, with the experience of Israel in the steppes of Moab, fill up the latter portion of the present book."—*Keil and Del.*

In this and the succeeding two chapters we have the record of Balaam and his prophecies.

Verse 1. "*The plains.* Heb. *araboth*; the word is the plural of that which is used to denote the whole depressed tract along the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and onward, where it is still called the Arabah, to the Elanitic gulf. Near the mouth of the Jordan this tract is about eleven miles across, a breadth of from four to five miles being on the eastern bank. The space occupied by the Israelitish camp consisted, in the main, of a large and luxuriant oasis upon this bank, slightly raised above the barren flat, sultry because sheltered by the Peraean hills which bear up the fertile plateau above, and watered by

the brooks which, descending from those hills, run westward across the plain into the Jordan (see Tristram, 'Land of Israel,' pp. 528 sqq.)."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Plains of Moab: See on xxi. 20.

On this side Jordan by Jericho. Keil and Del. translate, "Beyond the Jordan of Jericho."

Verse 2. *Balak* = waster, destroyer. —*Fuerst.*

Zippor = a bird.

Verse 3. "*Was distressed because of.* Lit. 'shrank from before them' in terror."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 4. *Midian*. "The Midianites, who are referred to here, must be distinguished from the branch of the same tribe which dwelt in the peninsula of Sinai (chap. x. 29, 30; Exod. ii. 15, 16; iii. 1). They had been settled for a long time (cf. Gen. xxxvi. 35) on the eastern border of the Moabitish and Amoritish territory, in a grassy but treeless steppe-land—where many ruins and wells are still to be found belonging to very ancient times—and lived by grazing (chap. xxxi. 32, sqq.) and the caravan trade. They were not very warlike, and were not only defeated by the Edomites (Gen. xxxvi. 35), but were also subdued and rendered tributary by Sihon, king of the Amorites." —*Keil and Del.*

"*The elders of Midian* are heads of tribes who administered the general affairs of the people, who, like the Israelites, lived under a patriarchal constitution. The most powerful of them bore the title of 'kings' (chap. xxxi. 8) or 'princes' (Josh. xiii. 21).—*Ibid.*

Verse 5. *Balaam* = "devourer of the people" (*Hengstenberg*); or, "one not belonging to the people, i.e., a foreigner; or, conqueror, corrupter of the people." —*Fuerst.*

Beor is regarded by many as derived from בֶּעַר, to burn, to consume.

Fuerst says it signifies shepherd, and is from בֶּעַר, cattle. In 2 Pet. ii. 15 the name is written Bosor.

"*Pethor, which is by the river, &c.* Rather, 'which was on the river' (i.e., the Euphrates, so called here and elsewhere by pre-eminence) 'in his native land.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Pethor was a city of Mesopotamia (Deut. xxiii. 4) on the Euphrates. Its site is unknown.

Verse 7. *Rewards of divination.* "The soothsayers' wages" (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 15).

Verse 15. *Princes, more, and more honourable*; i.e., more in number and of more exalted rank, and with more splendid presents or proffers of reward.

Verse 36. *A city of Moab.* Heb., *Ir-Moab*. See on chap. xxi. 15.

Verse 39. *Kirjath-huzoth.* Margin: "a city of streets." *Fuerst*: "city of the steppes." From the context, it was "apparently within Balak's dominions, and therefore south of the Arnon. Hardly however far south, for from it, on the morrow, the company proceeded to Bamoth-Baal, which lay north of the Arnon. It was probably a place of importance, and possibly that of Balak's residence. . . . All the conditions implied as to the site of Kirjath-huzoth in the Scriptural notice of it are satisfied by the ruins of Shihân, four miles west by south of the site assigned to Ar or Ir. They stand on a slight but insulated eminence, and form a conspicuous object to all the country round."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 41. *The high places of Baal*; or, Bamoth-Baal. See on xxi. 19.

The utmost part of the people; or, "the end of the people," i.e., the outermost portion of the camp of Israel. Balak seems to have thought that Balaam must have the Israelites in view to curse them effectually.

(Verse 1.)

The Israelites have now ended their wanderings. They have encamped for the last time. When they strike their tents again it will be to march forward towards the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Viewing them in their present position, we regard them as an illustration of the Christian approaching the end of his pilgrimage. There is an analogy in the following particulars. The Christian as he draws near to the end of his pilgrimage,—

I. Is cheered by delightful prospects.

From their present encampment the Israelites could behold the land promised to their fathers. They looked forward to—

1. *Rest from their toils and wanderings.* The Christian nearing home anticipates rest from sin and sorrow, from toil and trial, from doubt and fear. Soon they shall “rest from their labours,” &c. (a)

2. *Possession of the inheritance.* The “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” will soon be entered upon by the Christian who has the end of his journey in view.

3. *The realisation of precious and long-cherished hopes.* For generations past the noblest of the Israelites had been animated by the hope of the possession of Canaan; and now that hope is on the point of fruition. The Christian hopes for freedom from sin, for holiness, for likeness to Christ, for the vision of God (1 John iii. 2, 3); and as he nears the bourne of his pilgrimage the realisation of these splendid hopes comes into clear and clearer view. Most brilliant and blessed are his prospects. (b)

II. Needs preparation for the new state into which he is about to enter.

In this encampment in the plains of Moab much preparatory work had to be done amongst the Israelites before they could advance to the possession of Canaan. This preparatory work is narrated in the last eleven chapters of

this book, and in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses completed his work as legislator for them, gave them directions as to the conquest and division of the land, took great pains to guard them against apostasy, to confirm them in their covenant relation to God, and to strengthen their loyalty to Him. And as the Christian approaches the end of his pilgrimage, the progress of his preparation for heaven is often manifest to the spiritual observer. His increasing meetness for his inheritance may be seen in the beautiful ripening of his character, which grows rich and mellow. His life becomes luminous with fore-gleamings of the great glory to which he approaches. Gradually he is “made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (c)

III. Is still subjected to trials and difficulties.

While encamped in the plains of Moab, and before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites experienced—

1. *Perilous temptations.* In the twenty-fifth chapter we have an account of temptations arising from their association with idolatrous peoples and practices, to which great numbers of the Israelites yielded. The true child of God is sometimes sorely tempted and tried, even when he has the heavenly Canaan within his view.

2. *Painful separations.* Their great emancipator and leader, “Moses the servant of the Lord” died there in the land of Moab. . . . And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days.” And the aged pilgrim nearing the end of his course often experiences painful separations. The dear partner of his life is perhaps summoned home before him, leaving him to finish his journey alone in weariness and sorrow. The end of the pilgrimage always involves separations, and very often trying ones.

3. *Formidable difficulties.* Jordan had to be crossed before the Israelites

entered into Canaan. And death is an experience which must be passed through by the Christian pilgrim before he gains the heavenly rest ; and to some this is a source of great anxiety and trial. (d)

Ye aged pilgrims, and ye who by

reason of sickness or weakness are nearing home, be of good cheer, for your heavenly inheritance is at hand. Be ye also diligent that when the summons to arise and depart is given to you, ye may be ready joyfully to obey it.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) O weary sons and daughters of Adam ! you will not have to drive the ploughshare into the unthankful soil in heaven ; you will not need to rise to daily toil before the sun hath risen, and labour still when the sun hath long ago gone to his rest ; but ye shall be still, ye shall be quiet, ye shall rest yourselves. Toil, trouble, travail, and labour are words that cannot be spelled in heaven ; they have no such things there ; for they always rest.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) I do not know a more beautiful sight to be seen on earth than a man who has served the Lord for many years, and who, having grown grey in service, feels that in the order of nature he must soon be called home. He is rejoicing in the first-fruits of the Spirit which he has obtained, but he is panting after the full harvest of the Spirit which is guaranteed to him. I think I see him sitting on a jutting crag by the edge of Jordan, listening to the harpers on the other side, and waiting till the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern, and the spirit shall depart to God that made it. A wife waiting for her husband's footsteps ; a child waiting in the darkness of the night till its mother comes to give it the evening kiss, are portraits of our waiting. It is a pleasant and precious thing so to wait and so to hope.—*Ibid.*

During the last days of that eminent man of God, Dr. Payson, he once said, "When I formerly read Bunyan's description of the land of Beulah, where the sun shines and the birds sing day and night, I used to doubt whether there was such a place ; but now my own experience has convinced me of it, and it infinitely transcends all my previous conceptions." The best possible commentary on the glowing descriptions in Bunyan is to be found in that very remarkable letter dictated by Dr. Payson to his sister a few weeks before his death. "Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan I might date this letter from the land Beulah, of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The Celestial city is full in my view. Its glories have been upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of Death, which now appears but an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He

approached, and now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this blessed brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm."—*George B. Cheever, D.D.*

(c) Am I nearer heaven ? then I will be doing more of the work which I shall do in heaven. I shall soon use the harp : let me be carefully tuning it : let me rehearse the hymns which I shall sing before the throne ; for if the words in heaven shall be sweeter and more rich than any that poets can put together here, yet the essential song of heaven shall be the same as that which we present to Jehovah here below :

"They praise the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below."

The essence of their praise is gratitude that He should bleed : it is the essence of our praise too. They bless Immanuel's name for undeserved favours bestowed upon unworthy ones, and we do the same. My aged brethren, I congratulate you, for you are almost home : be yet more full of praise than ever. Quicken your footsteps as the glory land shines more brightly. You are close to the gate of pearl ; sing on, dear brother, though infirmities increase, and let the song grow sweeter and louder until it melts into the infinite harmonies.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) In itself, death is the self-same thing to the righteous as to the wicked. It is the same painful, convulsive separation between soul and body, sometimes attended with greater suffering, sometimes with less, but always constituting the supreme last strife of agony endurable in this mortal tenement. . . .

Some wicked men have suffered much less in dying than some righteous men. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." It would be interesting to draw a comparison between the deaths and the death-beds of a number of the most remarkable wicked men, with an equal number of the most remarkable righteous men. The circumstances of disease, of mere material evil, are much the same, except that as material evils, they are always aggravated by spiritual distress ; the pangs of conscience giving sharpness to the pangs of dissolving nature. Compare even the death-

beds of Hume, Voltaire, and Paine, with those of Edwards, Brainard, Henry Martyn and Payson, and you will find that there is not much to choose as to the physical pain of dying. Take the deaths of Herod and of Paul, the one eaten of worms, consumed inwardly, and the last in all probability crucified, and there was about as much physical suffering in the one death as in the other. Take the deaths of Nero and of John, the one is a sui-

cide, the last dying quietly at a hundred years of age; the pangs of dissolution in both cases were probably very nearly equal. The death of the righteous is no more exempt from physical distress and suffering than that of the wicked.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

For another Illustration see the description of Christian and Hopeful passing through the river of Death in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

NEEDLESS ALARM.

(Verses 2-4.)

I. This alarm was great.

“Moab was sore afraid of the people, and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.” “As the Israelites passed by the eastern border of the land of Moab, the Moabites did not venture to make any attack upon them; on the contrary, they supplied them with bread and water for money (Deut. ii. 29). At that time they no doubt cherished the hope that Sihon, their own terrible conqueror, would be able with perfect ease either to annihilate this new foe, or to drive them back into the desert from which they had come. But when they saw this hope frustrated, and the Israelites had overthrown the two kings of the Amorites with victorious power, and had conquered their kingdoms, and pressed forward through what was formerly Moabitish territory, even to the banks of the Jordan, the close proximity of so powerful a foe filled Balak, their king, with terror and dismay, so that he began to think of the best means of destroying them.” *Keil and Del.* To go out and fight against them, to attempt to oppose their progress by force, were projects which could not be entertained even for a moment by the Moabites. They shrank from before them in extreme alarm.

II. This alarm seemed to be justified.

The historian mentions three things as giving rise to the terror of the Moabites.

1. *The number of the Israelites.* “Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many.” The number of men, “from twenty years old and up-

wards, able to go to war in Israel,” was at this time about 601,730 (chap. xxvi. 51), not including the Levites.

2. *The needs of the Israelites.* “And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.” The idea seems to be that so great a multitude would have great needs, and with their great power would seize and entirely consume all the possessions of the Moabites and the Midianites. The Israelites “seemed able to eat up the Moabites, to consume their towns, to possess their substance, and to take both their cities and substance into their own hands.”

3. *The deeds of the Israelites.* “Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.” They had conquered completely the former conqueror of the Moabites; how, then, could they expect to stand before them? It is probable that they had also heard of “the supernatural might of the people of God,” of the wonders which He had wrought for them, and this increased their terror by reason of them.

III. This alarm led to the formation of an alliance against Israel.

The Moabites induced their neighbours, the Midianites, to make common cause with them against the people who seemed such a dangerous foe to both of them. In this we have an illustration of many alliances which have been entered into against the cause and people of God. “Notwithstanding the differences and divisions amongst the

enemies of God and His truth, they can join hand in hand together to oppress the Church." We have illustrations of this in Judg. vi. 3; 2 Chron. xx. 1; Psa. lxxxiii. 5-8; Matt. xxii. 15, 16; Luke xxiii. 12; Acts iv. 27; vi. 9; xvii. 18.

IV. This alarm was needless.

"There was no ground for such alarm, as the Israelites, in consequence of Divine instructions (Deut. ii. 9), had offered no hostilities to the Moabites, but had conscientiously spared their territory and property; and even after the defeat of the Amorites, had not turned their arms against them, but had advanced to the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan." We may regard this as an illustration of—

1. *The groundless fears of the good.* Thus "David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." And the disciples of Christ "cried out for fear," when Jesus came to them walking on the sea. (a)

But the terror of the Moabites more appropriately illustrates—

2. *The groundless alarms of the wicked.* "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth."

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;
The thief doth fear each bush an officer."
—*Shakespeare.*

"The evil man feareth oftentimes where no fear is, trembling at the fall of a leaf, starting at his own thought, and shaking at his own shadow." "Conscience before sin committed, is a bridle to keep us from it, but when it is committed, a most sharp scourge and whip." (b)

Lessons.

1. *It is not always well to judge by appearances.* In this respect the Moabites erred. (c)

2. *No alliance can prevail against the cause of God.*

3. *The infallible antidote against alarm is firm faith in God* (comp. Psa. lvi. 3, 11; cxii. 7).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I remember, when a boy, reading a story of a traveller, who arrived in the dusk of the evening at a place where two roads met, and was greatly alarmed by what appeared to him, at a distance, to be a frightful ghost, dressed in white, with arms extended, ready to seize him in his frightful embrace. Cautiously advancing, however, he soon discovered that what appeared to be a terrible monster, ready to clutch him, was only a *guide-board* to direct him on his journey. Such are the afflictions that often befall us in this life. Seen at a distance, in the feeble light of our dim faith, they are frightful apparitions that alarm and terrify us; but, in the event, they prove so many friendly guide-boards, that a wise and gracious Providence has placed by the way-side, to guide us on to glory.—*Anon.*

It often happens that the coming of Christ to His disciples, for their relief, is that which frightens them most, because they do not know the extent of God's wardrobe; for I think that as a king might never wear the same garment but once, in order to show his riches and magnificence, so God comes to us in all exigencies, but never twice alike. He sometimes puts on the garments of trouble; and when we are calling upon Him as though He were yet in heaven, He is walking by our side; and that from which we are praying God to deliver us is often but God Himself. Thus it is with

us as with children who are terrified by their dreams in the night, and scream for their parents, until, fully waking, behold, they are in their parent's arms.—*H. W. Beecher.*

In regard to these temptations, Bunyan was sometimes just like a scared child that thinks it sees a ghost, or like a timid person in a wood by twilight, that sees in the stump of a tree a man crouched and lying in wait, and instead of daring to go boldly up to it to see what it is, stands shivering and almost dead with terror. Who has not realized this in his own experience, timid or brave? And just so Bunyan did not dare to go up to and examine and look in the face of the shocking blasphemies, accusations, and wrathful passages that Satan would be ever thrusting into his soul; but went cowering and shivering and bowed down as a man in chains under the weight of them. There was a time when all that Satan said to him he seemed morbidly inclined to take upon trust; and if it were a fiery passage of God's Word, so much the worse; for instead of coming up to it as a child of God to see what it was, and whether it were really against him, he fled from it at once as from the fiery flaming sword in the gate of Eden. And nothing can be more curious, more graphic, more affecting in its interest, more childlike in its simplicity, than the manner in which Bunyan describes the commencement and

progress of his recovery out of this state of condemnation and terror: how timidly and cautiously, and as it were by stealth, he began to look these dreadful passages in the face when they had ceased pursuing him, standing at first afar off, and gazing at them, and then, as a child that cannot get rid of its fear, slowly drawing near, and at length daring to touch them, and to walk around them, and to see their true position and meaning, but always conscious of their awful power.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

(b) However vauntingly men may bear themselves in the hour of prosperous villainy, proofs enough have existed of the fears of guilt, when the hour of calamity approaches. Why did our first parents hide themselves after their sin, when they heard the voice of the Lord in the garden? Why did Cain alarm himself at being pursued by the people of the earth? Why shrunk Belshazzar from the handwriting on the wall? Adam had before heard the voice of the Lord, and trembled not: Cain knew that no witness of the murder of his brother existed: Belshazzar understood not the meaning of the writing upon the wall:—and yet they all, after the commission of their several deeds of sin, trembled at the voices that were heard, and the signs that were about. Whence, then, was this? It was because conscience told them, that there is an Eye to which all hearts are open, and whis-

pered the important truth, which has since been proclaimed aloud to all the world, that doubtless there “is a God that judgeth in the earth.”—*Matthew.*

What a state is guilt,
When everything alarms it! Like a sentinel
Who sleeps upon his watch, it wakes in dread
Even at a breath of wind.
When apprehension can form naught but fears,
And we distrust security itself.—*W. Havard.*

(c) I remember well, one night, having been preaching the Word in a country village, I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath. I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed, when of a surety I saw something standing in the hedge ghastly, giantlike, and with outstretched arms. Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural; here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit. I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage, and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge. I jumped the ditch, and found myself grasping an old tree, which some waggish body had taken pains to colour with a little whitewash, with a view to frighten simpletons. That old tree has served me a good turn full often.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

BALAK'S FIRST APPLICATION TO BALAAM: MAN AND THE SUPERNATURAL

(Verses 5-14.)

Here we have the beginning of the action arising from the alliance between Moab and Midian against Israel. “‘Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike,’ the Moabites felt that it would be in vain to contend with them while they so manifestly enjoyed the blessing and protection of a mighty God. But they did think that it might be possible to withdraw or neutralize the force of that advantage, by laying upon them the heavy ban of some powerful magician; and by having them thus rendered weak as other men, they might be assailed with every prospect of success. It must have been a great recommendation of the design to them, that the result would enable them to recover the territory that had once been theirs, but which the Israelites now held by right of conquest from the Amorites. Indeed, could the Israelites be extermi-

nated, or driven back into the desert, the children of Lot might well calculate on not only recovering what they had lost, but on adding the rich lands of Argob and Bashan, which the Israelites had won from Og, to their former territories; and they would thus, with some allied tribes of Abrahamic origin, become the sole possessors of the whole country east of the Jordan.”—*Kitto.* With these views they sent to Balaam, a celebrated soothsayer, requesting him to come and curse Israel. In this portion of the history we have the following instructive themes for meditation—

I. Men in difficulty seeking supernatural help.

“Balak sent messengers unto Balaam the son of Beor,” &c. (vers. 5-7). This action manifests the belief that Balaam wielded supernatural powers. “It was supposed that prophets and sorcerers

had a power to curse persons and places so as to confound all their designs, frustrate their counsels, enervate their strength, and fill them with fear, terror, and dismay." (a)

1. *There is a measure of truth in this.* It is true that men have had power granted them to curse others. We have examples of this in Gen. ix. 25; Josh. vi. 26; 2 Kings ii. 24. It is probable that Balaam had this power. It is also true that when natural resources are unavailing, under certain circumstances and conditions man may obtain supernatural aid. The godly man may obtain such aid by means of prayer to God.

2. *There is much error in the views under consideration.* It was utterly erroneous to suppose that Balaam, or any one else, possessed this power independently, and could wield it arbitrarily. "The curse causeless shall not come." No man can curse those whom God hath blessed. And the power to curse or bless does not depend upon sacrifices or incantations; it is rather a gift bestowed by God, and which can be exercised only by His permission.

II. Man conscious of supernatural powers and of his subjection to Divine authority in the use of them.

And he said unto them, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." Balaam was certainly not altogether an impostor. "In his career," says Dean Stanley, "is seen that recognition of Divine inspiration outside the chosen people, which the narrowness of modern times has been so eager to deny, but which the scriptures are always ready to acknowledge, and, by acknowledging, admit within the pale of the teachers of the Universal Church the higher spirits of every age and of every nation." But notice—

1. *His consciousness of great powers.* This is clearly implied in the history. "He was endowed with a greater than ordinary knowledge of the one true God: he was possessed of high gifts of intellect and genius: he had the intuition of truth, and could see into the

life of things—in short, he was a poet and a prophet." (b)

2. *His consciousness of subjection to God in the use of his powers.* Repeatedly in the history he confesses that all his great powers were not his own, but derived from God, and could be used only by His permission. This is clearly implied in the portion of the history now under consideration (vers. 8, 13). He seems also to have been aware of the relation of Israel to the true God; and to have doubted whether he would be allowed to curse them. Hence we see—

3. *His sin against God.* Knowing what he did, he ought at once, and decidedly, to have refused the request of Balak. But he said to his messengers, "Lodge here this night," &c. He coveted "the rewards of divination"; he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." For unhallowed gain he would have prostituted his great gifts to wicked uses; and hoped to gain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. (c)

III. Man receiving a supernatural visitation.

"And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?" (vers. 9-12). This was an extraordinary visit. But here are three points of general application:

1. *God's access to man's mind.* It was probably by means of a dream or vision that God came to Balaam that night, and made known to him His will. By many avenues God can enter into man's mind, and influence his consciousness. With or without the concurrence of man's will, or even against His will, God can enter his mind and speak to him.

2. *God's interest in man's life.* This is seen in His question to Balaam, "What men are these with thee?" and in His prohibition, "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. The Lord was concerned for Balaam's welfare; He was solicitous that he should not succumb to the temptations presented to him. (d) In many ways God still manifests His solicitude for man's salvation, and His deep interest in every human life.

3. God's authority over man's life. "God said unto Balaam, thou shalt not go with them," &c. It is God's to command; it is man's to obey. Man's well-being is in the practical recognition of God's authority over him.

IV. Man dealing unfaithfully with a Divine communication.

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak," &c. (ver. 13). The most important part of God's message to him, that which would effectually have ended the business, he withheld from the messengers of Balak. He spoke as if it were possible to curse them, and as if he were inclined to accede to the request of Balak. His avarice is still further manifest in this: he could not bear to lose for ever "the rewards of divination" which the messengers had brought with them. 'Balaam's character is not so peculiar as it seems. Separated from the external accidents of time, of country, and position, we may go into the streets, and find a Balaam in every third man we meet. He belonged to that still numerous class who theoretically know God, and who actually do fear Him, but whose love and fear of God are not the regulating and governing principles of their minds. They are convinced, but not converted. They can prize, and strongly desire the privileges of God's elect; they long to 'die the death of the righteous,' but are unwilling to live their life. They would serve God, but they must serve mammon also; and in the strife between the two contending influences, their lives

are made bitter, and their death is perilous."—*Kitto*.

V. Men dealing unfaithfully as messengers.

"And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us." "Observe Satan's practice against God's word," says Ainsworth, "seeking to lessen the same, and that from hand to hand, till he bring it to naught. Balaam told the princes less than God told him, and they relate to Balak less than Balaam told them; so that when the answer came to the king of Moab, it was not the word of God but the word of man; it was simply, 'Balaam refuseth to come,' without ever intimating that God had forbidden him."

Learn.

1. *The Divine communications have never been limited to any one people, or country, or age.* Amongst heathen peoples Divine voices have been heard, Divine visions have been seen.

2. *Great goodness is not always associated with great gifts.* "The illumination of the mind is by no means necessarily associated with the conversion of the heart." "Broad is the distinction between spiritual endowments and spiritual character."

3. *Great gifts involve great responsibility and grave peril.* The responsibility of using them in accordance with the will of the Giver, and the peril of misusing them.

4. *The temptation to covetousness is of great subtlety and strength, and assails even the most gifted natures.* "Take heed and beware of covetousness;" &c. (Luke xii. 15-21).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Their procedure, in seeking to lay the armies of Israel under a curse, that their own arms might be successful against them, is a strange notion to us. But it is not so in the East. Even at the present day, the pagan Orientals in their wars have always their magicians with them to curse their enemies, and to mutter incantations for their ruin. Sometimes they secretly convey a potent charm among the opposing troops, to ensure their destruction. In our own war with the Bur-

mese, the generals of that nation had several magicians with them, who were much engaged in curing our troops; but as they did not succeed, a number of witches were brought for the same purpose. We may indeed trace it as a very ancient opinion among all people, that the maledictions, and the blessings, the charms, the incantations, and the devotements of men who were believed to be inspired by a superior spirit, good or evil, had the most marked effects, not only upon individuals, but

upon regions and entire nations, and even upon cattle and upon the fruits of the field. Not seldom they sought by strong enchantments to evoke the tutelary divinities of their enemies' cities, desiring thus to deprive them of what was regarded as their chief defence. Hence the proper name of many great cities was preserved as a state secret, that no enemy might be able to make use of it in their invocations. The names by which cities were ordinarily known,—as, for instance, Troy, Carthage, Rome—were not the true and secret names of these places. Rome was called Valentia—a name known as hers by very few persons; and Valerius Soranus was severely punished for having disclosed it. The heathens had, indeed, certain solemn invocations, by means of which they devoted their enemies to certain divinities, or rather to malignant and dangerous demons. The following is the formula of one of these imprecations, as preserved by Macrobius: "Dis-Pater, or Jupiter, if it better please thee to be called by that name—or by whatever name thou mayest be invoked—I conjure thee to pour upon this army (or this town) the spirit of terror and trepidation. Deprive of their sight all those who shall aim their strokes at us, our armies, or our troops. Spread darkness over our enemies, over their cities, their fields, their forces. Look upon them as accursed. Bring them under the most rigorous conditions to which any armies have ever been obliged to submit. Thus do I devote them; and I and those whom I represent, the nation and the army engaged in this war, stand for witnesses. If this doom be accomplished, I promise a sacrifice of three black sheep to thee, O Earth, mother of all things, and to thee, great Jupiter."—*John Kitto, D.D.*

For additional illustrations on this point see Dr. Adam Clarke *in loco*.

(b) Was this knowledge a reality or a pretence? If we take the narrative in its plain meaning—and that is the meaning in which we think that all historical Scripture should be taken—there can be no doubt that Balaam actually had this knowledge, that he not only held the truth, or much of truth, though he held it in unrighteousness, but that God did, in subservience to His own high purposes, actually communicate with him. Any other explanation, however ingenious, is but a continuous and painful distortion of the whole narrative, which revolts the understanding more than do even the strong facts which it tries to mitigate, in deference to the tastes and tendencies of the age. Besides this, the deep attention that Balaam had given (and was doubtless known to have given) to the affairs of the Hebrews, and his acquaintance with their early history, their existing condition, and their future hopes, are shown in the noble prophecy which he was eventually constrained to utter.

How he became possessed of the knowledge he held—and held with so little advantage to his own soul—is a question that looks more

difficult than it is. May he not have owed something to such remains of the patriarchal religion as still existed in Mesopotamia when Jacob was there, and which his residence for twenty years in that quarter may have contributed to maintain? But the only supposition which accounts *fully* for the knowledge which Balaam possessed of Jehovah, whom he generally mentions by that high and peculiar name, is the one which adds to whatever knowledge he possessed from other sources, that which he owed to the Israelites themselves. The way in which this knowledge might be acquired is clear. There could not but be many reports concerning the Israelites during their forty years' wandering in the desert. With a mind awake to everything which concerned his profession, he would be naturally attracted by the reports of the deliverance effected by the Lord for this people who had come out of Egypt, and whose parentage could not be unknown to him. He had surely heard of the passage of the Red Sea, of the waters of Meribah, of the miracle of the brazen serpent; and, as in the case of Simon Magus, a new source of celebrity and of emolument seemed to open up before him, most enticing to his besetting sin. He then, we may conceive, adopted Jehovah as his God, and named himself Jehovah's prophet. Nor, it may be, was this wholly with views of worldly advantage. It is quite possible, as Hengstenberg supposes, that there was a mixture of a higher order of sentiments, a sense of the wants of his moral nature, which led him to seek Jehovah, and laid the foundation of his intercourse with Him. This is all the more probable, as we feel bound to understand that the Lord did, in the accomplishment of His own great purposes, vouchsafe unto him special manifestations of the Divine will.—*Ibid.*

(c) Take heed of cares and covetousness, which is an immoderate desire of getting and enjoying the wealth of this world. For it stealeth away the heart of man from God and godliness, and maketh him bend the whole course of his life on earthly pleasures. This is the common sickness and disease of this age wherein we live. For give me one among many that is not overcome with the pleasures of sin, and the profits of the world. It stealeth on such as have sanctified affections, and have escaped out of the filthiness of the world, through the acknowledging of the Lord, and seeketh to overcome them. It is so deceitful and dangerous a sin, that it hath greatly assaulted, and fearfully overcome them after their calling to the truth and profession of the glorious Gospel of Christ our Saviour, and after they have begun to make some conscience of their life and conversation. Nay, such as before their calling and conversation felt no such desires and cares, now begin to be pressed, cumbered, and tempted with them. For as Satan by all means seeketh whom he may devour, and how he may hinder the repentance of sinners, so when he cannot any longer hold

men in horrible sins of idolatry, blasphemy, adultery and contempt of God; then like a wily and subtle serpent, he creepeth in another way before we can espy him; then he suffereth us to hate evil company, surfeiting, drunkenness, riot, and excess. but he driveth to another extremity, and possesseth us with distrustful cares, and immoderate thoughts of this world, to desire greedily, to seek continually, to keep wretchedly, and to depart heavily from the vain and momentary things that perish with the use. And as this is a secret and subtle sin (albeit deeply rooted, yet hardly espied) so is it seldom cured and recovered, because men do not much consider of it and regard it, but please and flatter themselves in it. If we would attain to our former estate, and see the danger of this disease, consider the vanity and uncertainty of all worldly things; compare them with spiritual blessings, and they are as dung and dirt matched with gold and silver. "Love not the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17; 1 Tim. vi. 17-19).—*W. Attersoll.*

(d) Balaam was blessed with God's special favour. You will ask at once, How could so bad a man be in God's favour? But I wish you to put aside reasonings, and contemplate facts. I say he was specially favoured by God. God has a store of favours in His treasure-house, and of various kinds—some for a time, some for ever; some implying His approbation, others not. He showers favours even on the bad. He makes His sun to rise on

the unjust as well as on the just. He willeth not the death of a sinner. He is said to have loved the young ruler, whose heart, notwithstanding, was upon the world. His loving mercy extends over all His works. How He separates, in His own Divine thought, kindness from approbation, time from eternity; what He does from what He foresees, we know not, and need not inquire. At present He is loving to all men, as if He did not foresee that some are to be saints, others reprobates to all eternity. He dispenses His favours variously—gifts, graces, rewards, faculties, circumstances, being indefinitely diversified, nor admitting of discrimination or numbering on our part. Balaam, I say, was in His favour; not indeed for his holiness' sake, not for ever; but in a certain sense, according to His inscrutable purpose who chooses whom He will choose, and exalts whom He will exalt, without destroying man's secret responsibilities, or His own governance, and the triumph of truth and holiness, and His own strict impartiality in the end. Balaam was favoured in an especial way above the mere heathen. Not only had he the grant of inspiration, and the knowledge of God's will, an insight into the truths of morality, clear and enlarged, such as we Christians even cannot surpass, but he was even admitted to conscious intercourse with God, such as even Christians have not.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

GOD'S INTEREST IN MAN'S COMPANIONSHIPS.

(Verse 9.)

Human companionships are—

1. *Observed by God.* The guests we entertain, the persons who visit us, the associations we enter into, the friendships we form, are all known unto the Lord.

2. *Challenged by God.* "What men are these with thee?" This enquiry was made neither because the Lord needed information, nor yet simply to open the conversation on the mission of the messengers of Balak. It was designed, as Hengstenberg suggests, to awaken "the slumbering conscience of Balaam, to lead him to reflect upon the proposal which the men had made, and to break the force of his sinful inclination." God addresses the same question to the young who are forming dangerous associations; to Christians who take pleasure in non-religious and worldly society, &c. He urges this

solemn enquiry (1) by the voice of conscience; (2) by the preaching of His truth; (3) by the exhortations and admonitions of His Word; and (4) by the remonstrances of His Spirit.

This enquiry also indicates the Divine concern as to human companionships. We may regard this concern as—

I. An indication of the Divine solicitude for the well-being of man.

Nothing whatever that is of importance to us is uninteresting to God. In every man, created in His image and redeemed by the precious blood of His Son, He has the deepest and tenderest concern.

II. An indication of the importance of our companionships.

Inasmuch as He is so concerned as to the character of our associates, it must be a matter of vital importance to us,

and should receive our serious attention.

1. *Our associates indicate our character.* "A man is known by the company which he keeps."

2. *Our associates influence our character.* "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

(a) "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" &c. (Prov. i. 10-15). "Enter not into the path of the wicked," &c. (Prov. iv. 14-19). "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," &c. (b)

III. An indication of our responsibility to God for our companionships.

For the associations we form and the alliances we contract we must every one give account to God. Soon or late we

each must answer the interrogation, "What men are these with thee?"

IV. An indication of the danger of dallying with temptation.

Balaam should have sent the messengers back to Balak at once, with a firm refusal to comply with his request. His longing for "the rewards of divination" led him to keep them for the night; and by so doing he increased the perilousness of his position tenfold. "To parley with temptation is to play with fire." In matters of right and wrong let us never hesitate; for hesitation in such matters is both sinful and dangerous. (c) To the invitations of the tempter let us respond with a prompt and decisive *No*. To the summons of Duty let us render speedy and hearty obedience.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The examples of our companions will exert a plastic influence in the formation of our own character, slow and silent, perhaps, but irresistible and successful: and this influence will be in proportion to the love and esteem we cherish for them. All nations and all ages have confessed the truth of this sentiment. The example of a beloved companion is omnipotent, more especially if he be a sinful one, because a bad model finds in the depravity of our nature something that prepares it to receive the impression. One evil companion will undo in a month all that parents and teachers have been labouring for years to accomplish.—*J. A. James.*

There is a certain magic or charm in company, for it will assimilate, and make you like to them by much conversation with them; if they be good company, it is a great means to make you good, or confirm you in goodness; but if they be bad, it is twenty to one but they will infect and corrupt you. Therefore be wary and shy in choosing, and entertaining, or frequenting any company or companions; be not too hasty in committing yourself to them; stand off awhile till you have inquired of some (that you know by experience to be faithful), what they are; observe what company they keep; be not too easy to gain acquaintance, but stand off and keep a distance yet awhile, till you have observed and learnt touching them. Men or women that are greedy of acquaintance, or hasty in it, are oftentimes snared in ill company before they are aware, and entangled so that they cannot easily get loose from it after when they would.—*Sir Mathew Hale.*

(b) Flee unholy company, as baneful to the

power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul as thou wouldst be for thy body. Durst thou drink in the same cup, or sit in the same chair with one that hath an infectious disease? And is not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself? Of all trades, it would not do well to have the collier and the fuller live together; what one cleanseth, the other will blacken and defile. Thou canst not be long among unholy ones, but thou wilt hazard the defiling of thy soul, which the Holy Spirit hath made pure.—*W. Gurnall.*

Those who willingly associate with the sinful are like men strolling with some trivial object through a district infected with fever, heedless of the invisible arrows of disease spreading through the air: or they may be compared to the River Thames, which is a sweet and pretty river enough near its source; but in the great metropolis it has kept company with drains and sewers, under the belief that its current was too powerful and pure to be injured by them. It was meant that the river should purify the sewer; but, instead of that, the sewer has corrupted the river.—*Union Magazine.*

(c) Suffer not Satan's fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parley or dispute about them; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenado or fire-ball cast into his clothes by the enemy, he does not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imaginations unto greater disturbance.—*John Owen, D.D.*

Young persons should, above all things, beware of beginnings, and by no means parley with temptations; their greatest security is in flight, and in the study to avoid all occasions

of evil; for the cockatrice, which may be easily crushed in the egg, if suffered to hatch and grow up, will prove a deadly serpent hard to be destroyed.—*Gleanings*.

HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. I

(Verses 1-14.)

This story of Balaam I believe to be an honest narrative of facts as they actually occurred (see Micah vi. 5; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14). These repeated references to the history of Balaam in the Old and New Testaments come in support of our belief in the reality of the history; and teach us that since Peter and Jude and John were anxious that the man's character and history should not be forgotten, and that the Church in their days should profit by the beacon-warning which the whole career of this half-bad, half-good man furnished; so, too, should we in our day gather up the details of his history and from them learn what is the lesson of the whole, how a man may struggle and fight against God; against God's kindness and God's voice, and God's warnings, and against his own thoughts and convictions, and better aspirations, until he becomes a light quenched in darkness, a heart hopelessly hardened, a man whom it is "impossible to renew unto repentance."

Look at the circumstances that brought Balaam into notice. . . .

Let us notice three things, as illustrative of human character and of the general history of Divine Providence.

I. How the career and fortunes of the children of Israel were made known in those days.

Those were the days of mere oral communication. From mouth to mouth, and from father to son, events passed along and through society. There was no machinery for the spread of intelligence: it was circulated just in the natural order of things. By these means the knowledge of Israel and of Israel's God appears to have been spread throughout all the countries surround-

ing the Sinaitic peninsula. This was in fact a revelation to these people; a mercy in making known to them, that amidst all their gods and vanities, there was yet a mightier and holier One, who would not give His name to idols, nor His "praise to graven images."

II. But this fear of the Moabites was needless, from the express instructions given to the Israelites (see Deut. ii. 9).

Of course the King of Moab, Balak, knew nothing of this; he and his elders might, however, have reflected upon the fact that the Israelites with anxious solicitude had avoided doing the least injury to the territory of the Moabites; they might have remembered that this powerful body of people had scrupulously paid for the bread and water that had been furnished them as they passed through their territory (Deut. ii. 28, 29). But the Moabites themselves were a lawless predatory tribe, in whom the will for conquest was manifested as far as their power went; and hence the needless fear of the King of Moab, expressed in that nervous language that at once reminds us of the old shepherd princes: "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." What a fine illustration is this of human nature! How "the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth:" how suspicious unprincipled men generally are! how men have estimated others by their own standard of right and wrong!

III. Let us add a word or two about Balaam.

What was he? Was he a heathen soothsayer? (and in Josh. xiii. 22 he is called so): and if he was a heathen soothsayer, how did he come to utter

such glorious and far-reaching predictions? Or was he a prophet of the true God, like Isaiah or Micah? And if so, how did he come to do such wicked things, and be so base and avaricious, and at last so gross and sensual a tempter of the people of Israel?

In reply to such questions, we remark, that previous to the constitution of the children of Israel into a separate religious nation, a nation selected for a religious purpose, with ultimate reference to the Messiah, there was a patriarchal Church extending among all the faithful that preserved uncorrupted the early traditions of the human family. This church, doubtless, received frequent oral communications from God Himself. The men composing this church were not of the seed of Abraham, but were in those far distant days a pledge and type of the enlargement of the Church of Christ among all nations. Such were Shem, Job, and Jethro.

Now, Balaam, I take it, was one of that ancient patriarchal church: traditions, partly correct and partly corrupt, had been handed down generation after generation until they came to him; on these traditions, and on occasional visits from God, his soul lived. There was a religiousness and purity about the man that attracted attention among the wild and lawless Moabites; they were impressed and awe struck with

the blameless simplicity of his life as compared with the licentious character of their sensual Baal worship; and so the man came to be regarded with reverence and fear by them, to be invested with a kind of supernatural and mysterious power by which whomsoever he blessed was blessed, and whomsoever he cursed was cursed, in the estimation of these wild Moabites.

Now you can hardly imagine a more difficult and perilous position for a man to be placed in. A man standing alone in his religious ideas; far in advance of all around him in real and essential truth; got to be regarded by others, until he comes to regard himself, as a very extraordinary character; looking *down* upon *others* quite as much as they look *up* to *him*; surrounded by wild nomadic tribes, who are filled with a vague but real, and all the more real because it was vague, dread of this superior being. What a school this, to learn lessons of the human heart—to learn how it will shuffle, and cheat, and lie, to keep up this spiritual power—to learn how, under seeming religiousness, it will aim at personal aggrandizement and influence; to learn how, step by step, he who was at one time the most religious man among them, may become the darkest and the blackest sinner among them. To us in this history the Scripture says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—*W. G. Barrett.*

HISTORY OF BALAAM, AND HIS PROPHECIES.—No. II.

(Verses 1-14.)

There is nothing so dear to man as power; the acquisition of influence over the minds of others is a conquest full of hazard and responsibility. Balaam had this influence. He had the key of Balak's heart, and could turn its wards which way he pleased. To him, living a retired life in the desert, the messengers of the king come; their request is *urgent*, for it is from the king; their request is *flattering*, for it is a testimony

from Balak that a prophet's word is better than a king's sword; their request is apparently *reasonable*, for why should the Moabites be destroyed? and their request was accompanied by "those rewards of divination" without which the heathen never consulted their favourite oracles.

But their request was a sinful one; and I believe from the language of ver. 9, Balaam saw even then that it was a

wicked request ; but it had come before him so unexpectedly—he was so honoured and flattered by it, that his moral sense, his religious convictions, got crushed and overpowered as this huge temptation came and stated itself before this weak man, and said to him, “Yield to me, yield at once, for riches and honour are in my right hand : all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

Let us notice—

I. The first false step Balaam took, as indicative and prophetic of all the other downward ones.

(Ver. 8.) “And he said unto them, Lodge here this night,” &c.

This was not the way to meet this great peril. I believe he had quite enough knowledge on the subject to have shaped for himself a different course. I believe this was just a hypocritical pretence to gain time, and that the man, even now dazzled by the gifts of gold, the rewards of divination, was clutching them in his heart long before they came into his actual possession. This I think furnishes the key to the whole after-history of this greatly bad man. I do not think Balaam meant at all to consult God. The matter was too plainly before him to create any necessity for that ; but it was a capital trick to play off upon these Moabitish courtiers to impress them with a deeper sense of his importance and influence.

Do not you think we may do the very same thing ? We may talk of praying over such and such a matter, and seeking Divine direction, and asking for the leadings of Providence, when really God's will is the last thing we are thinking about ; when we have already decided and determined what to do. God sees our purpose and determination to have our own way, and man hears our words about Divine direction and guidance ; and so, next to cheating God, the worst thing a man can do is to cheat himself ; so Balaam did, and you know how it succeeded.

II. The warning Balaam had during the night of agitation that followed this visit.

My reason for thinking that Balaam did not intend to consult God at all is the language of the ninth verse, which reads to me very much like a reproof. It is not Balaam going to God and asking, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?” but God coming to Balaam and saying to him, “What are *you* doing ? ‘What men are these with thee ?’ How is it they are with thee ? How is it that you did not dismiss them at once ?”

Ah ! that must have been a sore night of perplexity and agitation to Balaam. . . . How often must he have resolved and re-resolved, and yet, spite of all his resolutions, in the absence of a holy will did he reconsider the thing, and make up his mind, if possible, to go with the messengers of Balak.

Then in the stillness of that night, came this warning to Balaam, “What men are these with thee ?” How that warning might have saved him if he had heeded it : but out of stammering lips and from an undecided heart he speaks the truth, and tells God their character and message to him.

All this was the beginning of the end of Balaam. . . . Let us look here, and see the easy steps to hell. “What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?” Learn how a man, in spite of his better nature and religious revivings, may quench the Spirit and die a desolate and forsaken outcast.

III. The positive refusal God gave to Balaam.

“Thou shalt not go with them.”

Here was mercy and severity ! It was *mercy* not to abandon this man ; not to give him up hopelessly and for ever to his own heart's lust, without another word of warning ; *mercy* to follow him after his stammering, hesitating, half-hearted confession, to say, “No, no, thou shalt not go ! There is a way that seemeth right to thee, Balaam, but the end of it is death.” And does God never follow us in that manner ? Does he not come and cry unto us, “Turn ye, turn ye at My reproof ;

why will ye die?" Oh! if you have ever heard that voice, listen to it; it is thy life! "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

Here was *severity* too. Do you think a man like Balaam ought to have required such a prohibition? Ought he not at once to have felt that the whole scheme was a wicked one, which he ought to hate, and to shun and to protest against?

Ill fares it with the health of life and

soul when it must be put under the care of lock and key; when nothing but commands and prohibitions can keep it in order; when it must be surrounded by "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," to keep it right. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and the emancipated spirit has higher but happier constraints than the law of Sinai, in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. — *Ibid.*

BALAK'S SECOND APPLICATION TO BALAAM: THE DECREASE OF RESISTANCE TO EVIL.

(Verses 15-21.)

In this section of the history we have four conspicuous steps.

I. The repetition with increased force of the request of Balak to Balaam.

"And Balak sent yet again princes," &c. (verses 15-17).

1. *The embassy was more influential.* The princes who were sent this second time were more numerous and more honourable than the former ones. Here was a powerful appeal to the vanity of the prophet.

2. *The message was more urgent.* "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me."

3. *The inducements were stronger.* "For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me," &c. If Balaam wanted rank and dignities, he should have them; if he wanted wealth, he should have it also. If he will but comply with the request of the King of Moab, the most splendid honours and the most munificent treasures shall be freely given to him. Learn: that *temptations which have been declined reluctantly or half-heartedly are presented again, and with greater force.* The manner of Balaam's dismissal of the former messengers prepared the way for a repetition of their mission.

II. The repetition under aggravating circumstances of guilty delay by Balaam.

"And Balaam answered and said

unto the servants of Balak," &c. (vers. 18, 19). In entertaining the proposal at all, and in keeping the messengers during the night, the prophet sinned and that heinously; he ought to have sent them back to Balak with a firm and final refusal. And his guilt was the greater because —

1. *He had been challenged by God as to the presence of the former messengers.* "God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee?"

2. *He had already been prohibited from complying with the request of Balak.* "God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). To a really good man this would have been a final settlement of the question. So it ought to have been to Balaam.

3. *He himself felt and plainly declared that he was bound by the Word of the Lord in the matter.* He "said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the command of Jehovah my God, to do little or great." An utterance worthy of a holy man and a true prophet. But in the light of this declaration, Dr. Kitto forcibly enquires: "Then why not at once dismiss the messengers? He already knew the mind of God, and he ought to have known that 'God is not a man, that He should lie; nor the Son of Man, that He should repent.' Instead of that, he says, 'Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know

what the Lord will say unto me more.' What 'more'? Did Balaam fashion to himself a god after his own heart, and imagine that he also was to be moved from his declared purpose by the gifts and promises of Balak? Could he mean to insult God by his importunities? Did he hope to extort from Him, out of regard to his own worldliness, permission to bring a curse upon an entire nation which, as was well known, had been so long the object of His covenant care? Even such was what Peter calls 'the madness of the prophet.' Such also was the great wickedness of the prophet. He was afraid to transgress the command of God; but he hoped to obtain from Him permission to accompany the messengers, and so to gratify his passion for worldly gain. (a) The temptation was stronger than before; but the reasons for resisting it were also more clear and cogent; and his guilt in not doing so was darker and heavier. A temptation once dallied with, it becomes more difficult to resist it hereafter.

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."
Pope

III. The repetition of the Divine visit to Balaam.

"And God came unto Balaam at night, and said," &c. (ver. 20). Here are two things which claim attention—

1. *The permission granted.* God said unto Balaam, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." When man is determined to have his own way, a time comes when God ceases to oppose him in the matter. "My people would

not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto the stubbornness of their heart; they walk in their own counsels." In giving permission to Balaam, "God granted in anger what He denied in mercy" (comp. chap. xi. 18-20, 31-33).

2. *The condition enforced.* "But yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." God allows Balaam to go, but He restrains him so that he shall not in any way injure His cause and people. The power of the wicked for injury is limited by the Lord.

IV. The setting out of Balaam on the journey.

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." (b) Mark his unbecoming and sinful haste: God said to him, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them;" but he did not wait to be called: he "rose up in the morning," &c. "Because," says Dr. Adam Clark, "he was more hasty than he ought to have been, and went to them instead of staying till they should come to him, it was said of him, not *כי הלך ki halach*, that he went; but *כי הולך הוא ki holech hu*, i.e., he went of his own head—without being called." He "ran greedily for reward."

The chief lesson of our subject is, the importance of meeting the first temptation to evil with uncompromising resistance: to hesitate or to parley is to diminish our power of resistance, and to increase the power of the temptation, thus making successful resistance a task of almost insuperable difficulty. (c) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil," &c. (1 Pet. v. 8, 9).

ILLUSTRATIONS

(a) You will observe he *wished* to go with Balak's messengers, only he felt he *ought not* to go; and the problem which he attempted to solve was, *how* to go and yet not offend God. He was quite resolved he would, anyhow, act religiously and conscientiously; he was too honourable a man to break any of his engagements; if he had given his word, it was sacred; if he had duties, they were imperative; he had

a character to maintain, and an inward sense of propriety to satisfy; but he would have given the world to have got rid of his duties; and the question was, *how* to do so without violence; and he did not care about walking on the very brink of transgression, so that he could keep from falling over. Accordingly, he was not content with *ascertaining* God's will, but he attempted to *change* it. He in-

quired of Him a *second time*, and this was to tempt Him. Hence, while God bade him go, His anger was kindled against him because he went.

This surely is no uncommon character; rather, it is the common case even with the more respectable and praiseworthy portion of the community. I say plainly, and without fear of contradiction, though it is a serious thing to say, that the aim of most men esteemed conscientious and religious, or who are what is called honourable, upright men, is, to all appearance, not how to please God; but how to please themselves without displeasing Him. This surely is so plain that it is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon it. Men do not take for the object towards which they act, God's will, but certain maxims, rules, or measures—right perhaps as far as they go, but defective because they admit of being subjected to certain other ultimate ends, which are not religious. Men are just, honest, upright, trustworthy; but all this, not from the love and fear of God, but from a mere feeling of obligation to be so, and in subjection to certain worldly objects. And thus they are what is popularly called moral, without being religious. Such was Balaam. He was, in a popular sense, a strictly moral, honourable, conscientious man; that he was not so in a heavenly and true sense is plain, if not from the considerations here insisted on, at least from his after history, which (we may presume) brought to light his secret defect, in whatever it consisted. His defect lay in this, that he had not a single eye towards God's will but was ruled by other objects.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(b) That Balaam *saddled his ass*, must not lead us to suppose that there were in those days any proper saddle. This is a far later invention, even for riding on horseback, and is not even now in the East generally used in riding on asses. On this subject we have the negative evidence of sculptures. In Egypt, indeed, there are no equestrian sculptures at all except those which represent riding in chariots. Classical sculpture has no saddles or saddle cloths. We used to think that the earliest saddles were to be seen in the sculptures of the Sassanian dynasty at Shahpur in Persia; but the following passage would take

them back to the last age of the Assyrian empire: "In the earliest sculptures (at Nineveh) the horses, except such as are led behind the king's chariot, are unprovided with cloths or saddles. The rider is seated on the naked back of the animal. At a later period, however, a kind of pad appears to have been introduced; and in a sculpture at Konyunjik was represented a high saddle, not unlike that now in use in the East" (Layard).

The saddling of asses mentioned in Scripture probably consisted merely in placing upon their backs such thick cloths or mats as we see in some of the asses represented in the Egyptian paintings. Something of the same kind, or pieces of rug, felt, carpet, or cloth, are still in general use; although a kind of pad is now frequently to be seen upon asses in the large towns of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, especially among those let out for hire. Such town asses have also bridles, and sometimes stirrups, none of which, any more than the pad, do we remember to have noticed on asses upon actual journeys; and we have known of asses being used continuously on journeys quite as long as that which Balaam now undertook; and that by persons whose position in life quite enabled them to ride a horse or mule had they so chosen. It would not be at all extraordinary, even now, that a person, expecting to be laden with riches and honours, should ride upon an ass, still less in an age and country where no other mode of conveyance, except that of riding upon camels, appears to have been known.—*J. Kitto, D.D.*

(c) In worldly matters, "think twice;" but in duty, it has been well said, "first thoughts are best;" they are more fresh, more pure, have more of God in them. There is nothing like the first glance we get at duty, before there has been any special pleading of our affections or inclinations. Duty is never uncertain at first. It is only after we have got involved in the mazes and sophistries of wishing that things were otherwise than they are, that it seems indistinct. Considering a duty, is often explaining it away. Deliberation is often only dishonesty. God's guidance is plain, when we are true.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

APOSTACY.

"And Balak sent princes more and more honourable" (ver. 15).

"Tarry ye also here this night" (ver. 22).

"Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword" (chap. xxxi. 8).

We assume Balaam to have been a true prophet, though not of Israel. He appears to have been a singularly

good man. And, taking the history as it rises, we may learn what his religion was.

It was very enlightened. "His eyes were open" (see Mic. vi. 5, 8). These were Balaam's views of religion.

Balaam's religion was founded on principle,—the all-comprehensive principle of godliness. All considerations are kept in abeyance, waiting on the

will of God. "Lodge ye here this night: I will bring you word as the Lord shall speak."

His religion was practically exemplified. Balaam acted on principle, and obeyed the word of the Lord. "Thou shalt not go with them," &c. (ver. 12). Then Balaam said to the princes of Moab, "Get you unto your land," &c. (ver. 13).

But Balaam fell, and the first of our texts brings us to the turning point of his life—*downwards*.

I. Balaam apostatized through worldliness.

The temptation was strengthened. "Balak sent princes more honourable." The overtures now comprehend all that kings can do. "I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me." Still the prophet resists; but after a hard contest principle relaxes under the influence of this sun of worldly glory. Balaam becomes a soft and pliant thing in the hands of these monarchs—a total apostate from God. By means of the world the devil ever tempts man; tempting again and again by worldly pleasures, ambition, gain. Take heed and beware of covetousness. Of all mortal sins this is perhaps the most insidious and self-deceptive.

II. Balaam apostatized progressively.

Religion is neither got nor lost all at once. The progress of Balaam's fall may be traced.

1. *His heart went after covetousness.* He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

2. *He tampered with temptation.* Why were these ambassadors kept a second night?

3. *He struggled against his own conscience.* Mountain after mountain is ascended, sacrifice after sacrifice offered, that by some means he may obtain sanction to do what God said he should not do.

4. *He departs from the word of the Lord.* "If the men call thee thou mayest go with them"—a final check and test interposed. Now he is on the downhill course. The deepest, darkest sins follow. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

III. Balaam apostatized despite the greatest obstacles.

Conscience was a perpetual obstacle. *The fear of death* haunted him. From the high places of Baal, where he would have cursed, he saw the Israelites encamped below. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," he utters in apostrophe; when at once his own death appals him, like a dark vision. Then he abruptly exclaims, "Let me *die* the death of the righteous!" There were *extraordinary as well as ordinary obstacles*. What is to do with that poor ass? Mercy, Balaam! At last the angel reveals himself, sword in hand. "I have come out to withstand thee," &c. "If," said Balaam, "it displease thee, I will get me back." *IF*. Alas! he is not turned back yet. "The Lord is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish." Providence is mediatorial. The very difficulties and obstacles and adversities of life are incorporated with God's saving plans; yea, are ordered, permitted, or overruled for our good.

IV. Balaam's apostacy was not only sad but fatal.

Never did he obtain the "wages of unrighteousness." His career was one of unmitigated disappointment, issuing in the sin unto death. Very briefly is the last tragic scene given. God will be avenged of the Midianites. In the war against them Balaam is found among the enemies of the Israelites. "Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword." Thus the veil is drawn darkly; nor does the sacred historian ever name the fallen prophet's name more; but the silences of the Bible are significant as its utterances. Nor did that man perish alone in his iniquity. Does the backslider ever?

From this subject many additional lessons may be gathered—there is one of *hope for apostates*. The forbearance of God should lead to repentance. Balaam's case shows that there is hope for the worst and hope to the last.—*A Military Chaplain, in The Homiletic Quarterly.*

BALAAM AND HIS ASS; DIVINE CHECKS ON MAN'S DOWNWARD COURSE.

(Verses 22-35).

We are met by a preliminary inquiry ; why was God angry with Balaam because he went with the princes of Moab, when He had given consent to his going with them? (1) It is important to observe that God had not given to Balaam an unconditional permission to go with them. He might go with them on condition that the men came to call him. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." This condition had not been fulfilled when "Balaam rose up in the morning," &c. (ver. 21). "And God's anger was kindled because he went of himself." (2) Even this conditional permission was given not because God approved of his going, but because Balaam was determined to obtain permission if it were possible. (3) He went hoping to set aside the restriction which God had imposed upon him,—that he was to do that which He commanded. Clearly Balaam both desired and hoped to be able to curse Israel, and thus obtain the wealth and honours upon which his heart was set. Hence, "God's anger was kindled because he went." (a) God mercifully places obstructions in his way to save him from further sin, and to warn him against attempting to curse Israel, or exceed or deviate from His word to him. This part of the history is a striking illustration of *Divine checks on man's downward course*.

I. These checks are sometimes in operation when unperceived by man.

"The Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him And the ass saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Thrice the ass saw the Angel, and presented indications of alarm ; but Balaam saw Him not until God had opened the mouth of the ass to remonstrate with him. Balaam was blinded to such sights by the fierce lust of wealth and honours which possessed him. Many a dispensation of God's providence is intended as a check

upon man's downward course, which is not seen to be such by the person most concerned. As Balaam saw the troubled and troublesome ass, but not the forbidding Angel ; so men see the afflictions, the losses, the difficulties of their course without perceiving the merciful design of God in them ; they are irritated at the obstructions in their path, but do not see the Angel who is beyond the obstructions.

II. These checks are numerous.

"Mark," says Babington, "the manifold admonitions that Balaam had, and yet all in vain. The ass avoids the Angel once, twice, and thrice ; she hurts his foot against the wall, she lied down under him, never used to do thus before—yet all this could not smite his heart to think, Surely my journey pleaseth not God. Even thus in some sort doth God still deal with men, and yet all in vain ; their sin will not be seen—their fault will not be amended. He giveth us a twitch within, either at some sermon, or otherwise, and yet that vanisheth away, and we forget it. Then He striketh our foot against the wall, that is, He crosseth us with sickness or loss, or some calamities, assaying whether that will bring us home ; but still we beat the ass, and continue our course. When this will not serve, He throweth us down, ass and all, that is, when the lesser crosses profit not, He layeth on greater, greater, I say, and greater, till He makes us feel, even as a father smiteth more, till he humble the froward stomach of his child, yet many times in vain still."

III. These checks are of various kinds.

This is very clear in Balaam's case, in which we see—

1. *Obstructions to his progress.* The advance of his ass was thrice arrested by the Angel of the Lord. When our course is delayed, or difficulties crowd our path, or sickness removes us for a time from the active walks of life, we

shall do well to enquire whether these things are checks to restrain us from sin, or warnings that we are on a dangerous road.

2. *Appeals to his reason.* God gave to the dumb ass a voice to summon the erring and angry prophet to the exercise of reason. "The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done," &c. (vers. 28-30). "And where," asks Dr. A. Clarke, "is the wonder of all this? If the ass had opened *her own mouth*, and reproved the rash prophet, we might well be astonished; but when *God opens the mouth*, an ass can speak as well as a man." (b)

And God by various means still addresses the reason of sinful man. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord," &c. "Why will ye die?" Christianity is a sublime and mighty appeal, not only to the heart, but also to the understanding of man.

3. *Rebukes for his conduct.* "The Angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times?" &c. (vers. 32, 33). (c) The Lord now rebukes men for their sins by the penalties of those sins, by the condemnations of His holy Book, and by the voice of conscience. And these rebukes are designed to deter from sin.

4. *The awakening of his conscience.* "Balaam said unto the Angel of the Lord, I have sinned," &c. His whole line of conduct shows a mind ill at ease, a troubled, anxious mind. His irritation, petulance, and unreasonable anger with his ass, indicate clearly that he had no rest within. God in his great mercy was checking him by the voice of his conscience. Conscience will not allow the sinner to pursue his downward course without stirring remonstrances and stinging rebukes. (d) "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living."

IV. These checks are graduated in force.

See this in the case of Balaam: first his "ass turned aside out of the way;"

then "she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall;" then "she fell down under Balaam;" and then there appears unto the angry man "the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand," who administers to him a stern rebuke. "In this carriage of the Angel," says Mr. Ainsworth, "the Lord shows us the proceedings of His judgments against sinners: *First*, He mildly *shakes His rod* at them, but lets them go untouched. *Secondly*, He comes *nearer*, and touches them with an easy correction, as it were wringing their foot against the wall. *Thirdly*, when all this is ineffectual, He brings them into such *straits* that they can neither turn to the right hand nor to the left, but must fall before His judgments, if they do not fully turn to Him."

V. These checks are limited in their effects.

1. *By the perverseness of man's character.* The earlier obstructions only irritated and enraged Balaam. His eager lust for wealth and honour blinded him that he did not even see the forbidding Angel. To a perverse and hardened heart mild restraints are utterly ineffectual. There are, alas! some men to whom even severe checks seem ineffectual.

2. *By the irreversibleness of man's conduct.* "If it displease thee," said Balaam, "I will get me back again. And the Angel of the Lord said, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak." He had advanced too far to turn back then. He must go on. Only in one respect will the Divine restraint be effectual now; and that God insists upon: "Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." Unutterably solemn is this irreversibleness of moral conduct. The career once entered upon, in many instances, must be continued. The deed once done, can never be undone; and many of its consequences will live on—for ever! (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Why did Almighty God give Balaam leave to go to Balak, and then was angry with him for going? I suppose for this reason, because his asking twice was tempting God. God is a jealous God. Sinners as we are—*as creatures of His hand*—we may not safely intrude upon Him, and make free with Him. We may not dare to do that which we should not dare to do with an earthly superior, which we should be punished, for instance, for attempting in the case of a king or noble of this world. To rush into His presence, to address Him familiarly, to urge Him, to strive to make our duty lie in one direction when it lies in another, to handle rudely and practise upon His holy word, to trifle with truth, to treat conscience lightly, to take liberties (as it may be called) with anything that is God's; all irreverence, profaneness, unscrupulousness, wantonness, is represented in Scripture, not only as a sin, but as felt, noticed, quickly returned on God's part (if I may dare use such human words of the Almighty and All-holy God, without transgressing the rule I am myself laying down—but He vouchsafes in Scripture to represent Himself to us in that only way in which we can attain to the knowledge of Him)—I say, all irreverence towards God is represented as being jealously, and instantly, and fearfully noticed and visited, as friend or stranger among men might resent an insult shown to him. This should be carefully considered. We are apt to act towards God and the things of God as towards a mere system, a law, a name, a religion, a principle; not as against a Person, a living, watchful, present, prompt, and powerful eye and arm. That all this is a great error, is plain to all who study Scripture; as is sufficiently shown by the death of 50,070 persons for looking into the Ark—the death of the prophet by the lion, who was sent to Jeroboam from Judah, and did not immediately obey his instructions—the slaughter of the children at Bethel by the bears, for mocking Elisha—the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land for smiting the rock twice—and the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

(b) The true explanation lies between the notion that the whole occurrence was purely internal, and consisted exclusively in ecstasy brought by God upon Balaam, and the grossly realistic reduction of the whole affair into the sphere of the senses and the outward material world. The Angel who met the soothsayer in the road, as he was riding upon his ass, though He was not seen by Balaam till Jehovah had opened his eyes, did really appear upon the road, in the outward world of the senses. But the form in which He appeared was not a grossly sensuous or material form, like the bodily frame of an ordinary visible being; for in that case Balaam would inevitably have seen Him, when his beast became alarmed and restive again and again, and refused to go forward, since it is not stated anywhere that

God had smitten him with blindness, like the men of Sodom (Gen. xix. 11), or the people in 2 Kings vi. 18. It rather resembled the appearance of a spirit, which cannot be seen by everyone who has healthy bodily eyes, but only by those who have their senses awakened for visions from the spirit-world. Thus, for example, the men who went to Damascus with Paul, saw no one, when the Lord appeared to him in a miraculous light from heaven, and spoke to him, although they also heard the voice (Acts ix. 7). Balaam wanted the spiritual sense to discern the Angel of the Lord, because the spirit's eye was blinded by his thirst for wealth and honour. This blindness increased to such an extent, with the inward excitement caused by the repeated insubordination of the beast, that he lost all self-control. As the ass had never been so restive before, if he had only been calm and thoughtful himself, he would have looked about to discover the cause of this remarkable change, and would then, no doubt, have discovered the presence of the Angel. But as he lost all his thoughtfulness, God was obliged to open the mouth of the dumb and irrational animal, to show a seer by profession his own blindness. "He might have reproved him by the words of the Angel; but because the rebuke would not have been sufficiently severe without some deep humiliation, He made the beast his teacher" (*Calvin*). The ass's speaking was produced by the omnipotence of God; but it is impossible to decide whether the modulation was miraculously communicated to the animal's voice, so that it actually gave utterance to the human words which fell upon Balaam's ears (*Kurtz*), or whether the cries of the animal were formed into rational discourse in Balaam's soul, by the direct operation of God, so that he alone heard and understood the speech of the animal, whereas the servants who were present heard nothing more than unintelligible cries. In either case Balaam received a deeply humiliating admonition from the mouth of the irrational beast, and that not only to put him to shame, but also to call him to his senses, and render him capable of hearing the voice of God. The seer, who prided himself upon having eyes for Divine revelations, was so blind, that he could not discern the appearance of the Angel, which even the irrational beast had been able to see. By this he was taught that even a beast is more capable of discerning things from the higher world, than a man blinded by sinful desires. It was not till after this humiliation that God opened his eyes, so that he saw the Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing in his road, and fell upon his face before this fearful sight.—*Keil and Del.*

(c) We shall find in the sequel the person styled the Angel of the Lord, as in other places, so here, assuming the character and exercising the prerogative of Deity: for He it is that afterwards says, "The word that I shall

“speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.” We are to understand, therefore, by this designation, the mighty, the uncreated Angel, by whom God made the worlds, the eternal Word, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, and which in the fulness of time was made flesh and dwelt among men.—*Dr. H. Hunter.*

The Angel of Jehovah’s presence, which went before His people in the wilderness, not only to guide, but to guard and protect them; and who was an adversary to their adversaries, and at all times stood up for their help and assistance against all those that hated and opposed them.—*John Gill. D.D.*

(d) Balaam did only what men so entangled always do. The real fault is in themselves. They have committed themselves to a false position, and when obstacles stand in their way, they lay the blame on circumstances. They smite the dumb, innocent occasion of their perplexity as if it were the cause. And the passionateness—the “madness” of the act is but an indication that all is going wrong within. There was a canker at the heart of Balaam’s life, and his equanimity was gone; his temper vented itself on brute things. Who has not seen the like—a grown man, unreasoning as a child, furious beyond the occasion? If you knew the whole, you would see that was not the thing which had moved him so terribly; you would see that all was wrong inwardly.

It is a strange, sad picture this. The first man in the land, gifted beyond most others, conscious of great mental power, going on to splendid prospects, yet with hopelessness and misery working at his heart. Who would have envied Balaam if he could have seen all—the hell that was working at his heart?—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

It is a man’s own dishonesty, his crimes, his wickedness, and boldness, that take away from him soundness of mind; these are the furies, these the flames and firebrands of the wicked.—*M. T. Cicero.*

(e) Here is a serious reflection, that when we have begun an evil course we cannot retrace our steps. Balaam was forced to go with the men; he offered to draw back—he was not allowed—yet God’s wrath followed him. This is what comes of committing ourselves to an evil line of conduct; and we see daily instances of it in our experience of life. Men get entangled, and are bound hand and foot in dangerous courses. They make imprudent marriages or connections; they place themselves in dangerous situations; they engage in unprofitable or shameful undertakings. Too often, indeed, they do not discern their evil plight: but when they do they cannot draw back. God seems to say, “Go with the men.” They are in bondage, and they must make the best of it; being the slave of the creature, without ceasing to be the responsible servant of God; under His displeasure, yet bound to act as if they could please Him. All this is very fearful.—*J. H. Newman, D.D.*

Consider the impossibility under such circumstances of going back. Balaam offers to go back. The Angel says, “Go on.” There was yet one hope for him, to be true, to utter God’s words, careless of the consequences; but he who had been false so long, how could he be true? It was too late. In the ardour of youth you have made perhaps a wrong choice, or chosen an unfit profession, or suffered yourself weakly and passively to be drifted into a false course of action, and now, in spite of yourself, you feel there is no going back. To many minds, such a lot comes as with the mysterious force of a destiny. They see themselves driven, and forget that they put themselves in the way of the stream that drives them. They excuse their own acts as if they were coerced. They struggle now and then faintly, as Balaam did—try to go back—cannot, and at last sink passively in the mighty current that floats them on to wrong.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

BALAAM AND HIS ASS; OR, A LESSON ON OBSTRUCTIVE PROVIDENCES.

(Verses 22-35.)

Is this a literal narrative? Yes; for,—

1. The style in which it is written is plain and unadorned.

2. The story is not essentially incredible.

3. It is referred to in other parts of Scripture as plain matter of fact.

4. The end to be gained was quite enough to warrant the miracle.

5. The speech of the ass is so simple

and natural that it could not be either a delusion of Balaam’s excited imagination, or an invention of some later fabulist.

I. See the lessons it taught Balaam.

1. *It convinced him of spiritual blindness.* He was more stupid than his ass. She could see an angel, but Balaam could not, because he was engrossed and blinded by his covetous greed.

2. *It taught absolute submission to*

God. He made his ass, however reluctant, obey *him* ; and he, too, however obstinate, must be taught to obey God. This was indispensable to prepare him to do God's work among the Moabites.

II. The subject is full of lessons to us.

It shows us the worth of obstructive providences, and the wisdom of giving patient attention and heed to them.

1. *We often go on wrong errands, or on right errands in a wrong spirit.* Some go on wrong errands, seeking a change of place, from selfish ambition—pursuing a business necessarily sinful—projecting a matrimonial union without regard to piety—resolution to leave home and country from recklessness and self-will. Some have wrong motives in a right way:—*e.g.*, mercenary ministers of religion, self-seeking teachers, &c.—insincere rebukers of sin, who pander to the rich and make allowance for their vices, while they are very severe on the offending poor, &c.

2. *God checks us in His providence, and in love to our souls.* Illness ; raising up of insuperable difficulties ; falling off of friends ; superior success to rivals, &c.

3. *We are apt to fret and be angry at the instruments of our disappointment.* We cast our spite and blame on second causes.

4. *We should seek spiritual enlightenment, to see that it is God's doing.* Be not angry and resentful, but give yourselves to prayer ; else, like Balaam, you will not see that it is God who opposes you (ver. 34).

5. *We can only be permitted to go forward when we are brought to a state of perfect subjection to God.* Two things are here included : a perfect purity of motive and freedom from worldly self-seeking ; and an entire acquiescence in whatever God appoints, desires, or does. Thus, acknowledge God in all your ways, and He will direct your steps.—*T. G. Horton.*

BALAAM'S ASS.

(Verses 28 30.)

Observe—

I. The historic character of the miracle here recorded.

In the history of Christ and in that of His apostles, incidents are recorded which are miraculous, side by side with those which are not miraculous. The one cannot be separated from the other ; they are interwoven into one narrative, which must be accepted as a whole, or rejected altogether. So it is in the history of Balaam. It is well to note, concerning this incident, that it is spoken of by a New Testament writer as an undoubted fact (2 Pet. ii. 16).

II. The miracle itself.

The speech of the ass as the instrument of a higher intelligence, finds an analogy in another Scriptural record. In the first temptation of man, the speech of the serpent was used to convey the thought of a higher and more intelligent creature. If God permitted

Satan to use a serpent to tempt man, why should He not Himself use an ass to reprove man ? If the tongue of the serpent was used to convey intelligible sounds, why should not that of any other animal be used for the same purpose ? In one case the miracle was wrought by Satan for an evil end, in the other by God for a good end. We have another somewhat analogous case in the speech of parrots and other birds, who utter intelligible sentences without understanding them, the difference being that the ass did at once, and therefore miraculously, what these creatures learn to do by imitation. It is evident that these birds possess a special God-given faculty to imitate human words, and He who made them made the ass also.

III. The object of the miracle.

It was to bring Balaam to obey the Divine voice of his conscience, which

was well nigh drowned in the clamour of his covetousness for "the wages of unrighteousness."

1. It was calculated to humble him in relation to a gift of God upon which he probably prided himself. It is likely he was an eloquent man. He would now see that God could endow a brute with the gift of speech.

2. He would also see that an ass could discern a messenger from heaven, where he, blinded by his desire for gain, could see nothing but empty space.

3. He might also have learned that all speech was under Divine control, and that he would be able to utter only such words as God would permit.

Lessons.

i. That the means used by God to bring men to obedience are always

adapted to that end, although they do not always attain it. Balaam needed to repent of his present course, and nothing could have been more likely to startle him into reflection upon it than a reproof from his own beast. He had a moment's space for consideration before he stood face to face with the Angel of the Lord; but his half-hearted confession of his sin (ver. 34) shows—

ii. That, when obedience to a certain command is withheld (ver. 12), miracles are powerless to change character. Those who were unwilling to take the yoke of Christ (Matt. xi. 29), were not won by His miracles. See also Luke xvi. 31. Miracles startle the soul, but obedience transforms the character.—From *Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament*.

THE MEETING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verses 36-41.)

In this portion of the history these are the principal points:

I. The king receives the prophet with marks of great honour.

"And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him" &c. (ver. 36). And as a further token of his respect, the king sent unto Balaam and to the princes who were with him a feast from the sacrifices which he offered (ver. 40). The heathen were accustomed to pay great respect and reverence to their priests and prophets. We have evidence of this in Gen. xlvii. 22; 1 Kings xviii. 19; Ezra vii. *et al.* Their conduct in this respect is—

1. A *rebuke* to many Christians. Paul exhorted the Christians at Thessalonica to esteem their ministers "very highly in love for their work's sake:" yet how many Christians fail lamentably in this respect!

2. An *example* to many Christians. In this respect we may profitably imitate them. Our Lord saith to His faithful ministers, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me" (see

also Matt. x. 40, 41; John xiii. 20). (a)

II. The king expresses his surprise at the delay of the prophet in coming to him.

"And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee?" &c. (ver. 37). Thus he gently rebukes him for not having come to him when he was first asked to do so. And he seems surprised that his power to reward the prophet had not secured his ready compliance with his request. Clearly he was of opinion that the blessing or curse of a prophet was purchasable if the would-be purchaser could only bid high enough for them; that Balaam had his price; and that he, Balak, was able to pay it (b) (comp. Acts viii. 18-23). Balak seems to have had no idea of the sacredness of genius, or of the solemn responsibilities involved in the possession of great gifts, or that endowments from God must be used only in religious accordance with His holy will. A worldly-minded man, he can think of no higher motive than this, "Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?" (c)

But of what value are the highest honours and the richest rewards which kings can bestow, when they are obtained at the cost of righteous principles and a clear conscience? (d)

III. The prophet endeavours to moderate the expectations of the king.

"And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee," &c. (ver. 38). Balaam felt himself under a restraint which he could not throw off; no, not even for all the wealth and honours which a king has power to bestow. (e)

The Lord was watching over the interests of Israel; and while He protected them neither could Balaam curse them, nor Balak conquer them. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," &c. (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). (f)

IV. The king endeavours by sacrificial offerings to induce Jehovah to favour his design.

"Balak offered oxen and sheep." *Keil and Del.*: "The sacrifices were not so much thank-offerings for Balaam's happy arrival, as supplicatory offerings for the success of the undertaking before them. 'This is evident,' as Hengstenberg correctly observes, 'from the place and time of their presentation; for the place was not that where Balak first met with Balaam, and they were only presented on the eve of the great event.'"

Moreover, they were offered unquestionably not to the Moabitish idols, from which Balak expected no help, but to Jehovah, whom Balak wished to draw away, in connection with Balaam, from His own people (Israel), that He might secure His favour to the Moabites."

How utterly mistaken in this view of the Divine Being! He changes not. No sacrifices can alter His will, or turn Him aside from His purposes. How unworthy of God and how dishonouring to Him is such a view of His character! No bribes, however costly, can induce Him to forsake His people, or to favour an unrighteous cause. And the sacrifices offered to Him with such a view are an abomination in His sight.

V. The king and prophet ascend a height and obtain a view of the camp of Israel.

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people." Balak thought that Balaam must see the Israelites in order that he might curse them effectually. And now the time had come for the prophet to make the awful attempt. Balak was in a state of eager anxiety. But who shall tell the state of Balaam's mind at this time?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point see p. 62.

(b) As a mere matter of fact, known to us, by distressing observation, the saving of money is a fascination of the devil to many men; it absorbs their energies; it engrosses their time; it perverts their moral nature; it destroys natural affection; it sets them on fire of hell. Kept from the sight of gold, they may even bear a strong resemblance to pious men; they may be intelligent, genial, and entertaining, yet the moment their thoughts are turned to the accumulation of property, every trace of nobleness is destroyed. The victim of the world is entirely without self-control: every speck of dust is to him as a shackle of bondage; he would risk his eternity for a stone or a clod. At all times he would not know this, for in the moments of his release from the urgency of his tormentor he might discover traits of a better disposition; it is when he is brought again into contact with worldly con-

cerns that he shows how utterly he is enslaved and unmanned. I may remind my young hearers of the tiger that was trained to be the playmate of a favourite child. Weeks and months and years elapsed, and the tiger was gentle and playful; it so happened, however, that in licking the child's hand it tasted blood, and instantly the natural appetite of the creature was excited, and the child fell a victim to its ferocity. It is so in the moral history of many a man: there are breaks in human life which are filled up by many excellencies, and which apparently give the lie to the charge of apostacy, and yet suddenly some besetting sin will set the whole nature on fire, and in the madness of an hour the fabric of a lifetime may be overthrown.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) But few men in any country touch the highest point of fame; thousands upon thousands in all generations come to honour and influence, yet in a few months after their death

their names cease to have any interest but for the smallest circles. This reflection ought not to discourage virtue. Peace of heart is better than mere renown. To be known in heaven is the best fame. To have a place in the love of God is to enjoy the true exaltation.—*Ibid.*

(d) With money you can buy the canvas and the oil, but not the artistic eye which interprets and appreciates the picture; you can buy the poem, but the living and inspiring poetry is not for sale; you can rent the garden, but cannot bribe the flowers to whisper their tender messages. After all, it is but a very little way that money can go; it can do nearly everything in the market-place or among the dust of cities, but what do the angels know of your currency, your bills of exchange, your promissory notes, and your intricate conveyancing of estates? Not one of the great redemptions of life can be wrought out with money; death takes no bribe; the grave will not sell its victories for gold; you may buy the Bible, but you cannot buy the Holy Ghost; you may pay for the masonry, but no money can put you in possession of the Spirit of the altar.—*Ibid.*

(e) The kite broke away from its string, and instead of mounting to the stars it descended into the mire. The river grew weary of its restraining banks, and longed to burst them, that it might rush on in the wild joy of freedom; down went the embankments, the river became a flood, and carried destruction and desolation wherever it rushed. Unrein the coursers of the sun, and lo! the earth is burned; unbind the girdle of the elements, and chaos reigns! Let us never desire to be rid of those restraints which God has seen fit to lay upon us; they are more needful than we dream.

Remember how the vine, when bound to the stake which upheld it, judged itself a martyr, and longed to be free; but when it saw the wild vine at its feet, rotting on the damps and pining amidst the heats, and producing no fruit, it felt how needful were its bonds if its clusters were ever to ripen.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) According to the gloomy prophets, all England is going to the bad—not England alone, but all countries are hastening on to a general and everlasting smash. Then one begins to fret about the Church of God; for according to the soothsayers of the age, Anti-Christ is yet to come, and new heresies are to spring up; the dogs of war are to be let loose, the Pope is to rule and burn us, and one hardly knows what else. Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation, have been made sometimes to minister poison to every bright hope, but here is our comfort with regard to the future:—

“He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might:
His very act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”

Let the worst come to the worst, the best will come of it ere long. “If the heavens were a bow,” saith one, “and the earth were the string, and God should fit the arrows of His vengeance thereon, and shoot at the sons of men, yet they could find shelter with the archer himself.” Our refuge is in God; let the worst calamities occur to the world in years to come we are secure. It must be well: it cannot be ill. “Jehovah, Jireh.” Lift high the banner and hopefully advance to the battle, for the victory shall surely come unto the Arm eternal, the Will immutable.—*Ibid.*

HISTORY OF BALAAM.—No. III.*

(Verse 36—chap. xxiv. 25.)

We approach the termination of this eventful history. The portion of Scripture that forms the basis of our remarks is chap. xxii. 36, to the end of chap. xxiv.

We left Balaam on his journey to Balak; we now commence with his arrival in the land of Moab. With what strangely mingled feelings must Balaam have pursued this journey! That dumb ass had not spoken for nothing: a good many twinges of conscience, no doubt, Balaam had on the way; perhaps, after all, God did not like his going with these messengers; perhaps he had better have been content with his humble mountain home;

perhaps he will get into trouble, for he cannot forget—“The word that I shall speak, that shalt thou speak.” However, Balaam goes on, just this once, and when this affair is over he will return home, eschew Balak and his messengers for ever; in fact, Balak had made him so many presents already, that he will be able in future to afford to keep a conscience, and to say “No” to temptation.

As the key to this history, recall what was said before of Balaam's connection with the old patriarchal church: he was a monotheist amongst a multi-

* For Nos. I. and II. see pp. 429-431.

tude of polytheists; to that idea of God he was faithful. Moreover, Balaam knows God to be the God of Israel, that God has chosen Israel, and that God is with them. The history of their eight and thirty years' weary pilgrimage in the peninsula of Sinai, was matter of notoriety among all the wild Ishmaelites of that part; and Balaam is seer, he can prognosticate out of existing facts; and in the opposition of the Amalekites, and Moabites, and Edomites to the Israelites, he sees the certainty of their final overthrow. And yet the King of Moab sends to him to curse the people of God's choice; a people that Balaam knows are to be victorious; and he goes, although he knows it to be impossible to curse them; but he hopes to get his "wages of iniquity."

And so Balaam and Balak meet. The first words of the interview are ominous. Balak chides Balaam, and Balaam admits that all he says is right; but adds, "the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."

When a man has come to that pass it is all over with him. How many do we meet every day, who would be wicked if they dared; who would go

here, and would go there, only they are not at liberty; who don't mind the sin at all, only its exposure:—they might be reprov'd; they might lose a situation, &c. There is nothing left, but another edition of Solomon's picture in the Proverbs, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof," &c.

Endeavour to realize the scene. Balaam was alone; he "went to a high place;" there he stood by his burnt offering; below, on the plains, were God's people Israel: from the top of the rocks he saw their encampment, the "pillar of cloud" still hovering over the assembled host: all was order, security, and strength amongst Israel. Far away is the uncrowned king and his nobles, waiting the return of Balaam: but meanwhile a very notable event occurs,— "And God met Balaam." Balaam shall yet be warned, shall yet have another word; and so God met him.

The lessons from the whole are—

The formidable power of sin. Man can degrade himself below the level of a beast. The dumb ass was wiser than Balaam.—*W. G. Barrett.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Build me here seven altars.* "As seven was a number of perfection, Balaam chose it on this occasion, because he intended to offer a grand sacrifice, and to offer a bullock and a ram upon each of the altars; the whole to be made a burnt offering at the same time. And as he intended to offer seven bullocks and seven rams at the same time, it could not be conveniently done on one altar, therefore he ordered seven to be built."—*A. Clarke LL.D.*

The offerings were presented to Jehovah, whom Balaam acknowledged as his God.

Verse 2. *Balak and Balaam offered.* "Balak presented the sacrifices to be

offered for him and for his people; and Balaam performed the office of a priest and offered them."—*Bp. Patrick.*

Verse 3. *I will go; peradventure Jehovah will come to meet me.* "The meaning of these words is apparent from chap. xxiv. 1: and 'he went no more to meet with the auguries.' Balaam went out to look for a manifestation of Jehovah in the significant phenomena of nature."—*Keil and Del.*

He went to an high place. *Keil and Del.:* "a bald height." *Speaker's Comm.:* "'a bare place on the hill,' or 'a scar'; as opposed to the high place with its grove of trees." Heathen augurs were wont to select the lonely and

barren summits of mountains for their auspices.

Verse 4. *God met Balaam.* "God served His own purposes through the arts of Balaam, and manifested His will through the agencies employed to seek it, dealing thus with Balaam in an exceptional manner. For to God's own people auguries were forbidden (Lev. xix. 26)."—*Speaker's Comm.*

I have prepared seven altars, &c. "The spirit of these words is thoroughly that of a heathen worshipper expecting in all his devotions his *quid pro quo*."—*Ibid.*

Verse 7. *Parable.* Heb. : *mashal*, a proverb, similitude, sententious poem.

Aram. This word signifies "highland," and denotes the country to the north-east of Palestine as far as the banks of the Euphrates. The country between the Euphrates and the Tigris was specially designated "Aram-naharaim," or "Aram of the two rivers."

Mountains of the east, i.e., of Mesopotamia (comp. Deut. xxiii. 4).

Defy Israel. Rather "threaten," or "menace Israel."

Verse 8. *How shall I defy, &c.* Rather : "how shall I threaten whom Jehovah hath not threatened?"

Verse 9. *Dwell alone, &c., i.e., separate from other nations.* The outward separation was a symbol of their inward separation from the heathen world ; and this inward separation was an indispensable condition of their outward separation and safety.

Verse 10. *The fourth part, &c.* (comp. chap. ii.).

Verse 13. *Come with me unto another place, &c.* Balak's idea seems to be, that Balaam's view of the camp of Israel was so extensive, and so impressed him with their number and order and power, that he could not curse them ; and that if he took him to a place from whence he could see only a small portion of them, he would then be able to curse them.

Keil and Del., however, take a different view of this. They say the translation should be, "'whence thou wilt see it (Israel) ; thou seest only the

end of it, but not the whole of it' (*sc.* here upon Bamoth-Baal). This is required," they say, "by a comparison of the verse before us with chap. xxii. 41, where it is most unquestionably stated, that upon the top of Bamoth-Baal Balaam only saw 'the end of the people.' For this reason Balak regarded that place as unfavourable, and wished to lead the seer to a place from which he could see the people, without any limitation whatever."

Verse 14. *The field of Zophim.* "Or 'of watchers.' It lay upon the top of Pisgah, north of the former station, and nearer to the Israelitish camp ; the greater part of which was, however, probably concealed from it by an intervening spur of the hill. Beyond the camp Balaam's eye would pass on to the bed of the Jordan. It was perhaps a lion coming up in his strength from the swelling of that stream (cf. Jer. xlix. 19) that furnished him with the augury he awaited, and so dictated the final similitude of his next parable.—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 18. *Rise up, Balak, &c.* A summons to minute and earnest attention.

Verse 20. Omit the "commandment" of the A. V.

Verse 21. "*He hath not beheld iniquity, &c.* There is a large diversity in the interpretation of this verse. That of Keil and Del. seems to us correct : "God sees not וְרָעָה, worthless-

ness, wickedness, and וְצָרָה, tribulation, misery, as the consequence of sin, and therefore discovers no reason for cursing the nation. That this applied to the people solely by virtue of their calling as the holy nation of Jehovah, and consequently that there is no denial of the sin of individuals, is evident from the second hemistich, which expresses the thought of the first in a positive form : so that the words, 'Jehovah his God is with him,' correspond to the words, 'He beholds not wickedness ;' and 'the shout of a king in the midst of it,' to His not seeing suffering. Israel therefore rejoiced in the blessing of God

only so long as it remained faithful to the idea of its Divine calling, and continued in covenant fellowship with the Lord. So long the power of the world could do it no harm. The 'shout of a king, in Israel is the rejoicing of Israel at the fact that Jehovah dwells and rules as King in the midst of it (cf. Exod. xv. 18; Deut. xxxiii. 5). Jehovah had manifested Himself as King, by leading them out of Egypt."

Verse 22. *God.* אֱלֹהִים, the Mighty One.

Unicorn. Rather, the buffalo, or wild bull.

Verse 23. *Surely there is no enchantment, &c.* *Keil and Del.* translate: "For there is no augury in Jacob, and no divination in Israel. At the time it is spoken to Jacob, and to Israel what God doeth." "נִחְשׁ and קִסָּם, οἰωνισμός and μαντεία, *augurium et divinatio*, were the two means employed by the heathen for looking into futurity. The former was the unfolding of the future, from signs in the phenomena of nature and inexplicable occurrences in animal and human life; the latter pro-

phesying from a pretended or supposed revelation of the Deity within the human mind. נִחְשׁ, 'according to the time,' i.e., at the right time, God revealed His acts, His counsel, and His will to Israel in His word, which He had spoken at first to the patriarchs, and afterwards through Moses and the prophets. In this He revealed to His people in truth, and in a way that could not deceive, what the heathen attempted in vain to discover through augury and divination (cf. Deut. xviii. 14-19)."

Verse 25. *Neither curse them, &c.* *Keil and Del.*: "'Thou shalt neither curse it, nor even bless.' In his vexation at the second failure, he did not want to hear anything more from Balaam."

Verse 28. *Peor.* "Mount *Peor* was one peak of the northern part of the mountains of Abarim by the town of *Beth-peor*, which afterwards belonged to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20), and opposite to which the Israelites were encamped in the steppes of Moab (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46)."—*Keil and Del.*

Jeshimon. See on chap. xxi. 20.

THE SACRIFICE OF BALAK AND BALAAM.

(Verses 1-4.)

Observe—

I. Objectively this sacrifice was as perfect as the offerers could make it.

Clearly they aimed at presenting a perfect offering. This is exhibited—

1. In the *number* of offerings. There were *seven* altars, upon each of which they offered a bullock and a ram. Seven was regarded as a sacred and perfect number.

2. In the *victims* offered. "Seven oxen and seven rams." The victims were not mean or of little worth; but of the most valuable that were used for sacrifices.

3. In the *kind* of offerings. They were burnt offerings, which were presented without any reserve, being en-

tirely consumed in honour of the Divine Being.

It was a law amongst the Hebrews that they should present to God offerings of their choicest and best. Spiritually that law is still binding. (a)

II. Subjectively this sacrifice was very imperfect, and even sinful.

In the sentiments and motives of the offerers there was much that was both erroneous and evil.

1. The sacrifice was offered *with an admixture of faith and superstition*. Balak and Balaam believed the truth that acceptable approach to God must be by sacrifice. But there was superstition in their view of His regard for sacrifices, or the way in which He was

influenced by them. It was also belief in heathen superstitions, which led Balaam to go to look for auguries (ver. 3). Superstitions commend neither the offerer nor his offerings to God.

2. The sacrifice was offered *under the impression that the offering was meritorious on the part of the offerers, and placed God under an obligation to them.*

"And God met Balaam, and he said unto Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram." The state of mind which led Balaam thus to call Divine attention to the sacrifices, implied the ignoring of two facts of vital importance:—(1) God's proprietorship of all things. We can only present unto Him His own. David felt this, and said, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (comp. Psa. l. 8-13). (2) Man's relation to God as a dependent and sinful creature. Where this is realised, all notions of merit in man in relation to God, or of obligation upon God in relation to man, are effectually excluded. The best man at his best, is but an unprofitable servant, as regards God (Luke xvii. 10). Balaam did not feel thus: he was not humble, but thought he had rendered to God very meritorious service. (b)

3. The sacrifice was offered *as a means to induce God to change His mind.* He had forbidden Balaam to curse Israel (chap. xxii. 12); Balaam desired Him to revoke that prohibition, and to permit him to curse them; and for this

purpose he offered his sacrifice. At first God absolutely forbade his accompanying the messengers of Balak; then afterwards He gave him conditional permission to go with them; and Balaam probably regarded this as the result of a change of mind in the Divine Being, and drew from it encouragement to hope that he might obtain from Him permission to curse Israel. How false and dishonouring was such a view as regards God! how perilous as regards man! (c)

4. The sacrifice was offered *with a view of obtaining permission and power to curse the people of God.* This was the final cause of the sacrifice, and was utterly sinful in the sight of God.

Conclusion.

1. Learn that *the true value of sacrifice is to be looked for not in the quantity or quality of the offering, but in the spirit of the offerer.* "Thou desirest not sacrifice," &c. (Psa. li. 16-19). (d)

2. *Trusting in Christ Jesus for acceptance, let us present ourselves to God.* "God must be worshipped with our best. A man's best is himself; and to sacrifice this is the true sacrifice." "I beseech you therefore, brethren," &c. (Rom. xii. 1). (e)

3. *He who has truly given himself to God will keep back nothing from Him.* Hearty obedience and reverent worship he will render to God, and kind and helpful service to man. "By Jesus, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise," &c. (Heb. xiii. 15, 16).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point see p. 101.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 100.

(c) Balaam wanted to please himself without displeasing God. The problem was how to go to Balak, and yet not offend God. He would have given worlds to get rid of his duties, and he sacrificed, not to learn what his duty was, but to get his duty altered. Now see the feeling that lay at the root of all this—that God is mutable. Yet of all men one would have thought Balaam knew better, for had he not said, "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath he said, and shall He not

do it?" But, when we look upon it, we see Balaam had scarcely any feeling higher than this—God is more inflexible than man. Probably had he expressed the exact shade of feeling, he would have said, more obstinate. He thought that God had set His heart upon Israel, and that it was hard, yet not impossible, to alter this partiality. Hence he tries sacrifices to bribe, and prayers to coax God.

How deeply rooted this feeling is in human nature—this belief in God's mutability—you may see from the Romish doctrine of indulgences and atonements. The Romish Church permits crime for certain considerations. For certain considerations it teaches that God will forgive crimes. Atonements after, and indul-

gences before sin, are the same. But this Romish doctrine never could have succeeded, if the belief in God's mutability and the *desire* that He should be mutable, were not in man already.

What Balaam was doing in these parables, and enchantments, and sacrifices, was simply purchasing an indulgence to sin; in other words, it was an attempt to make the Eternal Mind change. What was wanting to Balaam to feel was this—God *cannot* change. What he did feel was this—God *will* not change. There are many writers that teach that this and that is right because God has willed it. All discussion is cut short by the reply, God has determined it, therefore it is right. Now, there is exceeding danger in this mode of thought, for a thing is not right because God has willed it, but God wills it because it is right. It is in this tone the Bible always speaks. Never, except in one obscure passage, does the Bible seem to refer right and wrong to the sovereignty of God, and declare it a matter of will: never does it imply that if He so choose, He could reverse evil and good. It says, "Is not My word equal? are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" was Abraham's exclamation in a kind of hideous doubt whether the Creator might not be on the eve of doing injustice. So the Bible *justifies* the ways of God to man. But it could not do so unless it admitted Eternal Laws, with which no will can interfere. Nay more, see what ensues from this mode of thought. If Right is right because God wills it, then if God chose, He could make injustice, and cruelty, and lying to be right. This is exactly what Balaam thought. If God could but be prevailed on to hate Israel, then for him to curse them would be right. And again: if power and sovereignty make right, then, supposing that the Ruler were a demon, devilish hatred would be as right as now it is wrong. There is great danger in some of our present modes of thinking. It is a common thought that Might makes Right, but for us there is no rest, no rock, no sure footing, as long as we feel right and wrong are mere matters of will and decree. There is no safety then, from those hankering feelings and wishes to alter God's decree. You are unsafe till you feel "Heaven and

earth may pass away, but God's word *cannot* pass away."—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(d) All sacrifice is worthless which is not vitalized by the *moral* element. Where the sacrifice represents a broken spirit, where it sets forth the operations of a contrite heart, it becomes acceptable to God, and useful as a basis of negotiation with heaven. Where the moral element is present, the physical element will not be forgotten. Though sacrifice in itself, without the presence of spiritual feeling, is absolutely worthless in the sight of God, yet where the moral element is present in the form of a broken spirit and a contrite heart, sacrifice will be presented even in its material forms. Thereby the penitent man expresses his love, and fosters his faith, and testifies his gratitude. Blessed be God, in our case it is unnecessary that we provide bullock or burnt offering. The one final sacrifice has been offered in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Higher than this no man can go. After His blood has been shed, the blood of all animals is unavailing. It is enough that the Lamb of God poured out His blood for the sins of the world. Yet we have to offer sacrifices, not indeed of atonement, but of gratitude; we have to testify by exalted pursuits, by noble endeavours, by generous efforts to ameliorate the condition of mankind, by all holy labour in the cause of evangelization, that our hearts have been broken and healed, that our spirits have been bowed down, and yet lifted up.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." That is a very solemn enunciation. Sacrifice is worship. You may pray devout prayers, you may sing sweet hymns with rapture, you may rejoice in all the peacefulness of the Sabbath well observed, you may be a religious man, and yet you may not have mercy; men may perish about you, and you be indifferent; works of beneficence may be going on under your eye, and you have no part or lot in them. It is possible for a man to be a religious man, and not a Christian. To be a Christian a man must have that spirit which led Christ to give Himself to be a ransom for the world, and he must carry his life so as to be a perpetual benefaction not to himself, but to others. To be Christlike in these regards is to be a Christian.—*H. W. Beecher.*

BALAAM'S FIRST PARABLE; THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 5-12.)

Balaam went out to look for auguries, and the Lord God met him and put a word in his mouth. "God designed to serve His own glory by him, and therefore met Balaam. Balak having chosen him for his oracle, God would constrain him to utter such a confession, to the

honour of God and Israel, as should render those for ever inexcusable who should appear in arms against them." Thus the Divine message was spoken by the lips of a bad man; and he who longed to curse Israel, in exalted strains pronounces their blessedness. Balaam's

declaration of the happiness of Israel, sets forth *the Blessedness of the People of God*.

I. It is placed beyond the power of their enemies.

Balaam both felt and declared this—"How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I threaten whom the Lord hath not threatened? . . . And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me?" &c. (vers. 8, 11, 12). Balaam felt that he could not curse Israel. And if he had cursed them, his curse would not have injured them, but himself. "See what it is to live within the wall of God's blessing." "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa. cxxi. 4-8). "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion," &c. (Psa. cxxv. 1, 2). "Upon this rock I will build My Church," &c. (Matt. xvi. 18). "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" &c. (Rom. viii. 31, 35-39). "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (a)

II. It consists in their separation from the ungodly.

"From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." "The separation of Israel from the rest of the nations was manifested outwardly to the seer's eye, in the fact that 'the host of Israel dwelt by itself in a separate encampment upon the plain. In this his spirit discerned the inward and essential separation of Israel from all the heathen.'" In three respects were the Israelites separated from other nations—

1. *Politically they were independent of them.* Both their country and their polity the Hebrews received from the Lord God; and so long as they kept themselves from the vices of the heathen, their independence was unimpaired.

2. *Morally they were separated from them.* God called them to complete separation from the idolatries and vices

of the corrupt Canaanites and others, and to the practice of a pure morality and the observance of an exalted and exalting worship.

3. *By the possession of peculiar privileges they were separated from them.* "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (comp. Deut. vii.). To them pertained "the adoption, and the glory," &c. (Rom. ix. 4, 5). This declaration of their separation from other nations "has been so marvelously realized in the history of the Israelites, notwithstanding their falling short of the idea of their Divine calling, 'that whereas all the mightier kingdoms of the ancient world, Egypt, Assyria, Babel, &c., have perished without a trace, Israel, after being rescued from so many dangers which threatened utter destruction under the Old Testament, still flourishes in the Church of the New Testament, and continues also to exist in that part which, though rejected now, is destined one day to be restored' (*Hengstenberg*)."

The people of God are still called to be a separate people. "They are not of the world," said Christ, "even as I am not of the world. I pray not," &c. (John xvii. 14-16). Their maxims, customs, laws, and conduct are dissimilar from those of the world: "their inheritance, their home, their citizenship are in heaven; their affections, conversation, pursuits, and pleasures are heavenly." (b)

III. It consists also in their vast numbers.

"Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the numbers of the fourth part of Israel"? To the eye of Balaam the Israelites seemed an innumerable host (comp. Gen. xiii. 16, and Deut. x. 22). Their rapid increase was regarded as the result of the blessing of the Lord their God.

The spiritual Israel of God is "a great multitude which no man can number." We may form an approximately correct idea of the countless

hosts of the people of God from three considerations. Their number is—

1. *Unlimited as regards time.* It includes the good of all past ages of the world's history, of the present, and will include those of all future ages.

2. *Unlimited as regards place.* The good of all lands are members of the great Church of the living God. "They shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north," &c. (Luke xiii. 29). "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations," &c. (Rev vii. 9).

3. *Unlimited as regards race or class.* The godly African as well as the godly European, &c. The rich and the poor; the learned and the unlearned; the bond and the free, &c. (c)

IV. It consists also of righteousness of character.

Balaam speaks of the Israelites as "the righteous" (ver. 10). "But Israel," says *Keil* and *Del.*, "was not only visibly blessed by God with an innumerable increase; it was also inwardly exalted into a people of יִשְׂרָאֵל, righteous or honourable men. The predicate righteous is applied to Israel on account of its Divine calling, because it had a God who was just and right, a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. xxxii. 4), or because the God of Israel was holy and sanctified His people (Lev. xx. 7, 8; Exod. xxxi. 13), and made them into a *Jeshurun* (Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26). Righteousness, probity, is the idea and destination of this people, which has never entirely lost it, though it has never fully realised it. Even in times of general apostasy from the Lord, there was always an *ἐκλογή* in the nation, of which probity and righteousness could be truly predicated (cf. 1 Kings xix. 18). The righteousness of the Israelites was a product of the institutions which God had established among them, of the revelation of His holy will, which He had given them in His law, of the forgiveness of sins, which He had linked on to the offering of sacrifices, and of the communication of His Spirit, which was ever living and at work in His Church (*Hengstenberg*)."

The people of God are still called to be righteous; and they realize this calling by the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ:—"even the righteousness of God through faith of Christ Jesus unto all and upon all that believe." There cannot be any true blessedness apart from righteousness. (d)

V. It is in some respects desired even by the ungodly.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" "Death," again quoting from *Keil* and *Del.*, "is introduced here as the end and completion of life. 'Balaam desires for himself the entire, full, indestructible, and inalienable blessedness of the Israelite, of which death is both the close and completion, and also the seal and attestation' (*Kurtz*). This desire did not involve the certain hope of a blessed life beyond the grave, which the Israelites themselves did not then possess; it simply expressed the thought that the death of a pious Israelite was a desirable good. And, this it was, whether viewed in the light of the past, the present, or the future. In the hour of death the pious Israelite would look back with blessed satisfaction to a long life, rich 'in traces of the beneficent, forgiving, delivering, and saving grace of God'; he could comfort himself with the delightful hope of living on in his children, and his children's children, and in them of participating in the future fulfilment of the Divine promises of grace; and lastly, when dying in possession of the love and grace of God, he could depart hence with the joyful confidence of being gathered to his fathers in Sheol (Gen. xxv. 8)."

Thus the ungodly bear testimony to the excellence of the lot of the people of God by desiring to share their blessedness. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." There is but one way of enjoying their privileges, and that is by possessing their character. To "die the death of the righteous," we must live the life of the righteous. (e)

Is this blessedness ours? Are we truly of the number of God's spiritual

Israel? By faith in Christ every man may become a member of the "chosen generation," and the "holy nation."

"They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) I read a story the other day of some Russians crossing wide plains studded over here and there with forests. The villages were ten or a dozen miles from each other, and the wolves were out, and the horses were rushing forward madly, and the travellers could hear the baying of the wolves behind them; and though the horses tore along with all speed, yet the wolves were fast behind, and they only escaped, as we say, "by the skin of their teeth," managing just to get inside some hut that stood in the road, and to shut the door. Then they could hear the wolves leap on the roof; they could hear them dash against the sides of the hut; they could hear them gnawing at the door, and howling, and making all sorts of dismal noises; but the travellers were safe, because they had entered by the door, and the door was shut. Now, when a man gets in Christ, he can hear, as it were, the devils howling like wolves, all fierce and hungry for him; and his own sins, like wolves, are seeking to drag him down to destruction. But he has got in to Christ, and that is such a shelter that all the devils in the world, if they were to come at once, could not start a single beam of the eternal refuge: it must stand fast, though earth and heaven should pass away.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

For additional illustrations on the Security of the People of God, see pp. 105, 154.

(b) It is our duty to flee from all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to have no fellowship with the ungodly, nor with the unfruitful works of darkness. This indeed is "pure religion and undefiled, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." This the Apostle Paul urgeth, 2 Cor. vi. 14-18. We know that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. One rotten sheep infecteth a whole flock. One leper spreadeth the disease further, to the hurt of sundry other. Now there is no leaven like to the leaven of sin (1 Cor. v. 6); no infection comparable to the infection of sin; no leprosy so deadly and dangerous as the contagion of sin, which bringeth danger and destruction to soul and body. Therefore we must not join ourselves with the ungodly, seeing that we are a holy people to the Lord our God. He hath chosen us to be a precious people unto Himself above other people that are upon the earth. We "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," &c. (1 Pet. ii. 9). Seeing we are washed from the corruptions of the flesh, let us not defile ourselves again; seeing we are called out of the world, let us not return into the world; and seeing we are freed from the thralldom of sin, let us not sell ourselves again to our own lusts, which fight against the soul.

We cannot come near an infectious disease without danger of infection. We cannot touch pitch without danger to be defiled with it.—*W. Attersoll.*

For another illustration on Separation from the world, see p. 94.

(c) The Lord's Church is bigger than any church that men's hands ever formed. There is no wall that can contain the Church of God on earth, and there is no sect line that can reach round it. The Lord's garment is large enough to cover all sects, and to leave room for nations to camp under it besides.—*H. W. Beecher.*

"Lo! a great multitude of all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues." The purpose of the Lord is fixed! Idols he shall utterly abolish! The march of Christianity may have been slow and impeded, but the truth shall yet prosper and prevail; and faith, guided by the sure word of prophecy, may even now behold the wild children of the desert, the wanderers, whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them, the slaves of bloody rites, the victims of fearful delusions, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in their right mind, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. O glorious society, which shall thus be gathered from all ages, and all ranks, and all countries! There is beauty in diversity! There is majesty in combination! I kindle at the thought of there being a great multitude in heaven; I kindle the more at that of this multitude being drawn from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue. What a throng to join in! What a company with which to associate and enter into fellowship! The righteous of past days, of the present, and the future—those who under the earlier dispensations caught faint glimpses of the star of Bethlehem—they who, possessing but a few brief notices of traditional religion, followed after God, and proved that He never left Himself without witnesses—Jews, who deciphered the types, and gave substance to the shadows of the law—Gentiles, on whom shone in all its effulgence the light of the Gospel—the mighty gathering of that splendid season when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do cover the sea." What a multitude through which to move! with which to make acquaintance! with which to hold converse!—*H. Melville, B.D.*

For another illustration on the immense numbers of the people of God, see p. 175.

(d) When society claps hands to the cry, "O *felix!*" "Oh, lucky fellow!" "Oh, rare

success!" it is the fortunate circumstances of a man's lot of which society is thinking. It is the blessedness of having a great deal of money, of being always comfortable, of being environed with what may minister to pleasure, and able always to command what one desires; it is the blessedness of condition which society crowns with its beatitudes, and to which men pay the tribute of envying it. Alas for this blessedness, which is outside the man; the blessedness of circumstance, and accident, and transient condition; the blessedness which Time's scythe mows down like grass to be cast into the oven! Not condition does Jesus bless, but character. He counts no earthly state enviable, least of all a state of unbroken ease. But the happy man is the good man. What a man is in himself, not where he is,

nor how he lives, nor how much he has, but *what a man is*, is the ground of his blessedness.—*J. O. Dykes, M.A. D.D.*

(e) Many in these days desire the death of the righteous, but they never regard their life; they desire their end, but they will not walk in their way; they are willing to end with them, but not to begin with them; they catch for the crown, but will not come to the cross; they would taste the sweet, but they cannot abide the sweat. If we will live with Christ for ever, we must here die with Him for a season; if we will reign with Him in heaven, we must first suffer with Him on earth (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12); we can never die comfortably unless we be careful to live unblameably.—*W. Attersoll.*

THE VISION FROM THE ROCKS.

(Verse 9.)

"From the top of the rocks I see him."

It was of Israel and Israel's glory that the false seer of Pethor spoke. He stood upon the top of Moab's barren rocks, and gazed down on the happy nation whom God had delivered from Egypt, had brought through the desert, and was about to lead into the land flowing with milk and honey. It was with wonder, perhaps with envy too, that Balaam looked on the goodly tents beneath him.

So from these desert lands, and these desert hills, we gaze upon the Church on her way to Canaan, about to be settled in the blessed land and holy city. And when we gaze, what do we see?

I. The ruggedness of the land of our present sojourn.

It is the region of hostility as well as barrenness. This is not our rest. These dark mountains are not our home. We may pitch our tents among them for a season, or climb to the top to gaze around us, but they are no dwelling place for us. We may look upon Canaan from Pisgah, but Pisgah will not do for a home. Nebo lies hard by Pisgah, and Nebo tells of death, not of life—mortality is here. This is the land, not of Israel, but of Moab; and its gods are Baal, not Jehovah. We could not abide here.

II. The glorious land.

Afar off just now, but still visible, still beautiful. It is the Paradise of God; it is the new Jerusalem; the city which hath foundations; the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The vision gives us a wondrous contrast between what we are and what we shall be, making us long for the day of entrance.

III. A people delivered from a present evil world.

Once in bondage, now free; once groaning under oppression, now in the service of a heavenly Master, and heirs of the world to come; the Red Sea crossed, and now between them and their persecutors an iron wall. Forgiven and redeemed; with their backs on Egypt, and their faces to Jerusalem. "A people saved by the Lord."

IV. A people sustained by Jehovah himself.

Theirs is the hidden manna, the water from the smitten rock. Jehovah feeds them; Jehovah gives them the living water. It is not man but God who cares for them. All that they have they owe to Him who has delivered them. They feed on angel's food; nay, better, the very bread of God; on Him whose flesh is

meat indeed, whose blood is drink indeed.

V. A pilgrim band.

They are strangers on the earth ; this is not their home ; here is not their city. Their loins are girt, and their staff is in their hand, and they are hastening onward. No sitting down ; no taking ease ; no folding of their hands. Forward, still forward, is their watchword ! Theirs is a pilgrimage, not a pleasure tour. They must not tarry.

VI. A people bought with a price.

Their ransom has been blood ; and they are not their own. Another life has gone for theirs. They have been plucked from death and the grave, because Another has died and risen for them. To that Other they belong—not to themselves, nor the flesh, nor the world.

VII. A people loved with an infinite love.

The banner that is over them is love. The song they sing is love, "Unto Him that loved us." It is a love which passeth knowledge ; a love without bound or end ; a love eternal and divine. All around and above them is love—the love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They are the monuments of love ; the witnesses of love—free love, forgiving love, redeeming love ; love beyond that which angels know—

a love which constrains them, purifies them, urges them forward, gladdens all their way.

VIII. A people preparing to pass over to the goodly land.

It is within sight ; a few days, perhaps less, will bring them over. Their journey is nearly done. Their toil and weariness will soon be exchanged for rest and glory. And "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "From the top of the rocks" they can see Jerusalem, and Olivet, and Bethlehem ; and get glimpses of the whole outstretched land. It is a land of plenty, where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; it is a land of light, where there is no night ; a land of blessing, where there is no curse ; a land of gladness, where sorrow comes not ; a summer land, where the frosts of winter chill not ; a calm sunny land, where storms vex not, and shadows fall not ; a land of health, where the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick ;" a land of peace, where the war-trumpet never sounds ; a land of life, where corruption and mortality enter not, where death and the grave are unknown ; a land of union, where broken ties are all reknit, and broken hearts all healed (Rev. vii. 17). There Jesus reigns ; there we reign with him.—H. BONAR, D.D. From *Light and Truth*.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE IRRELIGIOUS TO THE VALUE OF RELIGION.

(Verse 10.)

The character and example of good men are influential after death. They shine upon us like stars upon the deep—to guide us onward—to allure us upward. They who have turned many to righteousness are not only blessed in their own time, but they shine as stars for ever ;—monuments of the greatness of the human mind and of the power of religion, they awaken in the bosoms of others the sparks of kindred excellence.

The works of the wicked do not perish with them. They live as beacons. "The censers of the sinners against

their own souls" were to be preserved as a memorial against them (chap. xvi. 38). A mercy if their memory could quite perish, if their evil deeds could perish.

Balaam of this order : held up to perpetual infamy. A man of fine talents—even of prophetic illumination.

I. Remarks upon this exclamation as coming from the lips of such a man.

A man of talent, genius, acquirements, great influence over the minds of others ; but not truly religious.

1. *That solemn thoughts of death and judgment may often occupy, though to little purpose, the minds of irreligious men.* They cannot hide from themselves the thoughts of mortality, nor the responsibility that follows it.

In the history of man, the last solved problem always produces a new one to solve. Three stages in the history of man—his birth—conversion—death.

We have an existence beyond death. Greatest men have died young. Alexander 33, Raffaele 30. The most pious attain elements of better nature and disposition.

After death no change—"my last end." Everything fixed at death, and for ever. This is the world of change, and of great and mighty possibilities. But when the ultimatum of life is over, all stand one unvaried, fixed, eternal character and destiny.

2. *That irreligious men are often constrained to bear a reluctant testimony in favour of religion, and against themselves.* God's love to His people is wonderful to their very enemies. "Who can count?" &c. So struck with the sight of their privileges, blessings, tents, goodly array, Balaam forgot to curse, was compelled to bless, and for once in his life to pray. Bad men envy the security and comfort of the righteous. "How many hired servants," &c. They know the worth of religion by its loss.

Perhaps that offender never lived who has not occasionally sighed to possess the mercies and blessings of the righteous. The system of irreligion that will do for health will not do for sickness. Speculations which amuse in life will not support in death.

3. *That men cheat themselves with the fallacy of wishing to die by a religion by which they are not willing to live.* This man calculated wisely for his dying hour; he ought to have calculated as wisely for his living ones. We must live by faith if we would die by it.

4. *That none go as far from God as those who fly in the face of their own convictions.* Balaam gave counsel black as the pit whence it sprung (comp. chap. xxv., and Rev. ii. 14).

II. Remarks upon this exclamation as replete with instruction to the people of God.

1. *Let this testimony confirm you in attachment to the religion you profess.* Proof that it is no cunning fable: it "is a faithful saying." "Wisdom is justified," &c. Cling with tenacity. Take the ground they give. Yield not to the claims of infidelity.

2. *Let it prompt to the cultivation of this righteousness.*

3. *Let it lighten life of its cares, and death of its terrors.*

4. *Let it prompt with compassion for irreligious men.* —Samuel Thodey.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

(Verse 10.)

The text refers to—

I. A character that we must define—"the righteous."

None are such by nature; none are such by mere education, or parental discipline; none are such by self-exertion. This character is divine, and therefore of God. It includes—

1. *Justification.* By which, through faith in the Lord Jesus, we are constituted righteous, and dealt with as such (Isa. xlv. 25; Rom. iii. 26).

2. *Regeneration.* Born from above;

born of God; "partakers of the Divine nature." This is the "new man;" the holy nature which the children of God possess (John iii. 3, seq.; Col. iii. 10).

3. *Sanctification;* or the progress of the new man in holiness; the spiritual growth and advancement of the Divine life. This includes also the consecration of the heart to the service and glory of God. An increasing conformity to the holy image of the blessed God (2 Cor. iii. 18).

4. *Practical obedience;* or righteous-

ness of life. This is the great evidence of righteousness of heart. The fruit testifies that the tree is made good; the stream, that the fountain has become pure. He only is righteous who doeth righteousness. Those who "have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him," following His example, treading in His imitable footsteps. (Rom. vi. 22).

II. An event that we must illustrate—"the death of the righteous."

Even the righteous must die. The righteous of all ages, except Enoch and Elijah, have died. "It is appointed unto men," &c. But the righteous die—

1. *Under the immediate direction of God.* The wicked often die prematurely—by their own hands; by the hands of the executioner; by the power of sin producing disease; by the judgments of God. But the righteous, in life, in sickness, in old age, are the especial objects of the Divine care. They are in His hand; and "precious in His sight is the death of His saints." When their work is done He calls them home. When they are meet for glory, he receives them to Himself.

2. *In a state of gracious security.* They die in covenant with God; with an interest in Christ; the subjects of the indwelling Spirit; heirs of glory. "Die in the Lord." "Death is theirs." Not an enemy to destroy; but a messenger to conduct them to their better home. Death cannot separate the saint from Jesus. The righteous often die—

3. *In ecstasy and triumph;* have "an abundant entrance ministered unto them," &c. Thus died Stephen, with the vision of glory before his eyes. Harken to the apostle, "I have fought a good fight," &c. So thousands and myriads. Death has been victory. "O death, where is thy sting?" &c. Thus Payson: "The battle is fought, and the victory is won." The righteous always at death—

4. *Enter upon a life of immortality.*

They are intimately present with the Lord. To die is gain, immediate, consummate, eternal gain. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," &c. Death is the gate of life—the vestibule of glory.

III. A desire that must be regulated.

"Let me die," &c. It is a very proper desire. Should be the desire of every human being. But it will be fruitless unless it is regulated—

1. *By a personal regard to the character of the righteous.* The character and the death are united; they cannot be separated. We cannot die their death if we are wicked, impenitent, merely moral, or only professors of righteousness. We must attain the spirit and principle of the righteous.

2. *By a preparation for dying.* This, by the righteous, cannot be forgotten. He therefore acts and prays and believes in reference to this solemn want. He is anxious to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man; to have the lamp and the oil, the title and the meetness. This is the only desire of any value.

3. *By a constant deference to the Divine will.* The righteous cannot suggest anything as to the mode, the place, or the circumstances of dying. They say, "My times are in Thy hand." They regard present duties and privileges, and leave all that concerns the act of dying in the Lord's hands. "All the days of my appointed time," &c. With God are the issues both of death and life.

Application.

1. *The subject of the text is solemn.* Dying is always a momentous thing, a great crisis in man's history, &c.

2. *What is your prospect respecting death?* I ask, not what you wish, but what is the well-grounded prospect?

3. *How different is the death of the wicked to that of the righteous!* Dark; the beginning of sorrows, &c. Oh! avoid this.—Jabez Burns, D.D.

HOW TO DIE WELL.

(Verse 10.)

I. How do the righteous die?

1. In the favour of God.
2. In the love of Christ.
3. Tranquilly.
4. Fitted for heaven.

II. How may we die this death?

1. Repent.
2. Turn to God.
3. Believe on Christ.
4. Live righteously.—*W. W. Wythe.*

PERSISTENCE IN THE PURSUIT OF A SINFUL PURPOSE.

(Verses 13-18.)

In these verses there are several important topics for illustration and application.

I. A wicked persistence in the pursuit of an evil purpose.

Both Balaam and Balak knew that God had prohibited the cursing of Israel (see ver. 8 and chap. xxii. 12); yet Balak is determined to have them cursed if possible. Notwithstanding that Balaam had blessed instead of cursing them, Balak will have him make another attempt, and under somewhat different conditions. "Balak said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (ver. 13). And Balaam, urged on by his cursed hunger for "the rewards of divination," is willing to serve Balak in this if he possibly can. This power of persistence in the pursuit of an object, if it had been worthily directed, might have led to great good; but in this case it is daringly and wickedly perverted. (a)

II. A mischievous error as to man's power to curse his fellow-man.

Balak thought that if Balaam's point of view were changed, and he saw but a small portion of the camp of Israel, he would then be able to curse them. Hence he "said unto him, come, I pray thee, with me unto another place," &c. (vers. 13, 14). Balak was in error in this (see p. 424). And this error is a mischievous one. It has made men the dupes and the victims of witchcraft and priestcraft; it has hindered healthy mental and spiritual development, and

been a prolific cause of many and great evils. (b)

III. A grievous error as to the nature of the Divine Being.

Balaam and Balak seem to have thought that God might be induced to change His mind, by their sacrifices. For the second time they "built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram upon every altar." They regarded Him as a being who might be bribed by their gifts, or prevailed upon by their importunities. The language of God, by the Psalmist, is applicable to them: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as Thyself." How dishonouring to God is such a view of His nature! In certain forms this error survives to this day, and that in Christendom. (c)

IV. An illustration of the communication of the message of God to an ungodly man.

Balaam "said unto Balak, stand here by the burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder. And the Lord met Balaam," &c. (vers. 15, 16).

1. *God has access to the minds of wicked men.* Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 1-36), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii.), Balaam, iv. are examples. (d)

2. *God can use wicked men for the accomplishment of His own purposes.* In this way He used Balaam. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee," &c.

V. An illustration of the attention with which Divine communications should be received.

"And when he came to him, behold,

he stood by his burnt offering, &c. (vers. 17, 18). Balak was standing by his burnt offering, yet Balaam said to him, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor." It was a summons to thoughtful and

earnest attention to the Word of God, which he was about to speak to him. Not with listless ear and lethargic mind should Divine messages be heard, but with eager attention and thoughtful consideration. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) There are single acts of sin, and continued or repeated acts of sin; sins committed after convictions, promises, and resolutions. Now there is not so much of guilt in a single act of sin, as there is in a continued and repeated course of sin, called (Deut. xxix. 19) "adding drunkenness to thirst," and (Isa. xxx. 1) "adding sin to sin." For as it is in numbering, so it is in sinning; if the first figure be 1, the second is 10, the third 100, the fourth 1000, and every addition makes a greater multiplication. O, what a dreadful reckoning will there be hereafter for the consciences of poor sinners!—*Flavel*.

(b) When the confessor of Louis XIV. said, "With my God in my hand and my king at my knee, I am greater than any monarch on the earth," he gave utterance to no idle boast. He only expressed, somewhat more epigrammatically, what every priest would claim in his soberest moments. In his *Catéchisme de la Persévérance*, Gaume says, "The priest, mighty as God can, in one moment, snatch the sinner from hell, and render him worthy of Paradise, and from a slave of the devil make him a son of Abraham, and God Himself is bound to adhere to the judgment of the priest. The sentence of the priest precedes: God has only to sign it." Such are the well-known assumptions of Rome.—*Literary World*.

When John Knox began the work of reform in Glasgow, the idea prevailed that if a heretic should but touch the great bell in the church there, he would be struck dead instantly. He accepted the test on condition that the bell should be lowered into the street. He declared that it should either kill him, or he it. Then he stood over it, anathematized the church of Rome, the pope, and the wicked priests. The superstitious crowd looked in vain to see the bold heretic fall dead. Instead, men armed with hammers at Knox's order, broke the bell into fragments. Thus a great imposture was detected, Romanism defeated, and Protestantism established.—*Dict. of Illust.*

For another illustration on *Superstition* see pp. 425, 426.

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 447.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 426, 427.

(e) Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the Word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pre-

tence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since the public ministry possesses with regard to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages. Besides, such a pretence will generally be found to be hollow and disingenuous. If you observe a person habitually inattentive under an awakening, searching ministry, follow him into his retirement, and, it may be confidently predicted, you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or, if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears: he will satisfy himself with having completed his task, "and go his way and straightway forget what manner of man he was." If the general course of the world were as favourable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety, the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the Word: but while everything around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a careless manner, is unspeakably dangerous, since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the Word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."—*Robert Hall, A.M.*

Hear the Word with *attention*. Not to listen with attention is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever trains of thought of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly, but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as

dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity: it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a habit of attention, it will become natural, thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall, by degrees, experience no difficulty in following the track of the longest connected discourse. As we find it easy to

attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction is the love of the truth. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.—*Ibid.*

BALAAH'S SECOND PARABLE: THE CONSTITUENTS AND THE IRREVERSIBLNESS OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 19-24.)

Notice—

I. The constituents of the blessedness of Israel.

Balaam pronounced the Israelites blessed because of—

1. *Their covenant relation with God.*

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen distress in Israel." See *Critical and Explanatory Notes* on this verse. God cannot curse His chosen people. He must bless them with His favour and with all covenant blessings. So long as they do not utterly forsake Him He will protect and bless them. (a)

2. *The presence of God with them.*

"The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." Here are two ideas:—(1) God was present with them as their King. The government of Israel was a theocracy. Jehovah Himself was their sovereign. (2) His presence produced exultation. "The shout of a King" is the jubilant celebration by Israel of the presence of Jehovah in their midst as their King. His presence was a guarantee of success in their great enterprise, of victory over their enemies, &c. God is still with His people as their King and their God. (b)

3. *The doings of God for them.* "God brought them out of Egypt." Keil and Del. translate: "God brings them out of Egypt;" and remark that "the participle is not used for the preterite, but designates the leading out as still going on, and lasting till the introduction into Canaan." Looked at in this light, the clause before us refers to the

whole of God's doings for them, by means of which they were led forth from Egypt, and ultimately brought into the Promised Land. It includes:—(1) Emancipation from Egypt. (2) Direction in their journeys. (3) Protection from their enemies. (4) Provision in the wilderness. (5) Possession of Canaan. And in this Christian dispensation God works graciously and gloriously in and for His people. He delivers from a bondage far worse than that of Israel in Egypt, &c.

4. *The revelation of His will to them.*

"Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob," &c. (ver. 23). Margin: "in Jacob." See the translation and note by Keil and Del. in *Critical and Explanatory Notes*. We take the verse to mean that the art of the soothsayer was not practised amongst the Israelites; but God Himself, by means of His own appointment, and in due season, revealed to them His own designs and doings. He communicated with them through the high priest by means of the Urim and Thummim; He spake by Moses, and afterwards by the Prophets and the sacred poets. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." The teachings of Christ and His apostles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are granted to the spiritual Israel in this age.

5. *The victorious power He bestows upon them.* "He hath as it were the strength of a buffalo," or a wild bull.

"Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down

until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." Because Jehovah was with them as their King and Leader, they went forward with the strength of a wild ox—an indomitable animal, and terrible by reason of its horns (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 17; Psa. xxii. 21). And when they arose to battle they would not retreat until they had obtained complete victory. They would conquer their enemies, and take possession of the Promised Land. Let Balak, then, be warned, and abandon the vain hope of vanquishing this victorious and blessed people. And God's spiritual Israel shall conquer all their spiritual enemies, and take possession of that inheritance of which Canaan, even at best, was but a poor type. "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

II. The irreversibleness of the blessedness of Israel.

The blessedness of the people of God cannot be reversed because—

1. *It rests upon the unchangeableness of God.* "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent," &c. (c)

2. *It is beyond the power of their enemies.* "Behold, I have received to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." All the sacrifices which Balak the king could offer, and all the arts which Balaam the soothsayer could exercise, would not turn aside the blessing of God from His people. No power either in earth or in hell can effectually curse those whom God hath blessed.

Conclusion.

1. *Are we members of the spiritual Israel of God?*

2. *Let us, then, be faithful to our covenant engagements, and rejoice in our privileges.*

3. *Let those who are aliens from the spiritual Israel believe in Christ Jesus and share its blessedness* (Eph. ii. 12).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The new covenant exacts not of us, as a necessary condition, the perfection of obedience, but the sincerity of obedience; an uprightness in our intention, not an unspottedness in our action; an integrity in our aims, and an industry in our compliance with Divine precepts: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1), i.e., sincere. What is hearty in our actions, is accepted; and what is defective, is overlooked, and not charged upon us, because of the obedience and righteousness of our Surety. The first covenant rejected all our services after sin; the services of a person under sentence of death, are but dead services: this accepts our imperfect services, after faith in it; that administered no strength to obey, but supposed it; this supposeth our inability to obey, and confers some strength for it: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 27). Again, in regard of the promises: the old covenant had good, but the new hath "better promises" (Heb. viii. 6), of justification after guilt, and sanctification after filth, and glorification at last of the whole man. In the first, there was provision against guilt, but none for the removal of it; provision against filth, but none for the cleansing of it; promise of happiness implied, but not so great a one as that "life and immortality" in heaven, "brought to light by the Gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Life

indeed was implied to be promised upon his standing, but not so glorious an immortality disclosed, to be reserved for him, if he stood. As it is a covenant of better promises, so a covenant of sweeter comforts; comforts more choice, and comforts more durable; an "everlasting consolation and a good hope" are the fruits of "grace," i.e. the covenant of grace (2 Thess. ii. 16). In the whole there is such a love disclosed, as cannot be expressed; the Apostle leaves it to every man's mind to conceive it, if he could, "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1). It instates us in such a manner of the love of God as He bears to His Son the image of His Person (John xvii. 23): "That the world may know that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."—*Charnocke*.

(b) As He gave the blood of His Son to seal the covenant, so He gave Himself as the blessing of the covenant: "He is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. xi. 16). He is not only our God, but our God as He is the God of Christ: He is not ashamed to be our propriety, and Christ is not ashamed to own His people in a partnership with Him in this propriety (John xx. 17), "I ascend to My God, and your God." This, of God's being our God, is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises; in this He hath promised, whatsoever is infinite in Him, whatsoever is

the glory and ornament of His nature, for our use ; not a part of Him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigour and strength of all. . . . Thus, God's being ours, is more than if all heaven and earth were ours besides ; it is more than if we were fully our own, and at our own dispose ; it makes "all things that God hath ours" (1 Cor. iii. 22) ; and, therefore, not only all things that He hath created, but all things that He can create ; not only all things that He hath contrived, but all things that He can contrive ; for in being ours, His power is ours, His possible power as well as His active power ; His power, whereby He can effect more than He hath done, and His wisdom, whereby He can contrive more than He hath done ; so that if there were need of employing His power to create many worlds for our good, He would not stick at it, for if He did, He would not be our God, in the extent of His nature, as the promise intimates.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations of the Blessedness of the People of God, see pp. 154, 346, 347.

(c) Independent of all possible beings and events, Jehovah sits at the head of the universe, unchanged, and incapable of change, amid all the successions, tossings and tumults, by which it is agitated. When empires are overthrown, or angels fall ; when suns are extinguished, and systems return to their original nothing : He is equally impassive and unmoved as when sparrows expire, or the hair falls from our heads. Nothing can happen,

nothing can be done beyond His expectation, or without His permission. Nothing can frustrate His designs, and nothing disappoint or vary His purposes. All things, beside Him, change, and fluctuate without ceasing. Events exist and vanish. Beings rise and expire. But His own existence, the thoughts which He entertains, the desires which He admits, the purposes which He forms, are "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Throughout the coming vast of eternity also, and the boundless tracts of immensity, He sees with serene complacency His own perfect purposes daily and invariably advancing, with a regular fulfilment, towards their absolute completion. In its own place, in its own time, and in its own manner, each exists in exact obedience to His order, and in exact accordance with His choice ; nothing lingers, nothing hastens ; but His counsel exactly stands, and all His pleasure will be precisely accomplished.—*Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

"What makes you think that God will never forsake them that trust in Him?" was asked of an aged Christian. "Because He has promised," was the reply. "And what makes you think that He will keep His word?" "Because He never yet broke it." Here is encouragement for us all! Here is cause to cry aloud, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The past declares God's faithfulness, the present confirms it, and the future will only make more clear His fidelity and truth.—*Anon.*

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF JEHOVAH.

(Verse 19.)

To unfold the full meaning of these words, we observe—

I. Some men think that God will lie.

God has told us, with strong and repeated asseverations, that "we must be born again" (John iii. 7) ; but this is totally disbelieved by—

1. *The profane.* They persuade themselves that such strictness in religion, as is implied in the new birth, is not necessary ; and that they shall go to heaven in their own way.

2. *The self-righteous.* These consider regeneration as a dream of weak enthusiasts ; and are satisfied with the "form of godliness, without" ever experiencing "the power" of it.

3. *The hypocritical professors of religion.* These, having changed their creed, together with their outward conduct, fancy themselves Christians,

notwithstanding their faith neither "overcomes the world," nor "works by love," nor "purifies their hearts."

That all these persons think God will lie, is evident beyond a doubt ; for if they really believed that old things must pass away and all things become new (2 Cor. v. 17), before they can enter into the kingdom of heaven, they would feel concerned to know whether any such change had taken place in them ; nor would they be satisfied till they had a Scriptural evidence that they were indeed "new creatures in Christ Jesus." But as this is in no respect the case with them, it is manifest that they do not believe the record of God, and, consequently, however harsh the expression may seem, they make God a liar (1 John v. 10).

II. Others fear He may lie.

This is common with persons—

1. *Under conviction of sin.* When men are deeply convinced of sin, they find it exceedingly difficult to rest simply on the promises of the Gospel; such as John vi. 37; Isa. i. 18; lv. 1. This appears too good to be true: they cannot conceive how God should “justify the ungodly” (Rom. iv. 5), and therefore they seek to become godly first, in order that they may be justified: and if they cannot bring some price in their hands, they keep back, and give themselves over to desponding fears.

2. *Under temptation or desertion.* God has declared that He will not suffer His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear (1 Cor. x. 13). But when they come into temptation, they are apt to say, as David, “I shall one day perish,” &c. (1 Sam. xxvii. 1). They see no way for their escape; and therefore they fear that the very next wave will overwhelm them utterly. If God at such seasons hide His face from them, they conclude, “there is no hope;” they think “His mercy clean gone for ever,” &c. (Psa. lxxvii. 7-9), notwithstanding God has so frequently and so expressly declared, that He will never leave them nor forsake them.

Now these persons do not, like the ungodly, deliberately *think* that God *will* lie; but they have many *fears* lest He *should*; if it were not so, they would take God at His word, and stay themselves on Him when they are in darkness (Isa. l. 10).

III. But God neither will nor can lie.

1. *He will not lie.* (1) Let us hear the testimonies of those who have tried Him. Moses (Deut. xxxii. 4); Joshua (John xxiii. 14); Samuel (1 Sam. xv. 29). (2) Let us attend to God’s own assertions and appeals. Isa. v. 4; xlix. 19. Would He ever venture to speak thus strongly on His own behalf, if His creatures could make good their accusations against Him? (3) Let us look to matter of fact. He threatened

to punish the angels if they should prove disobedient: He denounced a curse on Adam if he should eat of the forbidden tree; He threatened to destroy the whole world with a deluge; to overwhelm Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone; and to scatter His once chosen people over the face of the whole earth. See now whether he has forborne to execute any of these threatenings. He also promised to send His only, dear Son to die for sinners; and to make Him great among the Gentiles, while His own nation should almost universally reject Him. Have either of these promises been forgotten? Or, if such promises and such threatenings have received their accomplishment, is there any reason to doubt respecting any others that are yet unfulfilled? Are not His past actions so many types and pledges of what He will hereafter perform? (2 Pet. ii. 4-9; Jude 7.)

2. *He cannot lie.* Truth is as essential to the Divine nature as goodness, wisdom, power, or any other attribute; so that He can as easily cease to be good, or wise, or powerful, as He can suffer one jot or tittle of His word to fail. If for one moment He could divest Himself of truth, He would cease to be deserving of all confidence or affection. Let it only be said of any *man*—“he is great and wise and generous, but no dependence can be placed on his word,” would he not on the whole be deemed a contemptible character? How then would Jehovah be degraded, if any such infirmity could be laid to His charge! “God cannot lie” (Tit. i. 2); “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. ii. 13); “It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. vi. 18). It is God’s honour that He neither will nor can lie.

Infer,—

1. *How vain are the expectations of unconverted men!* Men, whatever may be their state, persuade themselves that they shall be happy when they die. But how delusive must be that hope, which is built upon the expectation that God will prove Himself

a liar! Let us lay aside all such delusive hopes, &c.

2. *How groundless are the fears of the converted!* There is a holy fear that is highly desirable for every one, however eminent, however established. But there is a tormenting, slavish fear that arises from unbelief, and which greatly retards our progress in the Divine life. Now we ask, Does this fear arise from an apprehension of our own unfaithfulness, or of God's? If it be God's faithfulness that we doubt, let us know that His "gifts and callings are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29, with the words following the text), and that where He hath begun a good work, He will perfect it unto the day of

Christ (Phil. i. 6). If, on the other hand, we suspect our own faithfulness, let us recollect on whom our faithfulness depends (2 Cor. iii. 5; Zech. iv. 6). God has promised not only that He will not depart from us, but that He will put His fear in our hearts, so that we shall not depart from Him (Jer. xxxii. 39, 40).

Let us then "set to our seal that God is true" (John iii. 33). Let us commit ourselves to Him, knowing Whom we have believed (2 Tim. i. 12), and assured that while we stand on the foundation of His Word, we are immovably secure (2 Tim. ii. 19).—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

THE VERACITY OF GOD.

(Verse 19.)

Introduction—

Remarks on the character of Balaam, and the circumstances that led to the utterance of his prophecy.

I. Here is a purpose pre-supposed.

1. He saw Israel as the objects of the Divine protection, so that all the devices of their enemies were rendered vain.

2. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the face of all opposition.

3. The blessedness of their prosperity, in the tokens of the Divine presence and power with which they were accompanied.

II. The ground of this stability asserted.

1. God *Himself* is unchangeable.

2. He is so in His will and purpose.

3. There is no cause why God should alter. Three causes of change of mind in man not applicable to God:—(1) Want of foreknowledge. (2) Natural instability. (3) Want of power.

III. Inferences.

1. The perpetual obligation of religion.

2. Reproof of the inconstancy of man.

3. It directs us where alone we may safely put our trust.

4. It teaches patience under His providences.

5. An awful warning to sinners.—*Anon.*

GOD'S BLESSING IRREVERSIBLE.

(Verse 20.)

The text is connected with three illustrious orders of persons: Balak, king of Moab; Balaam, the wicked prophet; and the Israelites, who were journeying to the Land of Promise. Balak hated the Israelites, and was anxious to bring evil, &c. Balaam

hired himself to curse them; but God frustrated his evil design, and out of the lips hired to curse, God pronounced a blessing. Here is the wicked prophet's confession, "He hath blessed," &c.

I. God's people are blessed of Him.

So it was with Israel of old. God

blessed them by wonderful deliverances, and countless tokens of his favour. His compassionate eye was on them in Egypt; His arm led them out; His bounty supplied their wants; His presence guided—shielded them, &c. God has now His Israel in the world: all the spiritual seed of Abraham; all those who have believed in the Messiah; all who are travelling to a better country. On these His blessing rests. “He hath blessed”—

1. *With pardoning mercy.*
2. *With delivering grace.*
3. *With spiritual supplies.*
4. *With all needful good.*

Now this applies to every age of the world—to every true Israelite.

II. His blessing cannot be reversed.

1. *Wicked men would, but cannot.*
2. *Satan would, but cannot.*
3. *God does not desire to do so, and therefore will not.*

We may reject the blessing—backslide from God; but His “gifts and calling are without repentance.”

Application.

1. *Are we His people?*
2. *Then we have His blessing.*
3. *And this is all-sufficient.*—Jabez Burns, D.D.

THE STABILITY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS.

(Verse 23.)

We cannot but admire the endowments of this bold, bad man: we envy him the privilege he enjoyed of beholding the visions of the Almighty, and being favoured with His express communications; we look with astonishment at the perseverance which he manifested, worthy of a better cause; and we may allow ourselves to be charmed with his eloquence and edified by his prophetic anticipations. But when we have done this, there remains an awful contrast of warning: gloomy shades darken and deform a picture, some of the features of which appear clothed in the beauty and brightness of heaven. We see the loftiest qualifications of which human nature can boast—genius, literature, a great name, and even prophetic skill, devoted to the most execrable purposes, employed in direct opposition to God and His Church, and finally recoiling upon their possessor and drowning his soul in perdition. Like many in our own day, Balaam sees the good, but prefers the evil; he pursues the world, and turns his back upon God, in spite of the appearance of the Angel, the remonstrance of conscience, and the immediate voice of Heaven; he makes religion the cloak of the most ambitious purposes; he

numbers himself with those who “love the wages of unrighteousness,” and upon whose tombs God Himself has written the epitaph,—“Wandering stars, to whom is reserved,” &c.

I. The stability of the church is distinctly asserted.

What was true 3,000 years ago, is not worthy of less credit and less attention now. The times are changed, but the men are not. There is now as certain a combination against the Church of the Living God, as there was when Balaam took up his parable, and Balak listened for the curse upon Israel. But while the enemies remain the same, the promise remains unchanged. Every age has heard the cry, “Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.” But then every age has heard the language, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. What a confession is this of Balaam! how humiliating to himself, how instructive to us! Trace the particulars.

1. *The most base and desperate measures have always been used against the church.* Balaam evidently avows that the mean arts of divination and enchantment had been used. He acknowledges, in fact, that the church's enemies could not meet her in the open

field. Curses are the last resource of cowards—a confession of weakness. And so it has always been. Infidelity is not ashamed to use poisoned weapons—to stoop to the meanest devices to harass a cause which it is always ashamed to face. Some men have so great a hatred to the cause of Christ, that they will condescend to seek help from hell itself rather than fail. Hence every stratagem is employed; all the arts of calumny, and wickedness, and falsehood, are put in requisition to prevent the progress of truth and poison the mind against it. How weak that cause must be which stoops to such wretched devices! and how triumphant and glorious must that religion be, which, though unarmed, can defy them all! “The rains descended . . . and it fell not,” &c.

2. *These attacks are utterly fruitless and vain.* “There is no enchantment against Jacob,” &c. The enemies of the truth, however loudly they may boast at the onset, have always retired in confusion, and for the most part in despair. It is like shooting arrows against the sun: they return upon the heads of those who aimed them, while the sun pursues its glorious way uninjured and undisturbed. It is like attempting to stem the ocean with a bulrush: you may perish in the attempt, but you cannot hope to succeed. Let those who hate the truth, consider by whom that truth is supported—how long that truth has stood—how often it has been assailed, and how certain the overthrow of its enemies. Like Job’s leviathan, “the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold,” &c. “How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?” &c. “If this counsel or this work be of man, it will come to nought,” &c. (Acts v. 38, 39).

3. *The source of Israel’s safety is directly ascribed to God.* “What hath God wrought!” The world is right in its estimate of the feebleness of the Church of Christ in herself. We wonder not at their boasts, their scorn.

We wonder not to hear them say, “What do these feeble Jews?” We know she is a bruised reed; but we also know that she is strong in the strength of Another. It is delightful to hear from an enemy—(1) the faithfulness of God advanced as the security of the church (ver. 19). (2) The impotency of his own arts acknowledged. “I cannot reverse it” (ver. 20). (3) The mercy of God asserted as the comfort of His people (ver. 21). (4) The records of antiquity explored to confirm the position (ver. 22). Futurity opened up as disclosing their triumphs (ver. 24).

How is all this confirmed by the history of that very moment! Israel was resting in his tents, ignorant of the plotting of Balak and the prophecy of Balaam. Moses knew nothing of it while all this mischief was going on. But God is both a sure and a secret friend. He restrains countless evils of which we know nothing. “He that keepeth thee will not slumber,” &c.

4. *The season of our greatest dangers becomes the date of our noblest triumphs.* “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob,” &c. God delays till the hour of extremity.

5. *Our best blessings are frequently pronounced by our worst enemies.* How cheering is it to observe this—the enemies with one breath pronouncing our stability, with the next their own overthrow. “There shall come a star out of Jacob,” &c. A volume might be filled with the confessions of the enemy. “Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

II. The security of believers follows on the same principles.

They are exposed to similar attacks. The world tries its enchantments. False friends and real enemies endeavour to hinder,—watch for our halting, &c. Satan tempts, opposes, &c.

The same promises are our supports. Condescend to learn of an enemy. God’s simple word was enough for Balaam. Apply it to our experiences in life, to death.—*Samuel Thodey.*

BALAAM'S DECLARATION OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY.

(Verse 23.)

How true is the text of Israel of old. No evil spirit of enchantment could affect them. No spirit of divination injure them. The magicians of Egypt could mimic Moses, but only in adding to the misery of the Egyptians; but neither earth nor hell can injure those who trust in the Lord; "for He is their help and shield."

Applying our text to the Church of God in general, consider—

1. The important truth affirmed.

"Surely there is no enchantment," &c. We enter not into the discussion how far men may have had power to enchant, to divine, or to curse others. But we abide by the text, that there is no such thing against the cause and people of God. Hell is opposed to the cause of God, and united with it are the wicked powers of earth. They have the disposition, the will, the purpose, and may make the attempt to injure the Church; but their efforts must fail, their plots must be frustrated, their attacks must be powerless. Yet sometimes they have been allowed to harass and vex and torture the people of God. Sometimes they have apparently succeeded and triumphed; but really and eventually, they must be frustrated. "Surely there is no enchantment," &c. Now the certainty of this may be inferred—

1. *Because the counsels of God are more than sufficient to baffle the designs and plots of hell.* We would not array human skill and tact against the wiles and stratagems of the devil. But the security of the Church depends on the counsels of God—on the influence and wisdom of the Most High. He knows how to frustrate the devices of evil; and how to deliver those who trust in His name. Hell has no covering before Him. He is the watcher and keeper of Israel, and He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

2. *Because the power of Jehovah is ever effectual in resisting the attacks of*

the enemies of His people. Divine wisdom and omniscience are united with resistless power. His mandate gave being to the universe. "He spake, and it was." All created power is mere impotency before Him. How then can the power of evil ruin the Church, and overthrow the cause of the Eternal?

3. *Because Divine goodness is more than enough to counteract the malevolence of the Church's foes.* The wisdom and power of God are combined with immeasurable love. The interests of the Church are those of God's heart. His people are as the apple of His eye. He has covenanted with them to sustain, to keep, to preserve, to deliver, to glorify.

4. *The resources of God are more than adequate to render all the means of the Church's enemies abortive.* The enemy can combine various elements of evil. The craft, subtlety, and power of fallen legions—the wealth and influence of the world—the fashions of the earth, &c. And all these have successively been employed. But all resources are Jehovah's. The angels of His presence, the stars of heaven, the sun, and the moon, storms and winds, and tempests, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine. He often makes the wrath of man to praise Him. On these grounds we may say, "Surely there is no enchantment," &c.

II. The triumphant exclamation uttered.

"According to this time it shall be said," &c. Observe:

1. *What is to be said.* "What hath God wrought!" All deliverances, &c., are to be traced up to God. Agency may be observed; but God only praised. God alone is to have the glory, as He has had the real work of delivering His people. (1) This is to keep up our dependence on God. (2) To inspire with admiration and praise. (3) To keep human nature in its right place. Not

what Moses, or Joshua, or Gideon, or David, or the apostles, or the martyrs, or the reformers, or Wesley, or Whitfield; but "what God hath wrought." There is a tendency to lose sight of God, or to make Him secondary. But it ought ever to be, "What hath God wrought!"

2. *Who are to say it.* Sometimes even enemies have said it. Balak was forced to see it, and the covetous prophet to speak it. (1) But it should be said especially by the ministers of the Gospel. They are to draw attention to the doings of Jehovah—to "speak of the glory of His kingdom, and talk of His power," &c. (2) It should be said by all the pious. Parents to their children. Teachers to their pupils. Christians to one another. Thus the Psalmist, lxxvii. 11, &c., Isa. xii. 4, &c.

3. *When it should be said.* (1) In times of depression as a means of en-

couragement. (2) In times of great exertion as an incitement to perseverance. (3) In times of great success, to give tone to our exultings. (4) It will be reiterated in the world of the beatified for ever. Then they will see in one beautiful series the doings of God,—behold the golden chain entire, &c.

Application.

1. *Our text may apply to many as to their Christian experience before God.* Remember all the way God hath led you, &c. What great things He hath done for you.

2. *May it not apply to this Christian Church and congregation?* What hath God wrought here for you, in you, by you? &c.

3. *Let God ever be exalted by His Church and people for the blessings they enjoy, and all the good done in them, and by them.*—Jabez Burns, D.D.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOD, AND THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WHICH IT DEMANDS.

(Verse 23, latter portion.)

"According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!"

The text directs us to—

I. The source of effectual blessing.

It directs us to the Deity, in His essential character; in His active character; and in His relative character. And what is the interference we wish? Various. Sometimes—

1. *Deliverance*—from danger internal and external—"enchantment."

2. *Blessing.* "I have received commandment to bless," &c.

3. *Forbearance.* "He hath not beheld iniquity," &c.

4. *Stability.* "The Lord his God is with him."

5. *Complete success.*

II. The time from which His interposition is remarked.

"According to this time it shall be said." The time of—

1. *Conversion.*

2. *Renewed devotion.*

3. *Peculiar providential arrangement.*

4. *Earnest and decisive spirit of prayer.*

III. The acknowledgment it demands.

"It shall be said, What hath God wrought!"

1. *Acknowledgment is implied and expected.* "God wrought."

2. *It is spontaneously offered.* "It shall be said."

3. *It is a personal and explicit token.* "Jacob and Israel."

4. *It is to be recorded and gratefully renewed.* "According to this time it shall be said," &c.—Samuel Thodey.

(Verses 25 and 26.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes on ver. 25, and Homiletical remarks on vers. 11, 12.

(Verses 27—30.)

See Critical and Explanatory Notes and Homiletical remarks on vers. 1, 2, 13, 14, and Explanatory Note on ver. 25.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *To seek for enchantments.* See Notes on chap. xxiii. 3, 23.

He set his face toward the wilderness, i.e., towards the plains of Moab, where the Israelites were encamped.

Verse 2. *Saw Israel abiding, &c.* Keil and Del.: "He saw Israel encamping according to its tribes."

The Spirit of God came upon him. "The impression made upon him by the sight of the tribes of Israel, served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him. Of both the earlier utterances it is stated that 'Jehovah put a word into his mouth' (chap. xxiii. 5, 16); but of this third it is affirmed that 'the Spirit of God came over him.' The former were communicated to him, where he went out for a Divine revelation, without his being thrown into an ecstatic state; he heard the voice of God within him telling him what he was to say. But this time, like the prophets in their prophesyings, he was placed by the Spirit of God in a state of ecstatic sight; so that, with his eyes closed as in clairvoyance, he saw the substance of the revelation from God with his inward mental eye, which had been opened by the Spirit of God."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 3. *Whose eyes are open.* Margin: "Who had his eyes shut, but now opened." Dr. A. Clarke takes the latter view: "I believe the original שָׁתָם, *shethum*, should be translated *shut*, not *open*; for in the next verse, where the opening of the eyes is mentioned, a widely different word is used גָּלָה, *galah*, which signifies to *open* or *reveal*. At first the eyes of Balaam were *shut*, and so closely too that he could not *see* the angel who withstood him, till God *opened* his eyes; nor could he see the gracious intentions of God towards Israel, till the *eyes of his understanding were opened* by the power of the Divine Spirit."

HH 2

שָׁתָם הָעֵינַי, "with closed eye. שָׁתָם does not mean to open, a meaning in support of which only one passage of the *Mishnah* can be adduced, but to close, like סָתַם in Dan. viii. 26, and שָׁתָם in Lam. iii. 8, with the ש softened into ס or ש. 'Balaam describes himself as the man with closed eye with reference to his state of ecstasy, in which the closing of the outer senses went hand in hand with the opening of the inner' (*Hengstenberg*). The cessation of all perception by means of the outer senses, so far as self-conscious reflection is concerned, was a feature that was common to both the vision and the dream, the two forms in which the prophetic gift manifested itself (chap. xii. 6), and followed from the very nature of the inward intuition. In the case of prophets whose spiritual life was far advanced, inspiration might take place without any closing of the outward senses. But upon men like Balaam, whose inner religious life was still very impure and undeveloped, the Spirit of God could only operate by closing their outward senses to impressions from the lower earthly world, and raising them up to visions of the higher and spiritual world."—*Keil and Del.*

Fuerst however renders שָׁתָם הָעֵינַי, "opened of eye, i.e., with opened eye." So also the *Speaker's Comm. et al.*

Verse 4. *Falling, &c.* Omit the "into a trance" of the A.V. Keil and Del. translate, "Falling down and with opened eyes." Balaam fell beneath the power of the Spirit of God, who came upon him (comp. 1 Sam. xix. 24). In this way the eyes of his spirit were opened.

Verse 7. *He shall pour the water, &c.* Or, "Water will flow out of his buckets." Or, "He shall stream with water out of his buckets." An image of great prosperity; an abundant supply of

water being essential to fertility and prosperity in the burning East. "The nation is personified as a man carrying two pails overflowing with water."

His seed, i.e., posterity.

"By many waters," a metaphor indicative of rich blessings, particularly in this place, that of a numerous posterity.

Agag, a title common to all the Amalekite kings, as *Pharaoh* was to those of Egypt. "The reason for mentioning the king of the Amalekites was, that he was selected as the impersonation of the enmity of the world against the kingdom of God, which culminated in the kings of the heathen; the Amalekites having been the first heathen tribe that attacked the Israelites on their journey to Canaan (Exod. xvii. 8)" —*Keil and Del.*

His king his kingdom. "The king of Israel, whose greatness was celebrated by Balaam, was neither the Messiah exclusively, nor the earthly kingdom without the Messiah, but the kingdom of Israel that was established by David, and was exalted in the Messiah into an everlasting kingdom, the enemies of which would all be made its footstool (Psa. ii. and cx.)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 8. See chap. xxiii. 22.

Verse 9. See chap. xxiii. 24.

Verse 11. *Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour.* "A bitter and impious sarcasm."—*A. Clarke, LL.D.*

Verse 14. *Advertise thee.* Keil and Del.: "'Tell thee advisedly.' . . . An announcement which includes advice."

Verse 17. *A Star, &c.* "In all the typical language of Scripture stars are symbols of lordship and authority, ecclesiastical or civil. Thus a star is the symbol of the highest dominion of all: 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob;' and the actual birth of Him whom Balaam prophesied of here, is announced by a star (Matt. ii. 2; cf. Isa. xiv. 12)."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

A Sceptre, &c. (comp. Gen. xlix. 10).

The corners of Moab. Rather, "the two sides of Moab," "equivalent to Moab on both sides, from one end to the other."

Destroy all the children of Sheth.

Speaker's Comm.: "Overthrow the sons of tumult." Keil and Del.: "'Destroy all the sons of confusion,' by which the Moabites are to be understood as being men of wild, warlike confusion."

Verse 18. *Edom shall be a possession, &c.* "Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power" (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 14; 1 Chron. xviii. 11-13; Obad. 17 sqq.).

Verse 19. *He that shall have dominion, i.e., the ruler foretold as Star and Sceptre.* "The Star and Sceptre of the prophecy, like the 'Sceptre' and 'Lawgiver' of Gen. xlix. 10, point naturally rather to a line of princes than to an individual; or rather are emblems of the kingdom of Israel generally. Thus the victories of David and his successors, generation after generation, over Edom and Moab, are unquestionably recurring and progressive accomplishments of what Balaam foretold; but after all of them the prophecy yet reaches forward to some further and culminating accomplishment; and that too in 'the latter days' (ver. 14), the ordinary prophetic designation for the time of the Messiah (cf. Dan. x. 14).

"To a Christian, the connection between the Star and Sceptre of Balaam, and the Star of the King of the Jews, which the wise men saw (Matt. ii. 2), is self-evident. As they were 'wise men from the east,' so was Balaam also a 'wise man from the east' (cf. xxiii. 7); and the tradition that they were, if not descendants, yet fellow countrymen, of Balaam, and occupied in pursuits kindred to his, is probable enough." —*Speaker's Comm.*

Destroy him that remaineth, &c. "The phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives till he has cut off all of every place (cf. 1 Kings xi. 16)."—*Ibid.*

Verse 20. *Amalek was the first, &c., i.e., pre-eminent amongst the states or nations which Balaam then had in view of his mind's eye.* The sense given by the marginal rendering is doubtful.

Verse 21. *The Kenites.* "A tribe or nation whose history is strangely inter-

woven with that of the chosen people. Their origin is hidden from us. But we may fairly infer that they were a branch of the larger nation of Midian—from the fact that Jethro, the father of Moses's wife, who in the records of Exodus (see ii. 15, 16; iv. 19, &c.), is represented as dwelling in the land of Midian, and as priest or prince of that nation, is in the narrative of Judges (i. 16; iv. 11), as distinctly said to have been a Kenite. As Midianites, they were therefore descended immediately from Abraham by his wife Keturah, and in this relationship and their connexion with Moses we find the key to their continued alliance with Israel.”—*Bible Dict.*

Verse 22. *The Kenite.* Heb.: *Kain*. The *Speaker's Comm.* says that *Kain* is “the name of the Kenites abode.” Keil and Del.: “*Kain*, the tribe-father, is used poetically for *the Kenite*, the tribe of which he was the founder.” And Fuerst regards it as the name of the tribe. A more faithful rendering of this verse is, “For Kain shall not be destroyed until Asshur shall carry

him away captive.” It is a promise of long-continued safety to the Kenites.

Verse 23. *Alas, who shall live, &c.* “The words, ‘Woe, who will live,’ point to the fearfulness of the following judgment, which went deep to the heart of the seer, because it would fall upon the sons of his own people. The meaning is, ‘Who will preserve his life in the universal catastrophe that is coming?’ (*Hengstenberg.*)”—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 24. *Chittim*, “i.e. Cyprus, the nearest of the western islands, the only one visible from Palestine, and so the representative to Balaam and to Israel of all those unknown western regions across the Mediterranean Sea, from which were at length to come the conquerors of the mighty empires of the East (cf. Isa. xxiii. 1, 12; Jer. ii. 10).”—*Speaker's Comm.*

Eber, “i.e., not as Vulg. and LXX., ‘the Hebrews,’ but generally the descendants of Shem.”—*Ibid.*

He also, “i.e., the conqueror of Asshur and Eber, who should come across the sea.”—*Ibid.*

BALAAH'S THIRD PARABLE: THE GLORY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verses 1-9.)

This paragraph contains two main divisions:

I. The preparation of the prophet to declare the divine will (vers. 1-4).

1. *Balaam renounces the search for auguries.* “And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments.” The sacrifices were offered as at former times, but Balaam goes no more apart to look for auguries. He seems to have despaired of accomplishing the desire of Balak by any exercise of his art.

2. *He beholds the encampment of Israel.* “He set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel encamping according to their tribes.” He seems to have gazed on the imposing spectacle

beneath him, and to have allowed it freely to influence him. Its order, unity, vastness, and might, seem to have deeply impressed him. And the impression produced by that sight “served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him.”

3. *He is inspired by the Holy Spirit.* “And the Spirit of God came upon him” (see *Critical and Explanatory Notes* on ver. 2). He had, as Attersoll remarks, “the Holy Spirit, but not the spirit of holiness; for wheresoever He worketh He is holy, but He doth not always work holiness and sanctification, which evermore accompany salvation.” Balaam was inspired to utter the Divine message; but his heart was perverse and corrupt, &c.

4. *He hears Divine words and sees Divine visions.* "And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man with closed eye hath said: he hath said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling down and with opened eyes" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes on vers. 3, 4). The senses of Balaam now seem to be closed to external impressions, and, for the time being, the Spirit of God has the mastery of his nature, and by voice and by vision reveals the will of God to him. Thus the Lord prepared him for the declaration of His holy will. Do not these words of Balaam display his egotism and pride in his own privileges and power? Keil and Del. hold that they do not. "This introduction to his prophecy is not an utterance of boasting vanity; but, as Calvin correctly observes, 'the whole preface has no other tendency than to prove that he was a true prophet of God, and had received the blessing which he uttered from a celestial oracle.'" We are unable to take this view of his preface. To us it "savours very much of pride and vain glory, taking all the praise of this prophecy to himself, and magnifying himself as one of the cabinet-council of heaven. Paul speaks with humility of his visions and revelations (2 Cor. xii. 1); but Balaam speaks of his with pride." (a)

II. The declaration by the prophet of Israel's glory (verses 5-9).

The blessing here pronounced is in its substance very similar to those in the preceding chapter. Balaam declares—

1. *Their beautiful appearance* (vers. 5, 6). Here are three ideas (1) *Beauty*. The beauty of *order*. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; thy tabernacles, O Israel!" (b) And the beauty of *culture* and *fertility*. "As the valleys are spread forth, as gardens by the river's side." To the mind's eye of the seer, the dwellings of Israel in Canaan spread themselves abroad with the loveliness of fertile valleys, and even as gardens

along the banks of a river, "which are still more lovely than the grassy and flowery valleys" (comp. Deut. viii. 7, 8). (c) (2) *Fragrance*. "As the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted." "The aloe, imported from China and the far distant east, furnished to the ancients one of the most fragrant and precious spices (cf. Ps. xlv. 8), 'All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia' (Prov. vii. 17).'" So the reputation of Israel should be fragrant. Their character and condition should produce a delightful impression upon their neighbours. (3) *Majesty*. "As cedar trees beside the waters." "The noblest of trees branching forth in the fairest of situations; an image of majestic beauty." The beauty of Israel is set forth in a somewhat similar manner in Hos. xiv. 5, 7. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold." The truly godly man is beautiful in his principles and spirit, in his character and conduct. "The beauty of the Lord our God is upon" him.

2. *Their prosperous condition*. Two aspects of prosperity are probably presented by the prophet:—(1) A fertile soil. "He shall pour the water out of his buckets" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). (2) A numerous posterity. "His seed shall be in many waters." Abundant and unfailing prosperity and increase are thus proclaimed as the portion of Israel. And very remarkable was their prosperity at all times when they were faithful to the Lord; and their increase was wonderful.

3. *Their exalted position*. "And his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" (see Critical and Explanatory Notes). The glories of the kingdom of Israel were to far exceed those of their heathen neighbours. We may perhaps find the fulfilment of this prediction in the prosperity and power of the kingdom during the latter part of the reign of David and the greater part of that of his successor. But its most

splendid fulfilment is to be looked for in the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah.

4. *Their conquering power.* This is exhibited in several aspects—(1) Their great *strength*. This is seen in what God had done for them. “God leads him forth out of Egypt.” And in their present condition. “He hath as it were the strength of a wild bull.” The people were strong because God was with them as their leader, &c. (see on chap. xxiii. 22). (2) Their great *conquests*. “He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.” The words point to the complete victory of Israel over their enemies, and their enrichment by means of such conquests. (d) (3) Their great *security*. “He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?” “They were to overcome their foes thoroughly, that none of them would venture to rise up against them again.” The prophet’s words present

a striking picture of assured security. Who shall dare to arouse a sleeping lion? During a great part of the reign of David, and during that of Solomon, Israel was thus secure. When His people are faithful to Him, God guarantees their safety. “The work of righteousness shall be peace,” &c. (Isa. xxxii. 17, 18). (e). (4) Their great *influence*, as a blessing to their friends, and as a bane to their enemies. “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.” For this cause, let Balak and all their enemies take warning. God makes His people’s cause His own. “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?”

Here is *encouragement* to the people of God and to their friends. Here is *warning* to their enemies.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) From first to last one thing appears uppermost in this history—Balaam’s self; the honour of Balaam as a true prophet—therefore he will not lie; the wealth of Balaam—therefore the Israelites must be sacrificed. Nay more, even in this sublimest vision his egotism breaks out. In the sight of God’s Israel he cries, “Let me die the death of the righteous:” in anticipation of the glories of the Eternal Advent, “I shall behold Him, but not nigh.” He sees the vision of a Kingdom, a Church, a chosen people, a triumph of righteousness. In such anticipations, the nobler prophets broke out into strains in which their own personality was forgotten. Moses, when he thought that God would destroy His people, prays in agony—“Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book.” Paul speaks in impassioned words—“I have continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.” But Balaam’s chief feeling seems to be, “How will all this advance me? And the magnificence of the prophecy is thus marred by a chord of melancholy and diseased egotism. Not for one moment—even in those moments when uninspired men gladly forget themselves; men who have devoted themselves to a monarchy, or dreamed of a republic in

sublime self-abnegation—can Balaam forget himself in God’s cause.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) A church is not a load of bricks, remember: it is a house built together. A church is not a bundle of cuttings in the gardener’s hand: it is a vine, of which we are the branches. The true church is an organised whole; and life, true spiritual life, wherever it is paramount in the Church, without rules and rubrics, is quite sure to create order and arrangement. Order without life reminds us of the rows of graves in a cemetery, all numbered and entered in the register: order with life reminds us of the long lines of fruit trees in Italy, festooned with fruitful vines. Sunday-school teachers, bear ye the banner of the folded lamb; sick visitors, follow the ensign of the open hand; preachers, rally to the token of the uplifted brazen serpent; and all of you, according to your sacred calling, gather to the name of Jesus, armed for the war.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) One flower is very sweet. I smell its perfume. But I walk into some vast conservatories, into some gentleman’s garden, acres in extent, and there are beds of flowers, the blue, and scarlet, and yellow. I see the verbena, the calceolaria, and the geranium, and many others, all in order, and in ranks. Oh, how glorious this is! Those undulating

lawns, those well-trimmed hedges, those trees so daintily kept, all growing in such luxuriance. One flower is sweet, but a garden! a garden! who can tell how sweet this is! So, one glorified saint is one of God's flowers, but a glorious Church is Christ's garden.

—*Ibid.*

(d) Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so doth the stream of infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die, for they are short-lived, an ephemeral generation. We have seen the Church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology, ethnology, and anatomy, and then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have issued, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the Church to-day are blown to the wind to-morrow; yea, the Church has been enriched by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been

strengthened, and her bulwarks consolidated.

—*Ibid.*

(e) As temporal and earthly governments become more secular, restricting their province to the physical well-being and the external relationships of mankind, there will be felt, amongst all who live a life intellectual and spiritual, the deeper need for the existence of a society and communion more truly corresponding to the higher and proper social nature of man than is possible in monarchies or republics, guilds or clubs. There is no danger of the world learning to do without the Church, or of the Church ceasing to exert a mighty influence over the world. The human rules and customs and creeds of the Churches may be modified; but the Church itself must remain: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Sooner shall the flames of love sink into the ashes of oblivion, and the stream of human thought pause in its eternal flow, than the Church of Christ shall cease to engage the warmest affections, to attract and employ the highest intelligence, and to enlist in her service and consecrate with her blessing the noblest energies of man.—*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

(Verse 5.)

We had thought of going to the New Testament for a text, and taking one of Paul's splendid and comprehensive addresses; but we recollected how much more powerful the confessions of an adversary are than the testimony of a friend. Christianity has in every age gained more from the reluctant tributes of homage extorted from the lips of enemies than from the loftiest efforts of its friends. The admissions of infidels in favour of the happiness and security of a religious life, and the regrets of worldly and irreligious men, say more on behalf of the real value of the Gospel to perishing man than all the labours of divines and all the boasted learning of the schools.

Besides, we have another advantage in the text. The testimony of Balaam will weigh more with many men than that of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul. Paul gained great advantage with the philosophers of Athens by quoting their own authorities—"As certain also of your own poets have said." And here we address intelligent and worldly men in

the words of one of their own number—"As one of your own prophets hath said." Balaam was a man of unquestionable genius, whose convictions were in favour of religion, as yours may be; but his heart was against it. He was a lover of this present world; he was quite enchanted with the smiles and flatteries of royalty, and had an open heart and an oily palm to receive the base bribes which the world could bestow. He was quite bent upon rising in the world, determined that nothing should stop him; he had no small opinion of his own pretensions, his genius, his knowledge, his acquaintance with Divine things, of which, as a practised worldling, he knew the full marketable value; and is in fact quite eloquent in portraying his own exalted advantages,—“The man whose eyes are open hath said,” &c. Then he went as far as ever he could in opposing conscience—the voice of the Angel—the drawn sword—God. He was bent upon the thing from first to last: to curse he came; to curse he was

determined. When God forbade him to curse by his prophecies, he cursed by his counsels; and actually died in arms against the Church of God. Now, this is the man from whom you are to receive a lecture on the advantages of religion. Mark the blessedness of the righteous as it appears to the eye of worldly and irreligious men. In proof of this happiness we appeal—

I. To the reluctant testimony of the men of this world. They express—

1. *Their envy of the happiness of the righteous.* “Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel.” He came prepossessed against them; yet broke out in their favour,—“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,” &c. An acknowledgment that they have nothing to compare with the privileges of the people of God. They secretly bend to a religion of more comfortable promise.

2. *The utter futility of all opposition against the righteous.* “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.”

II. To the nature of the blessings which religion brings.

1. *The anxiety it relieves.* Doubt and uncertainty, fear and guilt; the disorder and restlessness of spirit.

2. *The blessings it reveals.* The counsels of Deity laid open; the scheme of redemption unveiled; pardon and peace; certainty of Divine favour; guidance of Divine providence, &c.

3. *The progressive advancement in holiness and devotion.* Moral triumphs over self, the world, and sin. They “shall be higher than Agag.”

4. *The exalted objects of hope it reveals.* “There shall come a Star,” &c.

III. To the actual experience of good men in every age. They have proved that religion gilds prosperity—soothes adversity—softens death, &c.

IV. To the avowed design of Divine dispensations.

This is to bless men. Acts iii. 25, 26.—*Samuel Thodey.*

BALAK'S ANGER AND BALAAM'S APOLOGY.

(Verses 10-14.)

I. The anger of Balak.

“And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together,” &c. See here—

1. *His bitter disappointment.* “Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.” All his efforts and hopes had ended in this. His distinguished embassies and tempting offers to the prophet, his numerous victims and repeated sacrifices to God, his earnest expectations of ultimately having the Israelites cursed, have issued in a triple declaration of their rich and exalted blessedness. Intense and deep was his mortification.

2. *His severe rebuke of Balaam.* “Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour,” &c. What a humiliation for a man of Balaam's genius and gifts and

“proud pretensions,” to be thus addressed! What a reversal of his cherished purposes and desires as to the issue of this enterprise! Yet, surely Balaam deserved this rebuke. He had pitifully humiliated himself long before Balak uttered his scornful and angry rebuke.

3. *His impious reflection against God.* “Lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour.” In these words “the irony with which Balak scoffs at Balaam's confidence in Jehovah is unmistakable;” and their profanity is great.

II. The apology of Balaam.

1. *His vaunted honesty.* “And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me,” &c. This statement was true in the letter, but utterly false in spirit. Balaam's whole line of conduct was calculated to encourage in Balak the belief

that he would probably succeed in cursing Israel. Balaam's boast of his honesty implies a consciousness of his weakness, if not of his failure in that quality. "Brave men do not vaunt their courage, nor honourable men their honesty, nor do the truly noble boast of high birth. All who understand the human heart perceive a secret sense of weakness in these loud boasts of immaculate purity." (a)

2. *The impotence of man when opposed to God.* "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do good or bad of mine own mind." "He hath blessed ; and I cannot reverse it." Sennacherib would have destroyed Jerusalem, but the Lord said unto him, "I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou comest." Satan himself in his hostility against the people of God cannot go beyond the permission of God, as we see from Job i. 12 ; ii. 6. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

3. *The sovereignty of God.* Balak and Balaam could not frustrate His purposes. His supremacy is real and effectual. Quaintly and truly says Trapp, "God lets out the tedder to wicked men for a time, and then calls them back with shame enough to their task ; lets them have the ball on the foot till they come almost to the goal, and then defeats them of their great hopes ; as he did this sinful couple. Balak had not his will, nor Balaam his wages ; God fooled them both, pulling the morsel out of their mouths, that they had well-nigh devoured." "The Lord reigneth."

Before Balaam takes his departure from Balak he declares unto him still further the blessedness of Israel and their relations in the future to neighbouring nations. "And now, behold, I go unto my people ; come, I will advertise thee," &c. Some expositors are of opinion that this refers to the diabolical counsel of Balaam spoken of in chap. xxxi. 16 ; and Rev. ii. 14. We

reject this opinion for three reasons :— (1) No such counsel is recorded or even further referred to here. (2) The statement of the prophet in this verse is directly opposed to this opinion. He advertises Balak what Israel would do to the Moabites, not what the Moabites should do to Israel. (3) The advertisement he is about to make to Balak points on to the distant future. The events were to take place "in the latter days," or "at the end of the days," an expression which cannot possibly apply to transactions which took place almost immediately afterward.

III. The lessons to be deduced from this part of the history.

1. *That human nature is deeply selfish.* The selfishness of Balaam has been conspicuous throughout ; and now that of Balak is clearly revealed. Formerly, when he hoped to gain his ends by means of Balaam's powers, he was lavish in his courtesies and compliments to him ; but now he sees that this hope was vain, he utters to him words of scornful and stinging rebuke. (b)

2. *That evil enterprises have painful issues.* This enterprise has brought to Balak loss, bitter disappointment, and sore annoyance ; and to Balaam disappointment equally bitter, painful humiliation, and heavy guilt. God frustrates the designs of his enemies. Even when in the beginning evil courses seem pleasant and prosperous, the end thereof will be wretched and perhaps ruinous. "There is a way that seemeth right," &c. (Prov. xiv. 12). (c)

3. *That sin is utterly impolitic.* Balaam brought upon himself the scorn of Balak, guilt of conscience, and the anger of God, for "the wages of unrighteousness," which he failed to obtain. Sin is extreme folly. The sinner is the greatest fool. (d)

4. *That worldliness is utterly incompatible with obedience to God.* Balaam tried to harmonize them, and miserably failed in the attempt. He succeeded in neither his worldly nor his religious aims. He did not obtain "the rewards of divination ;" he incurred the righteous anger of the Lord God. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We observe here perfect veracity with utter want of truth. Balaam was veracious. He will not deceive Balak. And yet there was utter truthlessness of heart. Balaam will not utter what is not true; but he will blind himself so that he may not see the truth, and so speak a lie, believing it to be the truth. He will only speak the thing he feels; but he is not careful to feel all that is true. He goes to another place, where the whole truth may not force itself upon his mind—to a hill where he shall not see the whole of Israel: from hill to hill for the chance of getting to a place where the truth may disappear. But there stands the stubborn fact—Israel is blessed; and he will look at the fact in every way, to see if he cannot get it into a position where it shall be seen no longer. Ostrich like!

Such a character is not so uncommon as, perhaps, we think. There is many a lucrative business which involves misery and wrong to those who are employed in it. The man would be too benevolent to put the gold in his purse if he knew of the misery. But he takes care not to know. There is many a dishonourable thing done at an election, and the principal takes care not to inquire. Many an oppression is exercised on a tenantry, and the landlord receives his rent, and asks no questions. Or there is some situation which depends upon the holding of certain religious opinions, and the candidate has a suspicion that if he were to examine, he could not conscientiously profess these opinions, and perchance he takes care not to examine.

There are men who would not play false, and yet would wrongly win. There are men who would not lie, and yet who would bribe a poor man to support a cause which he believes in his soul to be false. There are men who would resent at the sword's point the charge of dishonour, who would yet for selfish gratification entice the weak into sin, and damn body and soul in hell. There are men who would be shocked at being called traitors, who in time of war will yet make a fortune by selling arms to their country's foes. There are men respectable and respected, who give liberally, and support religious societies, and go to church, and would not take God's name in vain, who have made wealth, in some trade of opium or spirits, out of the wreck of innumerable human lives. Balaam is one of the accursed spirits now, but he did no more than these are doing.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

(b) Remember with yourself how gloriously Balaam was welcomed and entertained when he came, and lay it to these words now. Is not the case much altered? So ever was it, and ever will it be in this false world. Men have their drifts and ends, when they give grace and countenance to men; they shoot at a mark, which if they may hit by your means, you shall be a white son still, and all shall be well while you serve their purposes. But if

once you fail, and prefer conscience and honesty before their desire, truth before falsehood, and God before the devil; then hands be smitten together, the foot stamps, the brow frowns, the countenance and heart are changed. Great things were intended to us in favour and love, but now all is lost, we must fly to our place, and be packing. And who hath kept us from honour but God? The fault must be laid upon Him. This to many falleth out most unjustly; but here to Balaam it was due, whose heart was tainted with desire of wicked gain, and so lost both God and his gain. An example to worldly minds if God have any portion in them.—*Babington.*

Was there ever a man that was more moral and cultured than Lord Chesterfield? and was there ever a man that was more exquisitely selfish than he? Men whose tendencies incline them to the world, come to see that if they act from motives of economy, it is best for them to go through life with such and such graces and proprieties. They are persuaded that it is the most profitable way to go through life. On that ground they are moral; but that leaves out some of the essential elements of character. It is not conscience that controls them; it is not faith; it is not hope; it is not spiritual purity; it is not aspiration; it is not rectitude in any shape; it is only a refined form of selfishness. A man may be a thoroughly moral man outwardly, and a thoroughly immoral man inwardly.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(c) It is ill with thee, sinner, because thy joys all hang upon a thread. Let life's thread be cut, and where are thy merriments? Thy dainty music and thy costly cups, the mirth that flashes from thy wanton eye, and the jollity of thy thoughtless soul, where will these be when death, with bony hand, shall come and touch thy heart, and make it cease its beating? It is ill with you, because when these joys are over you have no more to come. You have one bright chapter in the story, but ah! the never-ending chapter, it is woe, woe, woe, from the beginning to the end: the woe of death, and after death the judgment, and after judgment the woe of condemnation, and then that woe that rolleth onward for ever—eternal woe, never coming to a pause, never knowing an alleviation.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles," said he, for his drunkenness made him see double; "I will blow out one;" and, as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God: so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down for ever.—*Ibid.*

BALAAM'S FOURTH PARABLE: THE STAR AND THE SCEPTRE OF ISRAEL.

(Verses 15-19.)

The introduction to this prophecy (vers. 15, 16) corresponds with that which the seer used before (vers. 3, 4), and which we have already noticed.

The predictions recorded in verses 17-19 were partially fulfilled in the reign of David (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; Psa. lx. 8). But it is historically certain that they were not fully accomplished in the reign of David or any of his successors. The Star that shall come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel, as Canon Liddon observes, "is something more than an anticipation of the reign of David: it manifestly points to the glory and power of a Higher Royalty." (a)

It appears to us quite certain that the prophecy applies to Christ and His Kingdom. It sets before us—

I. The glory of the Messiah as a King.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Attersoll thus interprets the symbol of the Star: "He is called by this name—First, because He is the fountain of all salvation and comfort; Secondly, to teach that all men by nature walk in darkness, and in the shadow of death; Thirdly, because He will give those that are His, the light of knowledge in this life, and the light of perfect glory in the life to come." We are not sure that the figure warrants all this. But our Lord spake of Himself as "The bright and morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16), and He is frequently spoken of in the Scriptures as the great Light for the moral darkness of the world (Luke i. 78, 79; ii. 32; John i. 4-9; viii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 19). (b)

But the principal idea seems to be the glory of Christ as the Sovereign of His people. He is, as M. Stuart (on Rev. xxii. 16) says, "a King all resplendent and glorious, like to the morning star (comp. 2 Sam. xxi. 17; Isa. xiv. 12; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. xii.

3). It is the splendour and beauty of the morning star which makes it here an object of comparison with the splendour of the King of Zion." His royal glory is not material, but moral. It consists in such things as these—

1. *The benevolence and sublimity of the objects for which He reigns.* He reigns to save and bless men, &c.

2. *The righteousness of His laws.* These are "holy and just and good."

3. *The wisdom of His methods.* He governs not by force or coercion, but by persuasion and inspiration.

4. *The character and privileges of His subjects.* They are upright and holy in character. They have the exalted privileges of sons of God here, and shall have eternal blessedness and glory hereafter. The glory of this King is set forth in language of splendid eloquence and power in Psa. lxxii.

II. The extent of the Messiah's conquests.

1. *He shall vanquish all His enemies.* "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of confusion; and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city." "Edom and Moab are named by Balaam, as they are also by the prophets (cf., e.g., Isa. xi. 14), not for their own sake merely, but as representatives of the heathen nations (*goyeem*, cf. xxiv. 8), who were hostile to the theocracy. As Jacob then figures as a constant type of the Kingdom of Messiah in the prophets, so too do Edom and Moab of the enemies of that Kingdom; and in the threatened ruin of Edom and Moab is indicated the eventual destruction of all that resist the Kingdom of God in its power." But how will the King destroy the rebellious foes of His Kingdom? May we not reply, by transforming them into loyal subjects. An enemy is never so completely and gloriously destroyed as when he is converted into a true friend. But if any will not be vanquished by the kindness of the

King, they will be broken by His power. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron," &c. (Psa. ii. 8-12). (c)

2. *He shall take to Himself all the possessions of His vanquished enemies.* "And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies." All treasures and possessions shall surely be ultimately surrendered to Christ the King. The possessors of wealth and of power, the sons of science and the sons of song, the gifted and the beautiful, all will lay their treasures at His feet (comp. Psa. lxxii. 10, 11, 15).

III. The prosperity of the Messiah's subjects.

"And Israel shall do valiantly." "Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire power." The Church of the living God, supported from on high, has bravely repelled the assaults of all its enemies, and has come forth from every conflict, not only victorious, but with increased courage and strength for future battles.

When Christ shall again appear, and every eye shall see Him, how shall we behold Him?—with joy as our Saviour and King?—or, how? (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Upon whom did the seer look when from the summit of Peor he beheld afar a mysterious personage, and gave as His heraldry the sceptre and the star? This can be none other than He who arose splendid in the midst of universal night—a night of ignorance; a night of guilt—as "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel;" this can be none other than He by whose coming the shadows of ceremonial institutions were dispersed, and who gave to the world the "means of grace and the hope of glory;" this can be none other than He whose setting was in blood, but that blood the purifier of a polluted earth, the purchase of such irradiations from the heaven which is above as shall finally deepen into a sky without a cloud, a day without a night; this can be none other than He who has been invested with all power in heaven and earth, who must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet, and whose dominion is to be established upon the wreck of all human sovereignty; and this is He—we know Him, though spoken of in parables, and shadowed by mystic imagery; He came out of Jacob, He rose out of Israel; for "to the Jews as concerning the flesh Christ came who is over all, God blessed for ever." And if it were Christ's day upon which Abraham rejoicingly gazed when looking from the summit of Moriah down the long perspective of many generations, it was Christ's day which was beheld by Balaam, when from Peor's top he discerned, amid the mighty darkness of futurity, a single luminary, the harbinger of morning. If it were Christ of whom the dying Jacob foretold when he spoke of the sceptre departing from Judah, that Shiloh might appear; it was of Christ that Balaam pronounced when he predicted that out of the very people whose sovereignty was then to be destroyed, should arise a sceptre before which even Moab must bow; and Balaam might or might not be aware who the Being was of whom he said,

"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." But we who live in the dawning of that day for which prophets and righteous men longed—we who see advances already made towards the glorious consummation when Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords" shall reign triumphant over every nation and tribe and tongue,—we know the Personage whose bright emblazonry was shown to the seer on the vast gloom of future time, and we fall before the "one Mediator between God and man" as the "Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel."—*Henry Melville, B.D.*

(b) Are there reasons to be given why a star should be selected when the Saviour is to be figuratively described? We reply at once—that everything which has to do with light may be fitly taken as an image of Christ. There is nothing which so fitly represents the moral condition of the world when Christ appeared on earth, as darkness. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" and since Christ came to diffuse the knowledge of truth—in other words, to scatter this darkness—His office cannot be better represented than when he is exhibited under figures derived from the nature and the agency of light. But yet you may say, why describe Him as a star—a star which shines with comparatively faint lustre, and which does little towards radiating a benighted creation? Why not rather take the sun as His emblem—the sun which "cometh forth in his strength as a bridegroom from his chamber;" before which the shadows of the night immediately flee, and which pours lavishly its glorious radiance over earth, sea, and sky? Certainly it would seem at first sight, as though the sun were a more appropriate emblem of Christ than a star; and accordingly, whilst you may often hear Christians speaking of their Saviour as the "Sun of righteousness," you will hardly ever hear

them speak of Him as the bright and morning star. They have indeed scriptural warrant in calling Him the "Sun of righteousness," seeing that the words occur in the prophecy of Malachi, and evidently are used of the Redeemer. But this is the single passage in which the emblem of the Sun is employed; whilst that of the star is not of unfrequent occurrence. And if you examine attentively the passage in Malachi, you will find cause to think that it refers specially to a yet future time: for the prophet has just been speaking of that day of the Lord which seems in scripture to denote the second advent of Christ; and it is after describing the fearful desolation which that day will bring upon the wicked, that he is commissioned to say for the comfort of the godly—"But unto you that fear My name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." The title—"Sun of righteousness," as thus given to Christ, would appear to mark with how much fuller and more glorious manifestations the Saviour will show Himself upon His return to this earth, than are vouchsafed to us under the present dispensation. He will be a sun to His Church throughout the millennial and heavenly states; but He is only as a star till those states shall come. The night is yet upon us and around us, though that night may be far spent, and the day may be at hand. "We see only through a glass darkly," as we can "know but in part." Still it is no longer the starless night which it was ere the Redeemer brought life and immortality to light by His gospel. A Star—a morning Star has crossed the horizon, and a tempest-tossed world, in danger of everlasting shipwreck, may steer itself by the light of that Star to the haven where it would be, and where there is to be no more night, though no more sun. And thus, if an emblem is to be found which shall at one and the same time portray the Saviour as the source of moral illumination to the world, and yet show that this illumination is that of the dawn, rather than that of the noon-tide, such an emblem must be a star—a morning star, rather than that of the great luminary of the heavens. Christianity, as set up in the world, is but in its twilight; the night is still unbroken over a vast portion of our globe; and even where revelation has been received and rejoiced in, we must rather speak of streaks like those on the eastern sky, whose gold and purple prophecy of morning, rather than those rich full lustres which flood creation when the sun has reached the zenith. On every account, therefore—on account of what He is to the world, and on account of what (as yet, at least) He is not—is our Redeemer aptly figured by the emblem which He applied to Himself—the emblem of our text—the emblem of the bright and morning star.—*Ibid.*

(c) The sign of the Son of Man is yet to be seen in the heavens, where it was beheld by Balaam, from the summit of Peor. I know not what that sign shall be; perhaps again the star—fearful meteor!—like that which

hung over the fated Jerusalem, boding its destruction; perhaps again the sceptre—brilliant constellation!—burning with majesty and betokening the extinction of all meaner royalty; perhaps the Cross as it appeared to the Roman's eye, when he was taught to know the God of battles, and to place Christianity upon the throne of the Cæsars. But whatever the sign, the Being whose emblazonry it exhibits, shall come to deal out a long delayed vengeance on tribes that have refused to walk in His light and submit to His rule. "Associate yourselves, O ye people," saith Isaiah, "and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces." Yes! Edom, and Moab, and Seir, and Sheth, literally the foes of Israel in earlier days, and figuratively those enemies of the Church who shall league for its overthrow at the time of the end—against you shall that Mighty One arise, whose type in the person of David trampled down the nations who first bore your names. And, therefore, do we feel that the future was indeed giving up its secrets to Balaam, as he stood upon Peor, with Israel encamped in the valley beneath. We place ourselves at his side. What seeth he? Dim and mystic things are coming up to his view; a lonely yet a splendid star is rising out of Jacob, and from Israel is proceeding a sceptre, but it looks not like that which a mortal king wields. What mean these hieroglyphics? Whose is this strange yet beautiful heraldry? The answer is easy. Yonder star is the image of Christ, the enlightener of the world; and yonder sceptre is His, for the whole world shall do Him homage. Yes, you say, but ere Christ can shine upon the nations and reign gloriously over them, there is to be battle, and tumult, and earthquake, and destruction. Prophecy is express on this, that there will be a great banding of the powers of earth against "the Lord and His Christ," and these powers must be beaten down ere the reign of righteousness can begin. Beholdest thou, O Seer, aught in the distance which seems to tell thee of foes met and overthrown by Him who hath for His sign the sceptre and the star? We pause for our answer, that we may be certified that it is indeed the Christ on whom the seer looks; and we feel that the prediction is complete when the prophet exclaims, "He shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies."—*Ibid.*

(d) It has been said by some commentators, that the words of our text have reference to his own final doom, as though Balaam was made aware that he should be banished from the presence of the Being whose coming he was commissioned to predict—"I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." He shall be compelled to look on the Mediator; every eye shall see Him; but in place of being allowed to approach Him, he shall be amongst those who will be bidden to

depart. Oh! behold Him now by faith as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." Then, when He shall come in power and great majesty, you shall behold Him, not at a distance, as a stranger, but nigh to you as a deliverer, an advocate, a friend. The

"Star" shall light up "the valley of the shadow of death;" the "Sceptre" shall be extended to you in token of favour and acceptance; though as with a rod of iron He breaks in pieces the hosts of the wicked.—*Ibid.*

CHRIST THE STAR SPOKEN OF BY BALAAM.

(Verses 15-17.)

It has pleased God on various occasions to make known His will to persons of a very unworthy character; and to show that His ways and thoughts are not regulated by the vain maxims of human wisdom. He proclaimed to Ahaz the conception of our Emmanuel in the womb of a virgin. To Nebuchadnezzar He revealed the successive destruction of the four great monarchies, and the erection of the Messiah's kingdom on the ruin of them all. Thus, in the passage before us, we are informed that He declared to Balaam not only His purposes respecting Israel and the nations that surrounded them, but the advent of that glorious Person, who, as a star should enlighten, and as a prince should govern, the whole world.

I. The introduction to the prophecy.

1. *It seems very strongly to characterize the person who delivered it.* When prophecies have been delivered by pious men, they have either been introduced with a plain declaration, "Thus saith the Lord;" or the prefatory observations have been calculated to exalt and glorify God. But Balaam's prediction is ushered in with a pompous exhibition of his own attainments, intended, as it should seem, to wrest from Balak that respect and honour which he had failed to procure by his preceding prophecies.

2. *It shows us how much knowledge we may possess, while yet we are utterly destitute of converting grace.* The most highly favoured of God's servants, from the beginning of the world, had not delivered a clearer prophecy of Christ than that which was uttered by Balaam on this occasion. Yet where shall we

find a baser character than Balaam's? Having considerable knowledge of the true God, he still continues to use enchantments as a *magician*. He was so *covetous* that he preferred "the wages of unrighteousness" to every consideration, either of duty to God or of love to man (2 Pet. ii. 15, 16). His *hypocrisy* was conspicuous from first to last; for in the midst of all his high professions of regard to the will and word of God, he laboured to the utmost to counteract the designs of God and to reverse His decrees. More *murderous* purposes never were entertained in the heart of man; for it was his most earnest desire to curse all the people of God, and to consign them over to destruction by the sword of their enemies. His last act especially was truly *diabolical*: when he found he could not prevail to destroy their bodies, he taught their enemies how to tempt them and to destroy their souls (Rev. ii. 14). After comparing his character with his professions and attainments in divine knowledge, what shall we say? Let us never value ourselves on any discoveries of divine truth, unless we have suitable affections and a correspondent practice (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3; Matt. vii. 22, 23).

II. The prophecy itself.

1. *In its primary sense it must be understood in reference to David.* The immediate intention of Balaam was to inform Balak what the Israelites should "do to his people in the latter days." Accordingly he declares that one, like a star for brightness, should arise from among the Jews at a distant period, to sway the Jewish sceptre, and to destroy

the Kingdoms of Edom and Moab. This was fulfilled in David (2 Sam. viii. 2, 14; Psa. lx. 8; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16).

2. *But there can be no doubt of its ultimately referring to Christ Himself.* He is called in Scripture "the Day-star," "the bright and morning star;" nor did ever any one arise with splendour comparable to His. He too sat upon the throne of His father David, and exercised unlimited dominion. The children of Edom and Moab may be justly considered as representing the enemies of His Church and People. These He subdues and will finally destroy. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet," HIM then did Balaam see, as Abraham also had seen four hundred years before; but not, alas! with Abraham's joyful hope.

Improvement.

1. *Should not we then rejoice who have*

seen this prophecy accomplished? The star is risen, &c. We have only to yield ourselves up to Jesus, and we shall enjoy all the peace and glory of His Kingdom. Let us improve our privileges: let us pray that this "Day-star may arise in our hearts:" and let this Monarch so captivate our souls, as to lead us to a willing and unreserved obedience.

2. *Should we not be thankful too that we have One engaged to vanquish all our enemies? This is the work and office of the Lord Jesus; nor will He ever fail in the execution of it. The Promised Land is before us, and in vain shall our enemies conspire against us. "Be strong and very courageous." Let the weakest rejoice in a confident expectation of victory; for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."—C. Simeon, M.A.*

BALAAH'S FINAL PARABLES: NATIONAL REVOLUTIONS.

(Verses 20-24.)

These prophetic parables teach—

I. That national revolutions exhibit the instability of earthly greatness and temporal power.

See this in the destruction of the Amalekites, which was commenced under Saul and completed under Hezekiah (1 Sam. xv. ; xxvii. 8; xxx. 1-19; 1 Chron. iv. 43). The Kenites, too, though for a long time secure, were at length oppressed and carried into captivity by the Assyrians. Assyria and Eber also, descendants of Shem, were conquered by powers from the (to Balaam) unknown western regions. And finally these western powers "shall perish for ever." The greatest and mightiest empires of ancient days have passed away. All earthly things are transient. (a)

II. That national revolutions manifest the principles of Divine retribution.

In the revolutions predicted by Balaam we have clear and striking illus-

trations of the great truth that the *Divine retribution corresponds to human character and conduct.* The Amalekites were a warlike people; and by battles they were destroyed. "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Again, we see that empires obtained by conquest shall be lost by conquest. By force the Assyrian empire had chiefly been formed, and by force it passed away. We have another illustration of this retributive law in the history of the Kenites. They had been kind to Israel (Exod. xviii.); Moses had promised them that they should share in the goodness of God to Israel (chap. x. 32); Balaam here predicts for them long continued safety; and, as a matter of fact, they shared the fortunes of the Israelites until the captivity of the ten tribes. As v. Hofmann observes: "Kain, which had left its inaccessible mountain home in Horeb, enclosed as it was by the desert, to join a people who were only wandering in search of a home,

by that very act really placed its nest upon a still safer rock." They had aided Israel, and, in turn, they were aided by Israel. In the revolutions of history the kindnesses which have been shown to the cause and people of God are remembered and recompensed by Him. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Thus these historical revolutions teach us that, "With what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again"; and, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," &c. (b)

III. That national revolutions are ordered by God.

"God doeth this" (ver. 23). "Whoever are the instruments, He is the supreme director." "The Lord bringeth

low, and lifteth up," &c. (1 Sam. ii. 7, 8). "That bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). "Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown," &c. (Ezek. xxi. 26, 27). (c)

Learn—

1. *The great duty and interest of nations to seek for and to embody truth and righteousness in their governments, institutions, &c.* Prov. xiv. 34; xxv. 5; xxix. 14; Isa. lx. 12.

2. *The duty and interest of all men to set their "affections on things above, not on things on the earth."* The latter are mutable and transient, the former are immutable and permanent. Truth, holiness, love, are abiding things; seek after these. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Earthly inheritances are but of brief continuance. The possession of them is limited and uncertain. To every one, they are but at most for term of life. As one of the kings of Spain answered to one of his courtiers, who, thinking to please his master, wished that kings were immortal: "If that had been," said he, "I should never have reigned."—*Leighton.*

All earthly things last and endure but for a season; men are mortal, riches are uncertain, favour is vanity, honour is changeable, treasures are transitory, pleasures are unstable, profits are corruptible, friends are fading, and oftentimes turn to be enemies: only the treasures of heaven, the favour of God, the pleasures of eternal glory, the riches of the world to come, are immortal, and never decay.—*Attersoll.*

(b) God's rewards and God's punishments are all natural. Distinguish between arbitrary and natural. Death is an arbitrary punishment for forgery: it might be changed for transportation. It is not naturally connected. It depends upon the will of the law-maker. But trembling nerves are the direct and natural results of intemperance. They are in the order of nature the results of wrong-doing. The man reaps *what* he has sown. Similarly in rewards. If God gave riches in return for humbleness, that would be an arbitrary connection. He did give such a reward to Solomon. But when He gives Life Eternal, meaning by Life Eternal not duration of existence, but heavenly quality of existence, it is all natural. The seed sown in the ground contains in itself the future harvest. The harvest is but the development

of the germ of life in the seed. A holy act strengthens the inward holiness. It is a seed of life growing into more life. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap." He that sows much, thereby becomes more conformed to God than he was before—in heart and spirit. That is his reward and harvest. And just as among the apostles, there was one whose spirit, attuned to love, made him emphatically the disciple whom Jesus loved, so shall there be some who, by previous discipline of the Holy Ghost, shall have more of His mind, and understand more of His love, and drink deeper of His joy than others. They that have sowed bountifully.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 89.

(c) God increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. We see only the intermediate agents, we are prone to forget that God is the Creator and Controller as well of the moral as of physical volcanoes, and, consequently, are led to imagine, in the day of panic, that sovereignty is engulfed in confusion, and that the garments of battle are the shroud of government. It is thus that the devoutest of us may not unfrequently alarm ourselves into temporary Atheism, and hasten for refuge to the mud-fortresses of mechanical power, when we should fly straight to the pavilion of God. "The Lord reigneth," &c His throne is established of old; He is from everlasting. Kings are His servants, princes are His menials, the universe in His footstool, and heaven itself but a flash of His benignant eye.

We shall have but a shallow knowledge of history if we study it merely in the faint light reflected by victorious thrones, or by the troubled glare of oft-recurring battles. God is the central fact in all history. Growing nations are but his expanding smile, dwindling empires are but His darkening frown. Nebuchadnezzar was only the menial servant of the Most High when he built the "great Babylon" which he idolized, and all the conquerors of proud Chaldea, from Cyrus to Tamerlane, were the hirelings of the Infinite King. The Ptolemies and the Pharaohs of Egypt held their lease of power from the Most High; and the pompous march of the Cæsars was but as the dance of the ephemera over the summer stream. "He bringeth the princes to nothing," &c. (Isa. xl. 23, 24). Can it be right, or wise, to ignore *His* existence when we open the archives of history? Can he have a true conception of the magnitude and grandeur of the landscape who has examined it only by the feeble glimmer of a wasting

rushlight? Foolish man! Even an atom would not reveal its beauties in such a mocking light; how much less, then, the mountain, wood, and stream of nature's palaces. No, no! The sun must reveal it. And so with history: let the Sun of heaven blaze upon it, and every pinnacle becomes a glorified purpose—every want kindles into sublime significance.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(d) Oh, that I could pour in upon the young the majesty and sanctity of living for the invisible; that is to say, for honour, and truth, and fidelity! Oh, that I could make you feel how essentially brittle, how friable, how perishable, are all material sources of strength! God is the centre of life, and spiritual realities are the only things that will endure. Stone and iron, and silver and gold, and timber, and cities, and nations, and outward things, are but pictures, painted soon to fade away; while truth and love, and fidelity, and purity, shall last for ever and for ever.—*H. W. Beecher.*

DEATH, THE CROWN OF LIFE.

(Verse 23.)

"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

Our text may be considered either as a plaint, a sigh, or a song—a dirge winding to a march. There are, in reality, three questions interlinked in this passage. It is a question of studious curiosity. What kind of a race will then inhabit the earth! Men are naturally inquisitive to know who are to be their successors. Why not? They are to be the heirs in turn of our heritage; the tenants who are to move in as we move out; to enjoy our repairs, and to do, in turn, their own repairing, for those who shall follow them.

Who are they? The question deepens into a sigh. Here we go! just as we begin to take in the meaning of things about us; scarce sooner found than lost. Death! what is it? It must be a mystery full of meaning. It seems as natural as to be born. Has Heaven hid the happiness of death, that man may dare to live? And what is life? It is not so much one grand event as a conjunction of grand events. All are more or less alive to the activities that surround them. All are more or less

sensitive to the links that unite us to coming time.

The future is full of suggestion. The poet loves to forecast it for its own sake, and fill the atmosphere with sunshine, or with shade, as suits his fancy best. The poet is an artist too. He paints for us the landscape of the future, and interprets to our strange surprise the distant scenes embodied there. The philosopher listens eagerly for hints that shall confirm his airy schemes and idle speculations. The statesman is zealously intent on discovering the wedge that shall cleave the knots of craggy policies. The saint is anxious to learn of God and Heaven, and solve the awful mystery of our being.

But what of that which is to transpire long after all these are past? What will go on here when I am gone? Some one will tread the path that I am treading! Some one will saunter in the grove where I now linger! . . . Some one will cry out with unutterable longing, as we now cry, "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?"

We are baffled at the grave. We put our eyes close to the bars, but we

cannot see. Death is the crown of life; and yet it is not the triumph of man over time, but of time over man. . . . Do lasting slumbers hold us? Is there no more of us when we are gone? Oh! the melancholy ring of those words—"When I am gone!" I admit it is a solemn thing to die. It is a dread passage; and what may happen after it? There is an eternity to this side the grave; the world shall be moving on when I am gone—and shall I then be put out for ever? The emphasis is on this wise—this world *as it is to be*. Where are those who, in the times past, have been dreaming of rapid propulsion as they plodded slowly on? Where are those whose genius had almost wrested from nature the longed-for secret, but died without the sight? Know they now of swift-going ships and dashing railway trains that traverse mountain and valley like things of life? Where are those who dreamed of messages borne on the wings of the wind? Do they read the swift-flying signals from telegraph wires, leaving the winds lagging languidly behind? Verily, what hath God wrought! Yet these are but the meagre preliminaries to what *shall be*. When the reduplicated forces of the earth shall be put under command; when man shall sit in plumed victory over the opposing energies of nature; when the sword shall be beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook; when health shall mantle the cheek, and happiness shall festoon the fireside; when man shall keep faith with his fellow-man, and worship and adore his Maker. "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" Shall I live then? The thought gladdens, but it maddens as well. The scepticism that would console me with the thought that death is but a momentary pang; that I shall sleep in death's dateless night; that all these struggles shall have come to their rest; ah! this scepticism is but a miserable comforter after all. I cry out and complain with all the sadness of my rational nature. I am full of longing to know when this world shall have

been finished; then, where shall I be?

When geology shall cease to tamper with the rock; when disease shall be no longer necessary; when Death shall lie on his death-bed; "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" The Great Omnipotent does not weary. Every age becomes impatient; but His doings, as well as His revelation, assure us that with Him "a thousand years are as one day." . . . When we have fought our brave round, the Great Captain will order us to the rear and bring up fresh recruits. But what of the battle? Shall we know nothing of its sequel? "Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" It is a question of sublime importance to us.

It is voiced in another shape—"If a man die, shall he live again?" God has provided a way by which His people may be released, and yet view this earth in all its perfect beauty and glory. The resurrection solves this mighty problem. All who labour shall see the reward of their labour. Every husbandman whose time is due to toil shall be gladdened by the sight of the harvest. The sower shall be partaker of the fruit. "I heard a voice from heaven," &c. (Rev. xiv. 13). God works in the shadow of time. Even while we sleep he toils on; His agencies are ever on the alert.

Presently time shall have halted from its confused scramble, and God's finished workmanship shall have been taken from the loom, and the tapestry shall be revealed in all its beauty and perfectibility—the pattern will be complete. *Then* shall we learn that when we die we do not die out; that death is not death; that to die is not to die, but to blossom into life. We say good night to earth, but not good-bye. And all this we shall know when sin has perished; when death is dead; when tears are dried; when earth is immortal—we may then be alive, and never die again. Blessed reality close at hand! Shall we, *every one*, live when God doeth this?—*H. S. Carpenter, D.D.* (Abridged from *The Christian World Pulpit*.)

THE PARTING OF BALAAM AND BALAK.

(Verse 25.)

Instead of "Balaam returned to his place," it is better to translate, "turned towards his place." "That he really returned home is not implied in the words themselves; and the question, whether he did so, must be determined from other circumstances. In the further course of the history, we learn that Balaam went to the Midianites, and advised them to seduce the Israelites to unfaithfulness to Jehovah, by tempting them to join in the worship of Peor (chap. xxxi. 16). He was still with them at the time when the Israelites engaged in the war of vengeance against that people, and was slain by the Israelites along with the five princes of Midian (chap. xxxi. 8; Josh. xiii. 22). At the time when he fell into the hands of the Israelites, he no doubt made a full communication to the Israelitish general, or to Phinehas, who accompanied the army as priest, concerning his blessings and prophecies, probably in the hope of saving his life, though he failed to accomplish his end." Such is the opinion of Keil and Del. Hengstenberg, however, suggests "that after Balaam's departure from Balak, he took his way into the camp of the Israelites, and there made known his prophecies to Moses, or to the elders of Israel, in the hope of obtaining from them the reward which Balak had withheld, and that it was not till after his failure to obtain full satisfaction to his ambition and covetousness here that he went to the Midianites, to avenge himself upon the Israelites, by the proposals that he made to them."

I. Balaam and Balak parted, having utterly failed in their designs.

Balak had not obtained what he desired. His repeated sacrifices to Jehovah, his tempting offers of large rewards and splendid honours to Balaam, and all his other efforts, had proved fruitless and vain: Israel was not cursed but repeatedly and richly

blessed. Balaam, too, had not obtained what he so eagerly longed for. He had found himself utterly unable to curse the chosen people, and had not gained "the rewards of divination." The coveted wealth and honours, for which he had risked and dared so much, he had not secured. The prophet and the king were both bitterly disappointed and vexed; and during all their plottings and endeavours to curse them, the Israelites were peacefully and securely encamped in the neighbouring plains.

Learn: *the devices and deeds of the wicked against the cause and people of God are ever foiled by Him.* He that keepeth Israel can neither be surprised, nor circumvented, nor overpowered (Psa. cxxxi.). (a)

II. They parted with characters considerably modified by their association with each other.

The solicitations and temptations of Balak had influenced the character of Balaam; and the character and conduct of Balaam had exercised no slight influence upon Balak. What was the result of these influences? We know that the character of Balaam had sadly deteriorated since the first embassy from Balak had visited him; he had also incurred the wrath of God by reason of his sins; and he went forward to deeper and more diabolical wickedness, and to a doom of appalling darkness. And it is impossible to conclude that Balak was not injured by the influence of Balaam. His heinous designs had been encouraged, his hopes allowed and then blighted, and his temper irritated and embittered by the seer. They had mutually influenced each other for evil; they parted worse men than they were when first they met.

Learn: *that in our associations with our fellowmen we are ever exerting a most important influence upon their character and destiny.* We meet and part; but in our intercourse we have contributed

something to the development of each other's character either for good or for evil. We shall never be the same beings as we should have been if we had never met. (b)

III. They parted, but not for ever.

Balaam and Balak will meet again. They will both see Him of whom Balaam prophesied, "They shall see Him, but not now: they shall behold Him, but not nigh." "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." Then, if not before, these two who

parted upon Peor will meet again; and then each of them will receive the just retribution of his character and conduct.

Learn.—That *those who have been associated in this present life will meet again in the great hereafter.* Tempter and tempted, oppressor and oppressed, companions in evil designs and deeds, and companions in noble aims and enterprises, all will meet again.

Let the thought of that future meeting have its due weight in regulating our present associations. (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Sooner would God forget some planets that He had hurled into the firmament than forget the feeblest of His saints. "Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of My hands, thy walls are continually before Me." "The very hairs of your head are numbered." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people." God has pledged His power on our behalf. He has sworn by His existence that we are dear to Him through the infinite merits of His Son. Who shall tell the limits of our security? If God keeps all worlds in motion—if the eyes of the universe are directed to Him for help—if all things are under His benignant control, we may content ourselves in the plenitude of our safety. Say not, brother, that thy solitude is hidden from God, or that in the time of affliction He will forget thee; perish the thought! The mother may forget her sucking child; but God will hold thee in everlasting remembrance; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in His people" (Psa. cxlix. 4). God looks at the individual, not at the aggregate. The Christian cannot be lost in the world's crowd. The Koh-i-noor may be taken for a piece of valueless glass, but the Christian gem cannot be mistaken of God. They who love God shall be accounted jewels in "that day." Each is a part of the whole, and unity must be perfected in heaven.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) No human being can come into this world without increasing or diminishing the sum total of human happiness, not only of the present, but of every subsequent age of humanity. No one can detach himself from this connection. There is no sequestered spot in the universe, no dark niche along the disk of non-existence, to which he can retreat from his relations to others, where he can withdraw the influence of his existence upon the moral destiny of the world. Everywhere his presence or absence will be felt. Everywhere he will have companions, who will be better or worse for his influence.

It is an old saying, and one of fearful and fathomless import, that we are here forming

characters for eternity. Forming characters!—whose? our own? or others? Both; and in that momentous fact lie the peril and responsibility of our existence. Who is sufficient for the thought! thousands of my fellow-beings will yearly, and till years shall end, enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had I never lived. The sunlight of that world will reveal my finger-marks in their *primary formations*, and in all their successive strata of thought and life. And they too will form other characters for eternity, until the influence of my existence shall be diffused through all the future generations of this world, and through all that shall be future to a certain point in the world to come. As the little silvery, circular ripple, set in motion by the falling pebble, expands from its inch of radius to the whole compass of the pool; so there is not a child, not an infant Moses placed, however softly, in his bulrush ark upon the sea of time, whose existence does not stir a ripple, gyrating outwards and on, until it shall have moved across and spanned the whole ocean of God's eternity, stirring even the river of life, and the fountains at which His tall angels drink.—*Elihu Burritt.*

(c) It is said that among the high Alps at certain seasons the traveller is told to proceed very quietly, for on the steep slopes overhead the snow hangs so evenly balanced that the sound of a voice or the report of a gun may destroy the equilibrium, and bring down an immense avalanche, that will overwhelm everything in ruin in its downward course. And so about our way there may be a soul in the very crisis of its moral history, trembling between life and death, and a mere touch or shadow may determine its destiny. A young lady who was deeply impressed with the truth, and was ready, under a conviction of sin, to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" had all her solemn impressions dissipated by the unseemly jesting and laughter of a member of the Church by her side as she passed out of the sanctuary. Her irreverent and

worldly spirit cast a shadow on that young lady "not far from the kingdom of God." How important that we should always and everywhere walk worthy of our high calling as Christians! Let us remember that we are always casting the shadow of our real life upon some one; that somebody is following us as John followed Peter into the sepulchre.

Happy if, when all the influences of life flow back and meet at the judgment, we can lift up clean hands and spotless robes, and say, "I am free from the blood of all men!" Happy then, to hear even one soul saying to us out of the great multitude, that, following the shadow of our Christian life and devotion, he found Jesus and heaven.—*Dr. Storr.*

CHAPTER XXV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *Shittim.* An abbreviation of Abel-Shittim, "the meadow of the acacias." It was situated in the plains of Moab, at the northern extremity of the camp of Israel.

Verse 2. *And they called, &c.* ; "i.e., 'the daughters of Moab called': the verb, and the ensuing 'their,' being in Hebrew, feminine."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. *Baal-Peor* is the Baal of Peor, who was worshipped in the city of Beth-Peor (Deut. iii. 29; iv. 46; chap. xxiii. 28), a Moabitish *Priapus*, in honour of whom women and virgins prostituted themselves. As the god of war, he was called *Chemosh* (chap. xxi. 29). *Keil and Del.*

Verse 4. *Take all the heads, &c., i.e.,* Assemble them together.

Hang them. The "them" does not refer to "the heads of the people," but to the guilty persons: these were to be first put to death (verse 5), and then, as an aggravation of their punishment, and as a warning to others, they were to be publicly hung up, which was done by impaling the body upon a stake or fastening it upon a cross.

The fierce anger of the Lord was manifested in the plague with which he visited the camp of Israel (verse 9).

Verse 6. *One of the children of Israel, &c.* This was Zimri (verse 14).

A Midianitish woman,—"Cozbi, the daughter of Zur" (verse 15, and chap. xxxi. 8).

Weeping, &c. On account of the

wrath of God which had smitten the camp with the plague.

Verse 8. *The tent,* תֵּכָה, not the ordinary tent. The word is only found here in the Hebrew Scriptures; it signifies arched or dome-shaped. From the Hebrew word, through the Arabic, the Spaniards derive their *alcova*, and we our *alcove*. Here the word denotes, the inner division of the tent, which was used as the sleeping room and apartment for the women in the larger tents of the upper classes.

Verse 9. *Twenty and four thousand.* In 1 Cor. x. 8, St. Paul gives the number as "three and twenty thousand." In this he probably follows a tradition of the scribes, according to which, of the twenty-four thousand mentioned here, one thousand were put to death by the judges, leaving twenty-three thousand as the number of those who fell victims to the plague.

Verse 11. *Zealous for My sake.* Rather, as in the margin, "Zealous with My zeal."

Verse 13. *Made an atonement.* The vengeance inflicted by Phinehas upon two of the most flagrant offenders was accepted by God as a propitiation (lit., a covering) for the sin of the people.

Verse 17. *Vex the Midianites.* The Midianitish women seem to have been most active in tempting the Israelites. Moreover their wickedness "culminated in the shameless wantonness of Cozbi, the Midianitish princess."

THE SIN OF ISRAEL AT SHITTIM, AND THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

(Verses 1-5, 9.)

Consider—

I. The sin of the Israelites at Shittim.

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people," &c. (vers. 1-3).

1. *The sin itself.* Many of the people accepted the invitation of the daughters of Moab and Midian to a sacrificial festival, and then engaged in the worship of Baal-peor, which was associated with, and partly consisted in, the most licentious rites. Their sin was two-fold: (1) Spiritual fornication, or idolatry (Hos. ii.). (2) Physical fornication.

2. *The origin of their sin.* The counsel of Balaam was the accursed root from whence it sprang (chap. xxxi. 16; Rev. ii. 14). Having found himself utterly powerless to curse them as a prophet or a magician, with hellish cunning he advised that others should seduce them to curse themselves by their sins (a)

3. *The instruments of their sin.* The daughters of Moab (ver. 2), and the daughters of Midian (vers. 17, 18), were employed to tempt the Israelites. The Moabites and Midianites could not have vanquished the Israelites by the sword, but they speedily overcame them by the fascinations of their daughters.

4. *The occasion of their sin.* Two circumstances seem to us to have contributed to the success of the temptation. (1) Their abode at Shittim. They were in the neighbourhood of sinful associations and corrupting influences. "Near a fire, a serpent, and a wicked woman, no man can long be in safety." (b) (2) Their lack of occupation. The Israelites were comparatively unemployed. Idleness leads to vice and mischief. (c)

II. The judgment of God upon the Israelites on account of their sin.

1. *The judgment inflicted immediately by God.* "Those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand." "They joined themselves unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with

their inventions, and the plague brake in upon them" (Psa. cvi. 28, 29). As a punishment for their sin, the Lord sent among them this terrible pestilence. In some form or other, punishment ever follows close upon the heels of sin.

2. *The judgment inflicted by Moses and the judges, by the command of God.* "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people," &c. (vers. 4, 5). Concerning this punishment notice—(1) Its nature—death. "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-Peor." (2) Its publicity. "Hang them up before the Lord against the sun." After death their bodies were to be made a public spectacle—a warning to others by indicating the evil of the sin and the severity of the wrath of God against the sinners. (3) Its executioners. These are called "the heads of the people" (ver. 4), and "the judges of Israel" (ver. 5, and Exod. xviii. 25, 26). It was their duty to maintain law and order, and to punish wicked doers, each one in his own jurisdiction (comp. Rom. xiii. 1-4).

III. The lessons which we should learn from this portion of Israel's history.

1. *The secret of the security of the people of God.* While Israel was faithful to Jehovah their God, they were perfectly safe. Neither the subtlety nor the strength of their enemies, neither earth nor hell, could hurt them, while they were true to their covenant with Him. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good." Their sins deprived them of the Divine protection, and brought down upon them the Divine anger. "None can prevail against the servants of God, except by tempting them to sin." "By our own sins we are overcome." Faith in God is the great condition of our strength and safety. Cleaving to Him by faith, we are inviolably secure.

2. *The danger of those temptations which appeal to our self-indulgence or love of pleasure.* In most cases ease and pleasure are more perilous to the spiritual life than toil and pain. The pleasures of sense are very prone to grow into the pleasures of sin. Many have been "allured through the lusts of the flesh" into the most grievous sins. (d)

3. *The terribleness of the Divine anger.* Calm, righteous, constant, and intense is the wrath of God against sin. Let no one deceive himself or dishonour God by imagining that, like some weak-natured man, He is too kind and indulgent to His creatures to be angry

with them. With implacable hatred He hates sin. "The wrath of the Lamb" is unspeakably, inconceivably, terrible. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with his stroke," &c. (e)

4. *The solicitude with which we should guard against arousing this anger towards us.* Sin calls it forth, therefore shun sin.

5. *The earnestness with which we should seek the mercy and the protection of God.* We need His mercy for the forgiveness of sins in the past, and His protection to keep us from sin in the future. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Among the people who knew and discussed the events which befell the Israelites since their migration from Egypt, it must have been notorious that there had been signal punishments inflicted upon them for breaches of fealty to their King. Pondering this in his mind, the infernal sagacity of Bal-*am* led him to conclude, that if they could but be seduced from their allegiance to their Divine King, the protection which rendered them invincible would be withdrawn, and they would be easily subdued by their enemies. This discovery he made known to the King of Moab before his departure, and it illustrates the character of the man, that he could form this device, and counsel the King to act upon it, just after his mouth had poured forth, even by constraint, eloquent blessings upon the people whose ruin he now devises. And all this was purely gratuitous; for his business with Moab was ended. He could not curse Israel; and he had incurred the anger, rather than secured the honours, of the King of Moab. He seems to have retired among the neighbouring people of Midian, close allies with Moab, until he should behold the results of the course which he had thus suggested, and in which he seems to have induced the Midianites to co-operate. However dissatisfied with the result of their sending for him, the Moabites were still too deeply impressed with the notion of his superhuman sagacity not to pay the most heedful attention to his advice. This was in effect that the women should be rendered instrumental in seducing the Israelites to take part in the obscene rites of Baal-Peor. —*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) As the Hebrews lay encamped in the plains of Moab, unsuspecting of the bad feeling of the Moabites and Midianites towards them, an intercourse gradually, and seemingly in due course, sprang up between the kindred

nations. The daughters of Moab and Midian came to visit the women of Israel, and thus fell under the notice of the men. The men of Israel, also, new to a peopled country, and strange to a friendly intercourse with strangers, amused themselves and gratified their curiosity by visiting the towns and villages in the vicinity. This intercourse was perilous for them. Dazzled and bewildered by magnificent and seductive appliances of vice, to which in their simple wandering life they had been all unused, although their fathers had seen the like things in Egypt, they were prevailed upon by the idolators of Moab and Midian to take part in the riotous and lustful orgies of their gods. It does not appear to us that they meant to abjure their faith in Jehovah, or so much as adopted a belief in Baal-Peor along with it. What they did was to participate in the licentious acts by which his votaries professed to honour him. —*Ibid.*

Albeit we cannot at all times forsake the familiarity of the unfaithful, yet we must ever abandon and abjure their unfaithfulness and ungodliness: we cannot ever refuse their company, but we must evermore renounce their impiety. Let us take heed that we embrace none of their sins. He that standeth farthest from a raging flame, is freest and farthest off from burning; he that walketh a great distance from the bank of the river, is safest from drowning. He that cometh not near places of infection, is surest to escape the danger. And as we are to beware of all their sins, so especially it behoveth us to be suspicious and fearful of those sins, unto which we know ourselves most prone and inclined. For they do most of all delight us, and those are they which will soonest overturn us, and bring upon us destruction of soul and body. —*W. Attersoll.*

(c) And was idleness think you nothing?

Yes, yes, assure yourself, it is ever a chief agent in this business. Had our first mother been busy, she had not tattled with the serpent; and had they not been idle in Sodom, they had never fallen to that abomination; for idleness is mentioned as a means by the prophet (Ezek. xvi. 49). Take idleness away, and Cupid's bow casts the string: he will never do harm with all his arrows. Dost thou ask the question, how Ægistus became an adulterer? He was idle. David was idle on the top of the palace; and what followed? These Israelites are idle, and idle they tattle, and tattling they are invited to their sacrifice, invited, they go, and both spiritually and corporally they commit whoredom. A fearful fall in men so taught. But this is man's weakness and woman's strength.—*Babington*.

(d) Pleasures are of two sorts: some are simply unlawful, and not to be used at all, being directly contrary to the Word of God: such are the pleasures that carnal men take in eating till they surfeit, and in drinking till they are drunken; such are the pleasures that whoremongers take in adultery, fornication, and uncleanness. Others are of themselves indifferent, and in their own nature neither good nor evil, but according as they are used, as hunting, hawking, and other lawful recreations; and even these when they take up all our thoughts, and thrust better things out of

the doors, are called thorns in the parable of the sower, as well as unlawful pleasures (Luke viii. 14). There is nothing doth so much choke the Word of God as the pleasures of the flesh; nothing causeth us so soon to forget it; nothing maketh us so soon weary and loath to hear it, as the desire to follow and pursue after our delights; so that it standeth us upon to cut them up, and pull them out of the ground of our hearts. . . . We see many by experience, who in the days of tribulation have not given over their hold, but endured slanders, revilings, imprisonment, hunger, and thirst in a necessitous estate; yet have been overcome with peace, drowned with sensuality, and lulled asleep in carnal security. . . . Whilst David wandered in the wilderness, was hunted out of holes by Saul, into which he was glad to escape to hide himself, and was trained up in the school of afflictions, he comforted himself in the Lord his God, he made Him his rock and refuge, he asked counsel of Him and followed His direction; but when he had rest from enemies, safety from dangers, deliverance from troubles, comfort from sorrows, and freedom from afflictions, he fell into horrible sins, both in the matter of Uriah, and in numbering of the people.—*Attersoll*.

(e) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 220, 221.

THE FLAGRANT WICKEDNESS OF ZIMRI, AND THE FERVENT ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verses 6-15.)

Notice—

I. The flagrant wickedness of Zimri.

"And, behold, one of the children of Israel came," &c. (ver. 6).

1. *The heinousness of his sin.* Fornication in any one is a great and grievous sin, but in one of the chosen people its enormity is far greater than in others. They had a clearer revelation of God's will; they enjoyed superior privileges; they were called to a higher and purer moral life than their heathen neighbours; hence fornication in them was far more heinous than in their neighbours (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 15-20).

2. *The aggravations of his sin.* His guilt was aggravated by—(1) The position which he occupied. "The name of the Israelite that was slain with the Midianitish woman was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites." It was

incumbent upon him to set an example of order and purity and loyalty to Jehovah. His partner in guilt, too, was a princess. Her name was "Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian" (comp. chap. xxxi. 8). (2) The effrontery with which he sinned. Not content with sinning amongst the Midianites, he brought the woman into the camp of Israel, which Jehovah had commanded to be kept pure (chap. v. 1-3). And this he did "in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel." An utter absence of shame marked his vile conduct; he seems rather to parade than to hide his wickedness. (3) The daring and defiant character of his sin. The wrath of God had gone forth and was smiting the people with the deadly pestilence: by his conduct he bids it defiance. The

judges had been commanded to put to death the sinners: by his action he dares them to deal with him. He sinned presumptuously—"with a high hand" (comp. chap. xv. 30, 31). (a)

3. *The infamy of the sinners.* "Now the name of the Israelite that was slain," &c. (vers. 14, 15). Thus the names, the families, and the rank of the evil-doers are perpetuated. An immortality of infamy is theirs.

II. The fervent zeal of Phinehas.

"And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 7, 8).

1. *Its character.* "He was zealous with My zeal" (ver. 11); "he was zealous for his God" (ver. 13). "He abhorred the presumptuous wickedness of Zimri, as God abhorred it." He was filled with holy indignation against one who so flagrantly sinned and so greatly dishonoured God. His holy zeal burned to arrest the progress of the sin, and to vindicate the honour of Jehovah. (b)

2. *Its expression.* On seeing the conduct of Zimri, he promptly seized a spear, and following the guilty pair into the inner apartment of the tent, he "thrust both of them through." The authority of Phinehas to execute summary vengeance on Zimri and Cozbi has been challenged. The case presents itself to us thus: the outrageous sin of Zimri imperatively demanded stern and immediate punishment; and the nature of that punishment was already declared (ver. 5). But they who should have inflicted it seem to have been sorrow-stricken, and made no attempt to deal with the offenders. Tears of grief and shame were natural; but surely at such a time stern and decisive action was the great need. The indulgence of sorrow should have been firmly repressed until the judgment of God had been executed. With rare discernment Phinehas perceived the treatment which should be dealt out to those atrocious sinners, and with zeal and courage equally rare he at once applied that treatment. The case was of exceptional flagrancy and enormity, and demanded exceptional treatment,

and Phinehas administered that treatment. The "deed was its own justification. Its merit consisted in the evidence it gave that his heart was right before God. He risked his own life by dealing according to their deserts with two influential and defiant evil-doers." (c) If his conduct needed apology we may well give it in the words of Bishop Hall: "God pardoneth the errors of our fervency, rather than the indifferences of our lukewarmness." Moreover this act of Phinehas cannot without extreme unfairness be said to afford any countenance to "acts of private revenge, of religious persecution, or even of irregular public vengeance." (d)

3. *Its effect.* "So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel Phinehas hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel; and made an atonement for the children of Israel." The act of Phinehas was accepted by God as a national "atonement," "covering," or "propitiation." By this act he publicly manifested—(1) a right estimate of the sin; (2) right feelings in relation to it; (3) right action in relation to it—he endeavoured to make an end of it. It appears to us probable that it was because of these qualities in the action of Phinehas that God accepted it as "an atonement for the children of Israel." The due administration of justice by magistrates and judges tends to prevent the judgments of God. If they are lax in dealing with vice and crime, God will sternly deal with them Himself.

4. *Its reward.* For this zealous action Phinehas was—(1) Divinely commended. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar," &c. (vers. 10, 11, and Psa. cvi. 30, 31). (2) Divinely rewarded. "Behold, I give unto Him My covenant of peace," &c. (vers. 12, 13). The covenant bestowed upon Phinehas was the confirmation to him and his posterity after him of the possession of the priesthood. "In accordance with this promise, the high-priesthood which passed from Eleazar to Phinehas (Judges xx. 28) continued in his family, with the

exception of a brief interruption in Eli's days, until the time of the last gradual dissolution of the Jewish state through the tyranny of Herod and his successors." Thus for his zealous action Phinehas was himself rewarded, and his posterity was blessed for his sake.

"Brave works for God win crowns.

There is no merit in them. But the grace, which gives the will, and nerves the arm, and brings success, awards a recompense. Among earth's happiest sons and heaven's most shining saints, devoted labourers hold foremost place."

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 280, 281.

(b) Zeal may be defined as the heat or fervour of the mind, by which its vehemence of indignation goes out against anything which it conceives to be evil, and its vehemence of desire towards anything which it conceives to be good. In itself it has no moral character at all. It is the simple instinct of energetic nature, never wholly divested of a sort of rade nobility, and never destitute of influence upon the lives and upon the characters of others.—*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*

"He that is not zealous, doth not love." Now right zeal acts, like fire, to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing Truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up; and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief; to see Truth trodden under the feet of error and profaneness, and he not able to help it up—*W. Gurnall*.

(c) I think I could give my own life, if called to do so, for the cause of Christ and the welfare of men. Why, then, should I hesitate to denounce anything that is opposed to the cause of Christ? Why should I hesitate to inveigh against anything, however sacred it may be to others, which is injurious to the welfare of men? I will not fear to condemn any organisation, or any institution, that seems to me to stand in the way of God's glory or man's redemption. It is not personal bit-

terness that leads me to use severity. It is *for* men, and not *against* men, that I am inflamed and aroused. And my indignation is strong just in proportion as those for whom it is called out are weak and unable to defend themselves.—*H. W. Beecher*.

(d) Zeal is indeed a wonder-working grace. It scales the heavens in agonizing prayer. It wrestles with Omnipotence, and takes not denial. Who can conceive what countries, districts, cities, families, and men have sprung to life, because Zeal prayed! It also lives in energetic toil. It is the moving spring in hearts of apostles, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and burning preachers of the Word. What hindrances it overleaps. What chains it breaks! What land it traverses! It girdles earth with efforts for the truth: and pyramids of saved souls are trophies to its praise.—*H. Law, D.D.*

(e) I know that the most of you are diligent in business. You never hear the ring of a guinea without being on the alert to earn it if possible. Your coats are off, and very likely your shirt sleeves are turned up when there is a chance of driving trade. That I commend; but oh! do let us have something like it in the service of Jesus Christ. Do not let us be drudging in the world, and drawling in the church; lively in the service of mammon, and then laggard in the service of Christ. Heart and soul, manliness, vigour, vehemence—let the utmost strain of all our powers be put forth in the service of Him who was never supine or dilatory in the service of our souls when they had to be redeemed.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

ZEAL.

(Outline of an Address.)

(Verses 11-13.)

We can lay no claim to saintship without zeal. When wickedness grows defiant, as in the case of Zimri and Cozbi, then zeal, as in the example of Phinehas, must be bold and daring.

I. The source of godly zeal.

It is from the indwelling of the Holy

Ghost. It draws its vital force from the constant operations of the Spirit in the soul. Zeal is holy fire kindled in the heart. Coldness is barrenness, and ends in death. Jeremiah said: "I will speak no more in His name." But silence was impossible. He exclaims:

"But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Grace in the heart must break forth. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

II. Godly zeal has its seat in the heart.

When David penned that beautiful Psalm relating to the majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom, he began by saying: "My heart is inditing a good matter." The ideas of fullness and fervour are both expressed. My heart is hot as if it had holy fire within. Zeal is not a mere thing of the brain or of intellectual power, but a reality from a sanctified heart. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes us like John, who was a burning and shining light.

III. Mark the object of holy zeal.

We are to be "zealous of good works." Men are often deceived in this matter. There is a great deal of party spirit, and deadly persecution, which often goes under the name of Christian zeal. Zeal is a mixed passion of grief and anger, fervent love and holy desire, all fused together in one holy emotion of the soul, spending itself for the glory of Christ. It is the fervour of heavenly benevolence. It thirsts for Divine knowledge, seeks for fellowship with Christ, and labours with self-denial for His sake. Zeal travails in birth for

the salvation of souls; is ready for every good work; creates opportunities of usefulness.

IV. True zeal is blended with knowledge.

Zeal without knowledge is like a blind man running on a narrow plank. This was the case with John (Luke ix. 54-56). The zeal of Paul was wrong before his conversion. The Jews had zeal without knowledge when they rejected the righteousness of Christ in order to establish their own. Moses was rash when he broke the two tables on which the Law was written, because Israel had broken one. Minerva put a golden bridle upon Pegasus that he should not fly too fast. Blind zeal, as well as an offering without an eye, will both be rejected by God. To enlighten others we must have light ourselves.

V. Zeal is forgetful of itself.

Self-denial is an element of true greatness. Every grace must be strong for Jesus "and do exploits," but this must be so especially with zeal. Paul in his perils, and Barnabas in the sale of his land, Bunyan in prison, and martyrs at the stake, Carey in India, Pierce in the pulpit, and Fuller in his travels for missions, are all worthy of imitation. Each of these men manifested forgetfulness of self. What more shall we say? "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos vi. 1).—*The Study.*

THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MOVED THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS.

(Verse 13.)

"He was zealous for his God."

I. There was the enormity of their sin.

It included false doctrine and sinful practices, between which there is a closer connection than is always recognised.

II. There was the character of the instigator to the sin.

Balaam, "a strange mixture of a man," whose character has been ably analyzed by Butler, Pye Smith, Arnold, and many others.

III. There was the extent to which the sin prevailed.

Among all classes. Logan on the Social Evil.

IV. There was the misery occasioned by the sin.

To the guilty, to their connections, to the community.

V. There was the dishonour done to God.

1. We should be zealous in religion.

2. Our zeal in contending against the sins of others should begin in zeal in contending against our own.—*George Brooks.*

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE TEMPTERS.

(Verses 16-18.)

The Lord here commands Moses to avenge the wrongs which the Midianites had done to the Israelites. It is not private revenge which is here enjoined, but the avenging of a great injury inflicted by one people upon another. The carrying out of this command is given in chap. xxxi. In that place the subject will be more fully considered: at present it will be sufficient to notice the following observations, which the text suggests:—

I. Sin, whether in the people of God or in His enemies, cannot go unpunished.

The Israelites, who had been seduced into sin, had been severely punished by God. And now, as was surely just, the Midianites who had been most active in seducing them, are to be punished also. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites," &c. Tempter and tempted, both had sinned, and both must be punished for their sin. When the child is punished for his sins, the stranger who has also sinned cannot hope to escape. "Judgment must begin at the house of God," &c. (1 Pet. iv. 17). (a)

1. *Here is warning to those who tempt others to sin.* (b)

2. *Here is warning also to those who yield to temptation.* Tempters and temptations, howsoever seductive, can-

not compel you to sin. If you yield to them, you will surely suffer loss, or chastisement, or judgment. (c) (1) Avoid scenes of temptation and the society of tempters. (2) Seek confirmation in the knowledge of the right and true, so that you be not deceived by temptations. (3) Seek establishment in the practice of the right and true, so that you may the more successfully withstand and overcome temptations. (4) Above all and in all look to God for help. (d)

II. Whatever tends to lead into sin should be viewed by the godly as an enemy to be contended against.

"Vex the Midianites, and smite them; for they vex you with their wiles." Tempters and temptations often present themselves in very winning aspects; the most perilous influences are the most plausible; "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light;" but whatsoever would lead us astray must be resisted as an enemy. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," &c. (Matt. v. 29, 30). (e)

III. Under certain circumstances war is justifiable.

It is here commanded by God. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them;" &c.

For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 18-20.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on *The certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

(b) The art of seduction from the ways of truth and holiness, discovers the man to be both the child and scholar of the devil. And as wise and painful ministers of Christ, who turn many to righteousness, shall have double glory in heaven; so these subtle and more active agents of the devil, who turn many from the ways of righteousness, will have a double portion of misery in hell.—*J. Flavell*.

The drunkard enkindles his neighbour's lust "putting the bottle to him." O! what a base work are such men employed about! By the law it is death for any to set fire to his

neighbour's house; what then do they deserve that set fire to the souls of men, and that no less than hell-fire?—*W. Gurnall*.

For another illustration on this point, see p. 265.

(c) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 97, 98.

(d) There are temptations in life—temptations at every turning of the street—temptations in all the evolutions of daily circumstances, temptations that come suddenly, temptations that come unexpectedly, temptations that come flatteringly. There is no true, all-conquering, all-triumphant, answer to the temptations of the devil but this—*God!* Be

deep in your religion, have foundations that are reliable, know your calling, and God will protect you when the time of battle and storm and flood shall come. He will do it, if so be we put our trust in Him.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(e) In carrying out his tempting designs, Satan chooses such instruments as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for his nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is not likely David would have received that from Nabal which he took from Abigail, and thanked her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison: "Curse God and die." Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants,—though she was also within his commission,—as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter the disciple to tempt Christ; at another time His friends and kinfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met with was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off this snare without

heart-breaking: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?"—*W. Gurnell.*

And now, if it shall be allowed to stand for our excusing, that temptation came to us circuitously, veiled with the mask of virtue, then history has recorded few crimes that can be condemned. The business of our moral vigilance, and the test of our moral strength, is to penetrate the delusion, to tear off the mask, to recognize Satan even through his transformations. We should know our tempters as the sure instincts of innocent hearts know hypocrites "through the disguise they wear." Perhaps no tyrant, traitor, debauchee, or robber ever lived, who chose depravity for its own sake, or loved sin for its ugliness. If we are to be exculpated because temptation is cunning, oblique, crafty, then Herod was innocent, and Judas has been harshly judged; Nero is an injured man; Benedict Arnold has been misrepresented; and Jeffries and Rochester were rather sinned against than sinning. All our sins creep on us under concealment, creep on us circuitously. Our first lesson of resistance is to learn that Satan is a deceiver, transforms himself, looks an angel.—*F. D. Huntingdon, D.D.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verse 1. *The plague.* See chap. xxv. 9.

Verse 4. *Take the sum of the people.* These words are supplied in the A. V. to fill up an ellipsis; and it seems to us that they are correctly supplied. Or the verse might be read thus: "From twenty years old and upward" (shall ye take the number of the children of Israel) "as the Lord commanded," &c.

Verses 1-4. See pp. 3-7, 10, 11.

Verses 9-11. See pp. 289-312.

Verses 12-14. The tribe of Simeon shows the greatest decrease, as compared with the number taken at Sinai. Then the tribe numbered 59,300; now it numbers only 22,200; which is a decrease of 37,100. Zimri, who was so disgracefully conspicuous in the recent

and terrible transgressions, was a prince of this tribe (chap. xxv. 14). It is probable that his pernicious example was largely followed in the tribe, and consequently that many perished by the plague; hence, the great decrease.

Verse 51. The total number of adult male Israelites, exclusive of Levites, was 601,730; being a decrease of 1,820 from the number taken at Sinai 38 years before. But had it not been for the recent plague, there would have been an increase of more than 22,000.

This chapter does not offer many homiletical suggestions; and some of those which it does offer we have noticed in the numbering of the people at Sinai; our treatment of it will, therefore, be necessarily brief.

THE DIVINE COMMAND AND DIRECTIONS FOR NUMBERING THE PEOPLE.

(Verses 1-4.)

On this subject little need be added to what was said concerning the numbering in the desert of Sinai (see pp. 3-7, 10, 11). The chief differences in the two censuses refer—

i. To the *place* in which the census was taken. That was “in the wilderness of Sinai;” with the Promised Land far away; this was “in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho.” Now their wanderings are over; the land of their destiny and their desire was clearly in view, &c.

ii. To the *time* at which the census was taken. Thirty-eight years have elapsed since the last was taken. During those years many thousands have found their graves in the desert; an entire generation has passed away; a truer and braver generation has arisen.

During those years in several very important respects the history of the nation had been arrested by reason of the sins of the generation which died in the wilderness.

iii. To the *design* with which the census was taken. Several of the purposes which the former numbering served (see pp. 5, 6) would be served by this also. But in addition to those this was intended—(1) as a preparation for the war against Midian, which the Lord had commanded; (2) as a preparation for the conquest of Canaan; and (3) as a preparation for a wise and equitable division of that land amongst the tribes and families of Israel. For the accomplishment of the last-named object this census was absolutely necessary.

THE APPARENT INSIGNIFICANCE AND THE REAL IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 5-51.)

These uninteresting verses suggest—

I. The apparent insignificance of human life.

How dull are the details, and how wearisome the repetitions of this chapter! What a number of obscure names of unknown persons it contains! Most of them were without doubt very ordinary, common-place people; few were remarkable for intellectual activity or power; many were mean in soul; some were selfish and cowardly; others were base and wicked. Scarcely half a dozen persons can we find mentioned here who were brave or brilliant, noble or noteworthy, great or gifted. As a rule human life, as it appears here, is an ordinary and apparently insignificant thing. And this is a fair representation of human life in our own age and country. In the great majority of instances human lives seem obscure, insignificant, mean; in many instances they seem wicked and worthless. (a)

II. The real importance of human life.

This will appear if we consider that—

1. *Every man has his own individuality of being and circumstances.* No two souls are exactly alike; neither do the circumstances of any two persons correspond in every respect. How interesting does the poorest and dullest life become when we realise that, at least in some respects, it is a unique thing in the universe. (b)

2. *Every man has his own possibilities.* In the most unpromising life great possibilities slumber. “There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” As a spiritual being every man is capable of eternal progress and blessedness, or of endless loss and ruin. (c)

3. *Every man has his own influence.* There is no life in the universe which does not affect others for good or for evil. “You cannot live,” as Bushnell

says, "without exerting influence. The doors of your soul are open on others, and theirs on you. You inhabit a house which is well-nigh transparent; and what you are within, you are ever showing yourself to be without, by signs that have no ambiguous expression. If you had the seeds of a pestilence in your body, you would not have a more active contagion than you have in your tempers, tastes, and principles. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence—an influence, too, compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble." (d)

4. *Every man has his own accountability.* The man who has but one talent, is as certainly responsible for the use of that one, as the man of five talents is for the use of his five (Matt. xxv. 14-30). "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one," &c. "*Every one* of us shall give account of himself to God."

5. *Every man is an object of deep interest to God.* To Him nothing is mean, nothing unimportant. He taught His apostles that they "should not call any man common or unclean." He knows what human nature is, and He has evinced the deepest and tenderest concern for its well-being. The poorest and obscurest human life—(1) was created by Him. "Have we not all one

Father? hath not one God created us?" "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. (2) Is *sustained* by Him. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. . . . In Him we live, and move, and have our being." (3) Was *redeemed* by Him. Christ "died for all" (2 Cor. v. 15). "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." No creature is too insignificant for the Divine interest, or too obscure for the Divine regard; and His interest and regard attest the importance of every one to whom they are extended. Mark the deep and gracious interest which our Lord manifested in the timid and long-afflicted woman who "touched the hem of His garment" (Mark v. 25-34), and in little children (Matt. xix. 13-15), and in the woman of Samaria (John iv. 4-42), and in many others who would commonly be deemed unimportant, insignificant, and of little worth. (e)

Let us learn never to slight even the lowliest and obscurest of our fellow-creatures. Let us respect human nature, as such, because it is a Divine creation; because it is Divinely redeemed, and because it was the medium of the supreme manifestation of God (comp. Phil. ii. 5-9). (f)

"Honour all men."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) You must have already noticed that this chapter is as true as any chapter in human history, especially as it shows so clearly what we ourselves have found out, that the most of people are extremely uninteresting. They are names and nothing more. They are producers and consumers, tenants and taxpayers, and that is all; they are without wit, music, piquancy, enterprise, or keenness of sympathy. They listen to your best anecdotes, and say, "m"; they hear of Livingstone with a shudder; they suppose there must be a great noise at Niagara. Such people were Seth and Enos, Mahalaleel and Jared; respectable, quiet, plodding; said "Good night" to one another regularly, and remarked briefly upon the weather, and died. Just what many now-a-days seem to do. Put down on paper everything that has passed between you and

some people, and you will find how very little paper is needed. Now I want to show you that such people are often unjustly estimated, and to remind you that if all stars were of the same size the sky would look very odd, much like a vast chess-board with circles instead of squares.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(b) We are all men, and yet no two men are alike. In every history you find the great man and the little man; the poetic dreamer and the prosaic clown; the daring adventurer and the self-regarding coward; the child of genius and the creature of darkness; yet all claim to be men, and all may theoretically acknowledge the same God and Redeemer. These are facts with which we have to deal, whether we open the Bible or not, whether we acknowledge a system of Divine Providence or not, whether we are atheists or saints.—*Ibid.*

(c) Even the *worst* man has the seal of God upon him somewhere. We must not forget that man is man, whatever be his creed or his status, and that his very *manhood* should be the guarantee of some excellence. The men of the world and the men of the Church are God's; the barren rock is His, as is the glowing garden of the sunniest summer; the worm crawling on the outermost edge of life, and the angel shining above the stars, are both under the care of God. Do not, then, speak of one man as if he were created by the devil, and another as if descended from heaven. Let us even in the worst expect to find some broken ray of former glory, as in the best we shall find some evil which makes us mourn that he is not better still. *Ibid.*

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 485, 486.

(e) The play and interplay of everything that is within man, and the products of this play and interplay, are all before the mind of God. And He contemplates man, not merely as a creature that is subject to the laws of gravity, of light, of hunger and thirst, and to the wants that the body begets; but as a creature that carries within him a soul-force that is prolific, vastly productive, and full of little unregarded points of history. God sees and

sympathises with all the things that relate to the welfare of man; though they be infinitesimal, though they be fugitive, and though they be unthought of even by the subject of them. There is nothing that can transpire, which has any connection with the moral benefit of His creatures, that God is indifferent to. —*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) Thy Maker has become like thyself. Is that too strong a word to use? He without whom was not anything made that was made, is that same Word which tabernacled among us and was made flesh, made flesh in such a way that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. O manhood, was there ever such news as this for thee! Poor manhood, thou weak worm of the dust, far lower than the angels, lift up thy head, and be not afraid! Poor manhood, born in weakness, living in toil, covered with sweat, and dying at last to be eaten by the worms, be not thou abashed, even in the presence of seraphs, for next to God is man, and not even an archangel can come in between; nay, not next to God, there is scarcely that to be said, for Jesus, who is God, is man also; Jesus Christ, eternally God, was born, and lived and died as we also do. —*C. H. Spurgeon.*

THE INTERESTING HIDDEN IN THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verses 5-51.)

I. Here is the commonplace.

The forty-seven verses before us are prosaic and dull reading. They tell us that the sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; they give us similar details concerning the other sons of Jacob; they tell us that the families of the respective tribes numbered so many, and so many; and they further inform us that certain persons died. And in this long list of names there are very few that have any history connected with them to awaken our interest; and so it certainly seems a monotonous and tedious chapter. But in this respect it resembles human life in all ages and countries. How commonplace, and even humdrum, is the life of by far the greater part of mankind! how uneventful, ordinary, &c. (a)

II. Here is the interesting in the commonplace.

If we look into this chapter carefully we shall discover certain words

which are suggestive of deep and tender interests. *Sons* is a word of frequent occurrence, so also is the word *children*; we also read of *daughters* (ver. 33), and of a *daughter* (ver. 46). A profound human interest attaches to words like these. They imply other words of an interest equally deep and sacred; *e.g.*, *father*, *mother*. Unspeakable and unfathomable solitudes were awakened in the parents' hearts by each child named in this chapter or included in this census. What hopes and fears, what desires and prayers, what wealth of holiest love, gathered round the infancy and childhood of every one of the "six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty" who were "able to go to war in Israel!" The humblest, dumbest, most commonplace life has its relations. The least regarded person in all the thousands of Israel was "somebody's bairn."

We also read of *death* (ver. 19);

most of the names which are here recorded belonged to men who were gathered to their fathers; from the time of the twelve sons of Jacob here mentioned to the time of this census in the plains of Moab, many thousands of Israelites had died, of all ranks and of all ages. Reflection upon these facts awakens a mournful interest in the mind. Some had died in infancy, beautiful buds of rich promise, leaving bereaved parents to mourn in pain and sore disappointment. And some had died in young and vigorous manhood, workers smitten down just as they were setting resolutely to work; they passed away leaving many a gentle maiden desolate and heart-stricken. And others had died in life's prime, leaving widows and orphans to mourn their irreparable loss. Loving mothers, too, had heard the home-call, and must needs resign their dear children to the care of other hearts and the tendance of other hands.

Again, frequent mention is made in this chapter of *the family* and of *families*; and these words are suggestive of pure and beautiful associations. Family life involves and promotes mutual affection, and forbearance, and helpfulness; it enshrines and fosters some of the holiest experiences and exercises of which human nature is capable.

Thus in this commonplace census-record we discover themes of profound and perennial interest.

III. The importance of the common-place.

Impatience of the ordinary and the prosaic is an evidence of an unsound judgment and an unhealthy moral life.

1. *Most of life's duties are commonplace.* The duties of our trade or profession, and the duties of our family and social relations, are, for the most part, unromantic, monotonous, and, many would say, dull. Yet, how important it is that these duties be faithfully fulfilled! (b)

2. *The greater number of persons are commonplace.* Persons characterised by extraordinary endowments, or brilliant abilities, or other marked distinctions, are very rare. The great majority of mankind are plain, prosaic people. (c)

3. *The greater part of life is commonplace.* To say that extraordinary scenes, circumstances, and deeds are very exceptional, is a manifest truism; and yet many persons, in whom the craving for the exciting and the sensational is deep and frequent, need to be reminded of the truism. If the ordinary and commonplace be sound and true, all will be well; but if these be corrupt and false, all will be ill. (d)

Be it ours to give the charm of poetry to prosaic duties, by doing them heartily; and to ennoble our commonplace lives, by living them faithfully and holily. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on this point, see p. 496.

(b) The best part of human history is never written at all. Family life, patient service, quiet endurance, the training of children, the resistance of temptation—these things are never mentioned by the historian. The man who burns down an abbey or a minster is immortalised in history; the poor house-wife who makes a pound go as far as thirty shillings, and pinches herself that she may give her boy a quarter's more schooling, is not known even to have lived. Guy Fawkes is known all over the world; but your honest father, who has given you a good example and a good training, is hardly known six doors

away from his own residence. If we remember these things we shall mitigate the contempt with which we are apt to speak of so-called nobodies. Because we admire brilliance we need not despise usefulness. When your little child is ill, he needs kindness more than genius, and it will be of small service to him if his mother is good at epigrams, but bad at wringing out a wet cloth for his burning brow. —*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(c) It is wonderful how oddly and whimsically fame is gained: Methuselah is famed because he was the oldest man, and Sampson because he was the strongest man; another is known because he can walk upon a tight rope, and another because he can swim across a

channel. If it were in my power to preach the most splendid sermon ever uttered by mortal lip, not a newspaper in the world would take the slightest notice of it; but if I put up an umbrella in the pulpit or tore the pulpit Bible in two, many a paragraph would report the eccentricity. A splendid sermon would be thought of as interesting only to the few, but an act of folly would be regarded as of universal interest. Thus it is (though it may not seem so) that things get into history. Robertson, of Brighton, was hardly known in his own town during his life-time, whereas another clergyman in Brighton dressed himself in a coat of many colours, and made quite a figure in the principal newspapers. Any man living can have a world-wide notoriety to-morrow, can have his name telegraphed throughout the whole range of civilisation, and be the subject of editorial comment throughout Christendom. Shoot any member of the royal family, and see if this be not so. Everybody knows that Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, but nobody knows that but for you two orphan boys would never have had a chance in life. No preacher has a really world-wide name, known in slums and garrets, backwoods, steamboats, thoroughfares and palaces, who did not in some way get it through "contemptible speech."—*Ibid.*

(d) The circumstances which have most influence upon the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most

part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criteria by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil affected by a single statesman can bear, to the good or evil of a great social system.—*Lord Macaulay.*

(e) The hour will be dark in which we pine for things romantic at the expense of a quiet and deep life. Christianity teaches us that no child is to be despised, no work is to be considered mean, and that suffering may have all the honour of service. Woe to us when we can live only on stimulants! When the house is accounted dull, when only sensational books can be endured, when music and drama and painted show are essential to our happiness, life has gone down to a low ebb and death is at the door. Let us do our quiet work as if we were preparing for kings, and watch attentively at the door, for the next comer may be the Lord Himself.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE DISTINGUISHED RISING OUT OF THE COMMONPLACE.

(Verse 9.)

"Famous in the congregation."

There are several persons mentioned in this chapter to whom these words may be applied; some of them being famous for their gifts and virtues, and others, alas! for their failings and vices. Here are—

I. Distinguished rebels.

"This Dathan and Abiram, famous in the congregation, strove against Moses," &c. (vers. 9, 10, and chap. xvi. 1-35; and see pp. 289-301, 305-307, 311, 312). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were notorious by reason of—

1. *Their sin*, which comprised envy, rebellion, presumption, and profanity.

2. *Their punishment*. Korah was consumed by fire from Jehovah (see p.

290), and the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram.

Let us regard these prominent sinners as *beacons*, and shun the sins which ruined them.

II. Distinguished profaners of sacred ordinances.

"Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered," &c. (ver. 61; Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46).

1. *Their sin*.

2. *Their punishment*. (On both these points see pp. 45, 46.) These profane persons also should be regarded as *beacons*. Shun profanity; be reverent.

III. Distinguished leaders and rulers.

"Moses and Aaron" (ver. 64),

"Moses and Eleazar the priest" (ver. 63). Here are three persons honourably distinguished; and Moses especially so.

Moses was famous for—

1. *His great abilities and attainments.* He was eminently gifted and learned. "Moses was learned," &c. (Acts vii. 22).

2. *His saintly character.* Very remarkable is the testimony to this in chap. xii. 3-8. See pp. 219-220. (a) Aaron also was a good man (see pp. 385, 386), and so was Eleazar.

3. *His great mission.* Under the Lord God Moses was the emancipator, the leader, the law-giver, and the ruler of Israel. Aaron, too, had rendered signal and invaluable services to the people. And Eleazar was a useful man.

4. *His extensive influence.* Perhaps no man in any age of the world's history has exercised a more extensive influence than Moses, both as regards time and space. (b)

These honourably distinguished men let us look up to as *examples*, and imitate their excellencies.

IV. Distinguished heroes.

"Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun" (ver. 65). These men were "famous in the congregation" by reason of—

1. *Their faith in God.* See chap. xiii. 30; xiv. 8, 9; and pp. 237, 238.

2. *Their courage in duty.* See pp. 247, 248.

3. *Their faithfulness to God.* Striking testimony is borne concerning Caleb in this respect in chap. xiv. 24 (and see pp. 260-262). And "Joshua's life has been noted as one of the very few which

are recorded in history with some fullness of detail, yet without any stain upon them."

4. *Their eminent services.* Caleb, as one of the spies and as a brave man, and Joshua as a spy, as a general, and as the successor of Moses, rendered illustrious and priceless service to the nation.

5. *Their honourable destiny.* Of all those who were numbered at Sinai, from twenty years old and upwards, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were permitted to enter and possess the Promised Land (vers. 64, 65). This was the reward of their faithfulness, &c.

In them also we have *examples* worthy of imitation in many respects.

Lessons.

1. *Mere distinction is not a thing to be coveted.* The character of the distinction is a question of vital importance. (c)

2. *Men may rise to the highest distinctions from the common ranks of their fellow men.* With the exception of the education which Moses received, none of these illustrious men had any advantages of birth, training, or social status; but the reverse. (d)

3. *The highest spiritual distinctions may be attained by every man through Jesus Christ.* By the grace of God eminent goodness is possible to each of us. We may be "made kings and priests unto God" by Jesus Christ. (e)

4. *The supreme importance of personal character and conduct.* We are making our reputation now. A destiny of glory or of shame we are day by day preparing ourselves for.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(c) To do a good thing or a great thing occasionally is not enough to constitute true nobility of character. At the basis of all such character there must be some diviner elements, and just as those elements are allowed to predominate within do they lend grandeur to all that we do. Just as Jesus taught His disciples that the childlike disposition was essential to their having a place in the kingdom,

so the Great Man must think nothing of his own sacrifices, but do everything in the spirit of perfect self-oblivion. This condition of soul is inseparable from those profounder virtues whose moral force can be determined only by their moral fitness, and which shed the truest glory on every form of human greatness.

Such virtues shone brightly in the man Moses, in whose character we lack no attri-

bute—no excellence. It was the rich and rare combination of these higher qualities which gave strength and completeness to his whole man. Had he been less virtuous he would have been less illustrious. His graces gave lustre and glory to his actions. Pure in the last and lowest recess of his heart, he left the impression of his moral perfection on all that he did. If it be the virtuous soul that truly lives—lives “though the whole world turn to coal,” and burn to ashes, then what must have been the force and the fulness of Moses’s virtue! It was purged from all that is sickly and sentimental, and had in it a strength and a robustness indicative of the man.—*Robert Ferguson, LL.D.*

(b) His is indeed a noble character that lives through all time; though formed and built up within the limits of an earthly life, it suffers not from the waste of years; and after the sweep of ages multiplied by ages it retains its integrity and glory, and like some first and fixed star, shines with undiminished light and lustre. It is, in a certain sense, true that all character is deathless—that it is something which survives all the changes and the dissolutions of this lower world, and is destined to come out as an abiding and immutable reality in the future; but they are the few whose principles and whose doings can be recommended as a deeper study, or whose life can be held up as a model for universal imitation. They must be men of rare composition, and in whom meet all the higher and the richer qualities of both the mind and the heart. Theirs must be a sublime consecration to the common good, and they must have no other idea of life than to fulfil the purposes of Heaven and to add to the sum of human happiness. They must not pass their days in any dreamy, visionary sentimentalism; but watching the course of events, must brace themselves up for corresponding action. Catching the inspiration of a higher world, they must be heroic for God and for truth. Here Moses stands first and most conspicuous. In no man did the force of principle reach a higher ascendancy, and in no man can we discover a truer majesty of character. From the very first the conduct of his people had been such as might have ruffled the most placid bosom, and provoked the meekest spirit, but he was pacific when he might have been militant, patient when he might have been indignant, and even heart-loving when he might have invoked the wrath of Heaven on their heads. His was a noble heart: one purer or truer never beat within a human breast. Noble by nature, he was nobler still in the height and the force of his virtue. Not only is his name hewn out on Time as on a rock, but he “stands on Time as on a pedestal,” with the eyes of all nations

fixed upon him, and with the people of every land offering to him the incense of a loftier praise. His is a name greater than that of the Pharaohs, and a monument his which will outlive the years of the pyramids.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 498 (c)

(d) More true greatness comes from the cottage than the palace. Socrates worked with his father as a statuary; and with chisel in hand had learned to touch the stone into a figure, ere he knew how to reason with philosophers in the schools. Luther came up from the dark deep mines at Mansfield to be the head and the leader of a movement only second in importance to the introduction of Christianity. Richardson, in the humble capacity of a printer’s apprentice, was wont to buy his own candle, that his master might not be defrauded and steal an hour from sleep to improve his mind and lay the foundation for future literary fame. The author of Lorenzo de Medici, surrounded by the dry dust of a lawyer’s office, and with nothing more than the rudiments of a common education, rose to the highest eminence; while Morrison, the Chinese scholar and missionary, laboured at the trade of a last and boot-maker, and kept his lamp from being blown out by so placing a volume of Matthew Henry’s Commentary, as at once to guard the flame, and make it easy for him to lay up its contents in his mind and memory. Genius and greatness are the property of no one class. Heaven bestows His gifts according to His own will, but that will is supremely gracious to every order and every rank. While a Moses is taken from the court of Pharaoh, an Elisha is found following the plough: there is a David tending sheep, as well as a Daniel mingling with princes. If Milton is qualified to be the secretary of the Protector of England, at a crisis in England’s history, Bunyan is Divinely taught to be the guide and the counsellor of his race on their way to glory.—*Ibid.*

(e) The child-spirit is true greatness. “Whoso abaseth himself shall be exalted.” “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” “Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps, and pyramids are pyramids in vales.” A man may be great in *grace*. By the very necessity of the case all *outward* distinctions must become less and less, but *spiritual* attributes endure as long as the being of the soul.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

It seems to me

’Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.
—*Tennyson.*

RULES FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 52-56.)

In these directions concerning the division of the land, two rules are laid down:—

i. The extent of each inheritance must be in proportion to the number of persons in each tribe and family. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names," &c. (verses 52-54). Note, *the entire equitableness of this rule, and see in it an illustration of all God's dealings with men in this respect.* "The works of His hands are verity and judgment," &c. (Psalm cxi. 7, 8). "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

ii. The situation of each inheritance must be determined by lot. "Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot," &c. (verses 55, 56). It seems that first, lots were to be drawn for the determination of the general situation of the territory of each tribe, and then these territories were to be divided according to the number of persons in the respective tribes and families. Note, *the wisdom of this arrangement.* It would tend—(1) to prevent dissatisfaction, jealousies, and strife; (2) to inspire in each tribe the persuasion that their inheritance was appointed them by God Himself. The result of the lot was regarded by most nations as determined by God (comp. Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18). So its use was appointed in this case that the Israelites "might rest in that division no less than if it had been done by the immediate voice of God from heaven."

We may further consider these arrangements as an illustration of—

I. The sovereignty of God in bestowing His gifts.

1. *The manifestation of this sovereignty.* It is exhibited (1) in His appointment of the rules for the division of the land; and (2) in His determination of the locality of the territory of each tribe. (a)

2. *The righteousness of His sovereignty.* The rules which He gave to Moses for this important business were conspicuously equitable. (b)

II The truth that in the arrangements of God provision is made for all His creatures.

By the commands here given to Moses adequate provision is made for every family of Israel. In the order of creation He provided for the supply of human needs before He created man. He makes constant provision for beasts, birds, and all the inferior orders of creation (Psa. civ. 27, 28; cxlv. 15, 16; cxlvii. 9); and shall He not much more regard man and his needs? And as a matter of fact, in return for man's labour, the earth brings forth an abundant supply for the necessities of all men. (c)

Our subject presents to us—

1. *A reason for contentment.* Since God appoints our lot, let us be content with it, and make the best of it. "My times are in Thy hand." "He shall choose our inheritance for us." (d)

2. *A reason for thankfulness.* Let God's provision for us awaken our gratitude to Him. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c. (Psa. ciii. 1-5).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) His sovereignty is manifest in the bestowing much wealth and honour upon some, and not vouchsafing it to the more industrious labours and attempts of others. Some are abased, and others are elevated; some are enriched, and others impoverished; some scarce feel any cross, and others scarce feel any comfort in their whole lives; some

sw a and toil, and what they labour for runs out of their reach; others sit still, and what they wish for falls into their lap. One of the same clay hath a diadem to beautify his head, and another wants a covering to protect him from the weather. One hath a stately palace to lodge in, and another is scarce master of a cottage where to lay his head. A sceptre is

put into one man's land, and a spade into another's; a rich purple garnisheth one man's body, while another wraps himself in 'dung-hill rags. The poverty of some, and the wealth of others, is an effect of the Divine sovereignty, whence God is said to be the Maker of the poor as well as the rich (Prov. xxii. 2), not only of their persons, but of their conditions. The earth and the fulness thereof is His property; and He hath as much a right as Joseph had to bestow changes of raiment upon what Benjamins He please.—*Charnocke*.

(b) This dominion, though it be absolute, is not tyrannical, but it is managed by the rules of wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. If His throne be in the heavens, it is pure and good; because the heavens are the purest parts of the creation, and influence by their goodness the lower earth. Since He is His own rule, and His nature is infinitely wise, holy, and righteous, He cannot do a thing but what is unquestionably agreeable with wisdom, justice, and purity. In all the exercises of His sovereign right, He is never unattended with those perfections of His nature. Might not God by His absolute power have pardoned men's guilt, and thrown the invading sin out of His creatures? but in regard of His truth pawned in His threatening, and in regard of His justice, which demanded satisfaction, He would not. Might not God by His absolute sovereignty admit a man into His friendship, without giving him any grace? but in regard of the incongruity of such an act to His wisdom and holiness, He will not. May He not by His absolute power refuse to accept a

man that desires to please Him, and reject a purely innocent creature? but in regard of His goodness and righteousness, He will not. Though innocence be amiable in its own nature, yet it is not necessary in regard of God's sovereignty, that He should love it; but in regard of His goodness it is necessary, and He will never do otherwise. As God never acts to the utmost of His power, so He never exerts the utmost of His sovereignty; because it would be inconsistent with those other properties which render Him perfectly adorable to the creature.—*Ibid*.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 202.

(d) Are you labouring in a village, and does it ever enter into your head that you would like to labour in London? You had better not, you had better not entertain that notion; it hath driven some men almost crazy, and it is a very perilous thing to play with—a notion of that kind, that a man is adapted to metropolitan life when probably he is adapted to nothing of the sort. "To fill up the sphere we have" should be our duty and our joy. "It is only a nutshell." Well, then, it will take less filing. "It is only a little village." Well, then, you will make your work the more manifest and the more speedy. I do not say that every man is to abide just where he is. Nothing of the kind; but whilst he is there, he is bound by every consideration that can stir a true man's heart and strength, to make the very best of his position.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 166.

THE NUMBERING OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 57-62.)

On this subject, comp. chap. iii. 14-22; and see pp. 53-55.

On ver. 61 comp. Lev. x. 1-11; and see pp. 45, 46.

On ver. 62, the last clause, compare chap. xviii. 20; and see pp. 339-347.

AFFLICTION: ITS TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS.

(Verse 61.)

These words refer to one of the most interesting of the narratives of the Old Testament. It is contained in the tenth chap. of Leviticus. . . .

Alas for Aaron, the father of these young men! His was a bitter portion—to see his sons on whom he had just looked with delight, as set apart for the most honourable of offices, stretched

suddenly at his feet! Not only slain; but slain under circumstances so appalling. They fell not merely in consequence of sin, but whilst in the very act of its commission, without a moment for repentance; so that hope, always ready in such cases to fasten even on straws, could scarcely have found place in Aaron's breast. Could Aaron feel

too deeply, or lament too bitterly the slaughter of his children? Alas! for Aaron, he has more to do than to bear the grievous trial! He must bear it without a sigh, without a tear, as though he felt it not; but sternly acquiesced in the righteousness of the visitation. For no sooner had Nadab and Abihu fallen than Moses delivered the message from God to Aaron—"I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me; and before all the people I will be glorified." This was nothing but to announce authoritatively to the afflicted father that his sons had died for their sin; and must have added to the anguish which came climbing up for vent. But the message, moreover, required submission. And Aaron exhibited this submission: "Aaron held his peace."

But, surely, he may weep! Surely he and his surviving children may obtain at least that relief which sorrow finds in the being expressed. No! even this is denied him. It would be inconsistent with the sanctity of the priestly office that those who bear it should display any grief at occurrences by which that sanctity has been defended and demonstrated. "And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people." Others, as Moses went on to say, may bewail the dead; but not those who had loved them best, and must feel their loss most. Indeed, it were not easy to exaggerate the greatness of the trial thus allotted to Aaron. It is a beautiful thing in the Christian religion that it is so constructed with a due regard to our natural sensibilities that it neither supposes us stoics, nor seeks to make us such; not demanding of us that we should not sorrow, but only that we should not sorrow even as those who have no hope. Indeed, tears are nature's relief—nature's balm; and, through a mysterious power, they ease the pain by which they are produced. We have cause, then, to be thankful,

not only for the consolation which the Gospel offers so abundantly to the mourning, but for the power and the privilege of weeping. And when ye feel how much of love there is, not only in the chastisement which causes the tears, but in the allowance to shed them, then you may estimate the heaviness of the trial which Aaron had to bear, and you will look at once with commiseration and admiration on the high priest of Israel, as he bends by his dead children, and yet obeys to the letter the rigid command which prevented him showing any of the ordinary indications of grief.

It appears clear, from the remainder of the history, that Aaron, though he suppressed the signs of sorrow, was disquieted at heart, and so overpowered and overcome as scarcely to be master of his actions. . . . Not only was Aaron forbidden to mourn; it was required of him that he should proceed with the business of a complicated ritual—that ritual, of the peril of swerving from which had just been given so tremendous a proof. No wonder, then, if, in his agitation and perplexity, the high priest omit on so trying a day certain prescribed forms, or make mistakes in the performance of his office. This seems to have been exactly what took place. A goat had been offered as a sin-offering, and, according to the Levitical law, the flesh of the sin offering ought to be eaten by the priest in the holy place. When, however, Moses came to inquire, he found the goat had been burnt without the tabernacle, in place of being eaten according to the law. Then Moses expostulated; fearing, in all likelihood, that this act of disobedience would produce a repetition of the awful scene of the morning. "Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place? Ye should, indeed, have eaten it in the holy place as I commanded." And then Aaron, though not immediately addressed, but knowing that the blame was with him, if with any—Aaron took on himself to reply. And we do not think that, in the whole

range of Scripture, there are more plaintive or more pathetic words than his reply. He begins by stating that there had on the whole been due attention to the services of the ministry. "Behold this day have they offered their sin-offering and their burnt-offering before the Lord." . . . He felt, notwithstanding what had been duly done, that there had been a departure from the law, and that it became him to say something to account for it, or to excuse it. But must he enlarge on his affliction, and, by dwelling on its greatness, seek to extenuate his omission? He could not do this. His heart was overflowing; and, if he had once given vent to his feelings, he would have been completely unmanned, and thus would have transgressed the commandment, which forbade his showing grief. He, therefore, trusted himself to give only, as it were, a hint of his sufferings, believing that an affectionate brother could not need more. He only said, "Such things have befallen me!" Oh! what a vast amount of suppressed anguish, of hidden, but agonised feeling, seems gathered into these few syllables, uttered, we may believe, with an almost choked voice—"Such things have befallen me." And then he just ventures a doubt, which would seem to show that he had not acted altogether through inadvertency, but partly from a feeling that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice—"If I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" Moses has nothing to say against this touching reply from his brother. It seems to have satisfied him. And forasmuch as we must regard him as guided through the whole transaction by the immediate direction of God, we may consider that the answer of Aaron was such as found acceptance with the Almighty himself. Moses was the instrument in making known the Divine will; and he was "*content*"—that is the expression in Scripture.

Now, it is upon this CONTENTMENT of Moses, considered as expressive of

the approval of God, that we design to ground the remainder of our discourse.

The case with which we are presented is simply this, There is a man who is suffering beneath the oppression of extraordinary affliction. His grief causes him to neglect some portion of religious duty, or incapacitates him, as he imagines, for its discharge. Undoubtedly he is to blame; but God, who knoweth our frailty, remembering we are but dust, accepts in excuse the greatness of his sorrow; and restrains the vengeance which the fault might have otherwise provoked.

Let us separate the case from its original circumstances; and let us see whether we may not expect, whenever there is a similar case, that there will be a similar acceptance of the severity of sorrow in excuse for some failure of duty. . . . Grief tends to unfit us for religious duties, while it makes more essential their unwearied discharge. We can never have greater need to study the Bible, never greater to offer petitions to God, than when visited with trouble; and yet it is often more than commonly hard, when trouble is upon us, to fix attention on Scripture, or be instant in prayer. The Christian will, on that very account, write bitter things against himself, and aggravate his suffering by self-reproach and condemnation.

It not unfrequently happens that cases such as this fall within the observation of the minister. He visits an individual, perhaps the mother of a family, from whom there has been suddenly snatched away an object of deep love. He finds her scarcely able to exert any control over her feelings. She can do little but weep and utter complaints to show the anguish of her soul. And it is no part of the Christian minister's office to upbraid the mourner, as though it were not lawful to sorrow thus bitterly. He will rather show by his expressions of sympathy that he is fully sensible of the greatness of her affliction, and will mingle his tears with hers in just tribute to the dead. But then it will be his endeavour to impress

on the sufferer the duties of affliction, urge to the striving to be resigned to God's will, and to the finding consolation in God's Word. And this will bring out fresh complaint; the sufferer will lament that she cannot pray; that the heart seems turned to stone, so that when she has most need of religion, she has become altogether incapacitated for its duties. What should bind her to her Maker seems only to estrange her more from Him. Indeed, this would be a perplexing case for the minister, if he were not warranted in replying, that great grief, by its very nature, stupefies the mind, and that God is too gracious to impute to His children omissions or failures which such grief may occasion. He may say to the sufferer that she is not to try her religion by what it is when stunned by the blow; and that her Creator, who can accurately distinguish between wilful neglect, and that produced by the bewilderment of an overwrought spirit, will assuredly not be extreme in marking what he knows anguish has kept her from performing. He will never be warranted in telling an offender that he might safely neglect religious duties; but when he finds that affliction has caused certain duties to be neglected, and that the neglect was one of the things which pressed on the conscience, he is warranted, we believe, in referring to the contentment of Moses, when he had heard Aaron's answer, and endeavouring so to soothe the agitated parent. And this does not less hold good under circumstances of sickness. It is beyond all dispute, that bodily pain is a most engrossing thing; so that whilst it is being endured, the soul, in general, can do little more than sympathise with its suffering tenement. Even the righteous, when dread sickness is on them, feel disabled for spiritual exercises, though conscious that they were never more in need of communion with God. Accordingly, one continually hears complaints from pious persons, as disease bears them down, that they cannot fix their minds as they desire on heavenly things; that they cannot pray with fervency, much

less rejoice in tribulation. The just way of dealing with these persons, seems to be that of requiring them to take their difficulties into account when they would estimate their spiritual condition. They do utterly wrong in judging of what they are on a sick bed, by what they do on a sick bed, and feel, as they toss to and fro, that they cannot find rest. I never ask how a Christian died; but how a Christian lived.

We have a few words to say on another supposition—namely, that it was not through inadvertence, but rather through design, as feeling himself but ill-prepared to eat the sin-offering, that Aaron did not exactly conform to the prescriptions of the law. If you consider the words which Aaron uses—"And if I had eaten the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" you may judge that Aaron had probably imagined that it would be better for him to burn the sin-offering, though contrary to law, than to eat it with heaviness of heart. There was perhaps a feeling in him that he was not in a fit temper to partake of the sacrifice. And if this were the case, we must gather from the contentment which Moses expressed—not perhaps that he acquiesced in the reasons which Aaron alleged—but that even a mistake, when caused by a reverential fear of the mysteries of religion, will be looked upon compassionately by God, who reads the heart.

Now we would imitate Moses in this particular, and not deal harshly with those who, from the same reason as Aaron, neglected to feed on the sin-offering, in and through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It may be true that the majority of those who absent themselves from the sacrament, absent themselves in contempt of so awful a mystery, or in assumed respect for, which is but a cloak for determination not to separate from the world. But there are some who are tremblingly alive to the sacredness of the ordinance; who would receive it if they dared, but who are withheld by a consciousness of

their sinfulness, a sinfulness which they deplore and long to remove. This was Aaron's case, and God forbid that this should be harshly dealt with! They are under a mistake; but their mistake is in one sense only an excellence. We would teach them that their feeling of unfitness constitutes their fitness for the sacrament or "means of grace," which is not for those (if such there are) who have no sins to struggle with and lament. We would thus not upbraid them with their mistake, but endeavour to show that it was only to be proved in order to its being corrected. We do not suppose that Moses would have been "content," had he

found on successive days that the sin-offering had not been eaten. He had said enough to show that Aaron was wrong; but whilst abstaining from re-proving for the past, he undoubtedly expected that he would obey the law for the future. It is the same with those whom an habitual sense of unworthiness has withheld from the sacrament. They may plead their excuse whilst they have not been duly taught what the sacrament requires from its recipients; but it partakes of the nature of sin, if they continue absent when they know that a feeling of unworthiness is the very thing required.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

(Verses 63-65.)

In these verses we have a triple illustration of the Divine faithfulness:—

I. The faithfulness of God to His threatenings

"These are they that were numbered," &c. (vers. 63-65). The judgment which God pronounced thirty-eight years previous He has now completely fulfilled (comp. chap. xiv. 11-39; and see pp. 250—252, 257, 258, 263-265). (a)

1. *The immense number of the condemned does not avail for the escape of any one of them.* Sentence was passed upon upwards of six hundred thousand men; "and there was not left a man of them." "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21).

2. *The lapse of time before the complete execution of the sentence does not avail for the escape of any one.* Thirty-eight years passed away before the judgment pronounced was fully carried out; but ultimately not one upon whom it was passed escaped. "Because sentence against an evil work is not,"

&c. (Eccles. viii. 11; 2 Pet. iii. 3-10). (b)

II. The faithfulness of God to His purposes.

Though God completely cut off that rebellious generation; yet for the carrying out of His own plans He raised up another and far superior generation (comp. chap. xiv. 12, 31; and see pp. 251, 264). (c)

III. The faithfulness of God to His promises.

He promised to spare Caleb and Joshua, and to bring them unto the Promised Land (chap. xiv. 23, 30); and He spared them, and in due season brought them into that land (see pp. 258, 264). (d)

Here is encouragement to trust Him. Conclusion.

The great lesson of the subject is a solemn warning against unbelief. This warning is urgently enforced in Heb. iii. 7—iv. 2. Let us give earnest heed unto it, so that at last we may enter into the perfect and heavenly rest.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 225, 374.

(b) God says, "To-day I will work a wonder in your eyes; ye shall see marvellous things; I will beat down the proud throne and the great mountain." He says that, and then leaves us there. And a thousand years go by; the proud throne is still there, and the great mountain rears its shoulders through a thousand summers and a thousand winters. Men say, "The word has been forgotten." But the word is there. It is a factor in human history, and is working, and will work. It may be in ten thousand years the word comes up, and the men of the day say to one another, "All this is done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 312.

(c) It is necessary to our conception of an infinitely perfect Being, that we admit an *eternal purpose* regarding all that He has done or said. The idea of experiments undertaken and abandoned is, so far as He is concerned, utterly untenable. So is that of a change of purpose. "He is of one mind." He has purposed all He does, and He does or will do all He has purposed. Whether He create a world, or redeem a man, it is in pursuance of His *eternal will* that it should be so.—*W. Leask, D.D.*

(d) If He enters into engagements, promises, and covenants, He acts with perfect freedom. These are acts of grace to which He is under no compulsion; and they can never, therefore, be reluctant engagements which He would wish to violate, because they flow from a ceaseless and changeless inclination to bestow benefits, and a delight in the exercise of goodness. They can never be made in haste or unadvisedly; for the whole case of His creatures to the end of time is before Him, and no circumstances can arise which to Him are new or unforeseen. He cannot want the power to fulfil His promises, because He is omnipotent; He cannot promise beyond His ability to make good, because His fulness is infinite; finally, "He cannot deny Himself," because He is "not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent;" and thus every promise which He has made is guaranteed, as well by His natural attributes of wisdom, power, and sufficiency, as by His perfect moral rectitude.—*Richard Watson.*

Every promise is built upon four pillars:—God's *justice* or holiness, which will not suffer Him to deceive; His *grace* or goodness, which will not suffer Him to forget; His *truth*, which will not suffer Him to change; and His *power*, which makes Him able to accomplish.—*H. G. Salter.*

For additional illustrations on *God's faithfulness*, see p. 460.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The request made by the daughters of Zelophehad arose naturally out of the census, which was taken with a view to the distribution of the land amongst the people, and the Divine directions for the distribution, both of which are recorded in the previous chapter.

Verse 1 (comp. chap. xxvi. 29, 33).

Verse 2. *All the congregation* "denotes the college of elders, which represented the congregation and administered its affairs."

The door of the tabernacle, i.e., where the elders met in solemn assembly.

Verse 3. *Died in his own sin.* Zelophehad had not taken part in any of the rebellions which had been avenged by special judgments, but had died "under the general sentence of ex-

clusion from the land of promise passed on all the older generation."

Verse 12. *This mount Abarim* (see notes on chap. xxi. 20).

Verse 13 (see chap. xx. 23-29).

Verse 14 (see chap. xx. 7-13).

Verse 16 (comp. chap. xvi. 22).

Verse 18. *In whom is the spirit*, i.e., "The spiritual endowment requisite for the office he was called to fill."

Verse 20. *Of thine honour*; "i.e. of thy dignity and authority. Joshua was constituted forthwith vice-leader under Moses, by way of introduction to his becoming chief after Moses's death."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *He shall stand before Eleazar*, &c. In this respect Joshua did not enjoy the exalted privilege of Moses (comp. chap. xii. 6-8; Deut. xxxiv. 10).

The judgment of Urim, &c. Rather, "the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah." "Urim is an abbreviation for Urim and Thummim, and denotes the means with which the high priest was instructed of ascertaining the Divine will and counsel in all the important business of the congregation."

—*Keil and Del.* What these means were we do not know. "'Light and perfection' would probably be the best English equivalent" for the words Urim and Thummim. See an excellent article on the subject by Professor Plumptre in Dr. Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

THE REQUEST OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD: THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

(Verses 1-11.)

Consider—

I. The request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

1. *Was presented in an orderly and becoming manner.* "They stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest," &c. (verse 2). They made their request in a regular manner, and to the proper authorities.

2. *Was eminently fair and reasonable.* While their father, by reason of sin, was in common, with the generation to which he belonged, excluded from the Promised Land, yet he had not done anything for which his children should be deprived of an inheritance therein. And it certainly does not seem reasonable that they should be so deprived because they were all daughters—that they should be disqualified because of their sex. (a)

3. *Indicated becoming respect for their father.* They vindicate him from the guilt of sharing in any of the rebellions except the general one; and they evince an earnest desire for the perpetuation of his name and family. If no inheritance were granted to them as his heirs, then his name would cease from among his family. But if a possession among the brethren of their father were granted to them, then his name would be preserved: for when an heiress of landed property became a wife, her husband married into her family rather than she into his, and "the sons who inherited the maternal property were received through this inheritance into the family of their mother, i.e., of their grandfather on

the mother's side." We have examples of this in the case of Jair, who was reckoned a Manassite, though his father was a descendant of Judah (chapter xxxii. 41; Deut. iii. 14; 1 Chron. ii. 21, 22), and in the case of Jarha and his wife, the daughter of Sheshan (1 Chron. ii. 34, 35).

4. *Implied faith in the promise of God to give Canaan to the Israelites.* Though the Canaanites were in full possession of the land, and the Israelites had not even entered therein, yet they ask for their portion as if the land were already possessed by their people.

5. *Implied an earnest desire for a portion in the Promised Land.*

II. The Divine answer to their request.

1. *Was given by Jehovah to Moses in response to his enquiries.* "And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses," &c. Notice here—(1) The humility of Moses. He does not presume to decide the case himself, &c. (2) The direction which God grants to the humble. "The meek will He guide in judgment," &c.

2. *Commended the cause of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right."

3. *Granted the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.* "Thou shalt surely give them a possession, &c." (ver. 7). (b)

4. *Included a general law of inheritance.* "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (vers. 8-11). Thus a great benefit accrued to the nation from the request of the daughters of Zelophehad.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Some disabilities still accrue to woman, especially in respect to property, and just payment for her labour. Tasks that she is fully competent to every way, public opinion and false custom will not let her do, cruelly telling her she shall sooner starve; and for work that she actually does as well and as rapidly as her companion, man, she receives only a quarter of his wages; both of which are wrongs that Christianity rebukes as clearly as it does slavery or defalcation, and wrongs that Christian men must speedily remedy, or else cease to be Christians, and well-nigh cease to be men.

For the wrongs that remain to her position, and the disabilities that man's too selfish and partially Christianized nature has not yet removed, let her not, in the name of all that is lovely and all that is skilful, go to separatist conventions, nor to the platform, nor to the novel schemes of political economy, or social re-organization; but to that moral tribunal, where she is as sure to win her cause at last as the sunlight is to compel a summer. Let her take up and wield the spiritual sovereignty that is her everlasting birthright. Let her understand—what so few of her sex have been willing to learn to this hour—the power lodged in her whole spirit and voice and look and action for or against the kingdom of Heaven. Let her be content with the possession and exercise of power, in all its higher forms, without that appendage which unhallowed pride is for ever insisting on—the *name* of it. Let her unfold every nobler faculty that our imperfect social state invites; and then be sure that the social state will ripen into more perfect humanities, and full justice come at last. Let her be the brave domestic advocate of every virtue, the silent but effectual reformer of every vice, the unflinching destroyer of falsehood, the generous patroness of intelligence, the watcher by slandered innocence, the guardian of childhood, the minister of Heaven to home, the guide of orphans, the sister of the poor, the disciple of Christ's holy Church. On Jesus of Nazareth,—all fails except for this,—on the Saviour's heart, let her rest her unchangeable and unassailable hope, her unquestioning trust, her unconquerable love.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) Is it nothing for woman to remember, when her sex is made the type and tabernacle of Love, that we have ascribed the loftiest glory even to the Almighty Father when we have said that His name is Love? Is it nothing to her that her place in society and

her powers in the world correspond to her character? That while she shares with man, in honourable and often equal measure, certainly in these modern times, every intellectual privilege, literary accomplishment, and public function—authorship, the chair of science, the throne of state—she yet has a realm all her own, sacred to her peculiar ministry, where she reigns by a still diviner right? Is it nothing that it is her face which first bends over the breathing child, looks into his eyes, welcomes him to life, steadies his uncertain feet until they walk firmly on the planet? Suppose man were the natural enemy of woman; consider that from his birth, for the first ten years of his life, he is put into her hands, with scarcely a reservation or exception, to be impressed, moulded, fashioned into what she will,—so that, if he were born a wild tiger, her benignity would have its opportunity to tame him; consider that it has been historically demonstrated that scarcely a single hero, reformer, statesman, saint, or sage, has ever come to influence or adorn his age, from Jacob to Washington, who was not reared by a remarkable mother that shaped his mind; and then ask whether it is not equal folly for woman to claim the *name* of power, and for man to deny her the *possession*.

There is hardly a walk of public or private life where female talent is not heartily honoured, and does not command its deserved success. The fine arts, the sciences, classical learning, social reform, philosophy, education, empire,—all are represented at this day by accomplished women. Do they suffer detriment, or loss of influence, because they are women? Is Mrs. Somerville, or Miss Mitchell, less esteemed among the scientific minds of the age for her sex? Does not the whole British kingdom learn a heightened regard for woman from the womanly character it beholds in its Queen? Is there a department of knowledge from which woman is now, by our modern systems of education, shut out? Must it not be very soon true that her power shall be proportioned to her energy, and her influence be measured only by her merit? Probably the larger proportion of scholarship and public enterprise will still be with men.—the providential constitution of the sexes justifies that expectation; but when exceptions appear, the demand of Christian liberty is, that they be welcomed, recognised and rewarded.—*Ibid.*

THE SERVANT OF GOD SUMMONED HOME.

(Verses 12-14.)

The intimation here given to Moses of his approaching death suggests the following observations:—

I. That sin is an evil of the greatest gravity.

The Lord here informs the great leader of Israel that he must shortly relinquish his charge and lay down his bodily life. But why must Moses die at this time? Not because he was worn out either physically or mentally: "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated;" and his splendid valedictory charge to the people shows that his mind had lost nothing either of force or of fire. Nor has he to die at this time because he has outlived his usefulness. he is still the most useful man of all the thousands of Israel. He has to die because of his sin "at the water of Meribah." "Ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes" (comp. chap. xx. 2-13, and see pp. 372, 373). Moses besought the Lord that he might be permitted to enter "the good land that is beyond Jordan;" but the Lord "would not hear" him (Deut. iii. 23-27). Thus God manifests His abhorrence of sin, and testifies to its heinousness. (a)

II. That God is the absolute Sovereign of human life.

This great truth is strikingly illustrated in the death of Moses. Neither from disease, nor from the exhaustion of the vital forces, nor from accident, nor from external violence, does the great and good man die; but because God wills his death. To the man who recognises and obeys God's laws, and seeks to live in harmony with His will, death cannot come either prematurely or accidentally. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" "His days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my ap-

pointed time will I wait till my change come." "Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth," &c. "Thou hast made my days as an hand-breath." "Thou turnest man to destruction," &c. "My times are in Thy hand." (b)

This sovereignty of God over our life should—

1. *Lead us to seek for conformity to His will.* Manifestly it is both our duty and interest so to do.

2. *Encourage us in the prosecution of worthy aims.* "Man is immortal till his work is done."

III. That inspiring visions are often granted to the good as they approach the close of their earthly career.

"The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel." It was in mercy that God permitted him to survey the goodly land. Vast and splendid was the prospect from the heights of Nebo. "Even the city of Heshbon itself, stood upon so commanding an eminence, that the view extended at least thirty English miles in all directions, and towards the south probably as far as sixty miles." As to Moses it was granted to behold the extent and beauty of the Promised Land before his death (Deut. xxxiv. 1-4), so the most glorious spiritual prospects are often vouchsafed to godly souls as they draw near the close of their pilgrimage. This was the case with Stephen: "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven," &c. (Acts vii. 55-60). And with Paul: "I am now ready to be offered," &c. (2 Tim. iv. 6-8). See p. 419. (c)

IV. That through the gates of death the good enter upon scenes of congenial social life.

"And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered." See p. 379. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When Moses, instead of giving prompt and cheerful obedience to the command of God, yielded in an evil moment to the peevishness and the pettishness of his own temper, not only did he come short of the Divine purpose, and fail to glorify God in the sight of His people, but He became subject to serious privation and peculiar loss. As the punishment of his disobedience, he was precluded from entering the Promised Land. Though permitted to come to its very border, and though, from Pisgah's proud and lofty height, he was allowed to cast his eye over its fair and enchanting scenery, his feet never pressed its sacred soil, and ere his favoured nation had taken possession of the long-looked-for inheritance, his eyes were closed in death. Nothing is more natural than to suppose that after the toils and the strifes—the struggles and the sufferings of an arduous and devoted life, his heart thrilled with delight in the prospect of the earthly Canaan, and that it would have added much to the happiness of his old age had he been suffered to enter the good land, and there to have found a home and a grave. But this was denied to Him—*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*

It seems certain that this death on Pisgah, and this sight of the Promised Land, was designed partly to humble and partly to gratify Moses; partly as a mortification, and partly as an honour; partly as a punishment and partly as a pleasure. It must have mortified him somewhat to be brought to the verge of the object of his long ambition and deep-felt desire, and then to have it removed out of his sight; to say to himself, "Not a child in all that camp, but is more favoured than I: never shall I cross that Jordan, or visit those sacred spots where my fathers lived, worshipped and died: I alone, amongst these millions, am denied this privilege." But, on the other hand, while Aaron was not permitted to behold that land, but died with the great and terrible wilderness around him, Moses saw its beauty, felt a breeze wafted from its balmy air upon his dying brow, and expired while embracing it, as it were in the arms of his love and admiration. He saw, too, on the other hand, his people compacted into a powerful community, girt and armed for the contest; pawing like a lion ere setting their terrible feet upon the enemies' soil, led by a man and warrior after his own heart, with the tabernacle of God in their midst, and the cloud of the pillar hovering over them, and this sight serves to give an additional consolation and joy to his departing spirit. What an honour, too, to be watched over and tended so carefully by the Most High! Moses stripped off Aaron's garments, and Eleazar assisted him; but the

whole circumstances of the scene at Pisgah were arranged by the hand of God. He breathed on His servant and gave him death.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) For an illustration on this point, see pp. 381, 382. (b)

(c) Privilege as well as punishment is often connected with the death of God's people, and He often proves how precious in His sight is the death of His saints, by giving them in their last moments bursts of insight and glimpses of glory. Moses was alone on the mount at the time, and perhaps he was the only man, at all events the only eminent saint of God, who on the literal Pisgah ever died. But the path to the spiritual Pisgah is well-worn, and many a pious soul has found it a Mount Clear, and seen from it a little of the "glory of the land." . . . Words of rapture, of calm and sober yet profound and thrilling joy, have come forth from the lips of the departing children of God. Biography teems with these. How the martyred reformers and covenanters died, each of them with some cheering Scripture word, like a scroll of glory, on his lips, such as, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly;" "I have a desire to depart, and be with Christ;" "None but Christ; none but Christ." The famous Thomas Halyburton lay for weeks on his death-bed, and it seemed to have been uplifted by the hands of angels nearer to heaven as he lay upon it, and breathed out his ardent soul in words of ecstasy. In later times we find a Payson speaking of the "Sun of Righteousness becoming larger, brighter, and broader to his soul as he was drawing nigh it;" a Hall crying, "I have a humble hope, which I would not exchange for all worlds;" the young and lovely Mrs. Shepherd, whose interest in his salvation almost melted the heart of Byron himself, saying, as she lay a dying, "God's happiness, God's happiness," words which seemed to mean, "That is the only happiness deserving the name, and I am going to inherit it above;" and the great Coleridge, who amidst many aberrations of intellect and life died at last a meek disciple of Jesus, and dictated on his death-bed these lines as his epitaph:—

"Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame,
He asked and hoped through Christ—do
thou the same."

These persons were verily in their last hours exalted to one or other of the peaks of Pisgah, and received extraordinary testimonies of the presence and favour of God.—*Ibid.*

For additional illustrations on this point, see p. 420. (b)

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 382. (e)

A MODEL ORDINATION SERVICE.

(Verses 15-23.)

In this paragraph there are several things which deserve notice.

i. *The solicitude of Moses for the carrying on of God's work.* This was his great concern when he knew that the time of his departure was at hand. "Moses spake unto the Lord saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits," &c. (vers. 15-17).

ii. *The noble unselfishness of Moses.* He does not seek the appointment of one of his sons as his successor. Already the high priesthood has been settled in the family of Aaron, and it would have been a very natural thing if Moses had asked that one of his sons might succeed him in his office; but he leaves the appointment entirely with the Lord.

iii. *The directions of the Lord for the ordination of the successor of Moses* (vers. 18-21).

iv. *The carrying out of these directions by Moses* (vers. 22, 23).

Although the ordination of Joshua was to the office of chief magistrate, yet we may regard it as illustrating a Model Ordination Service to the Christian Ministry. What an interesting ordination service this was! With Canaan so near, and the great leader so soon to pass away, and the recollections of the sinful strife at Meribah and of his sin there, which caused his passing away at this time, so clear—this service must have been deeply impressive. What a charge Moses would give! And how solemn would it be to Joshua as he pondered on the reason why Moses was leaving them then! And how full of instruction and warning to the congregation!

In our day an ordination is regarded by some as merely a thing of ecclesiastical etiquette; and by others as a kind of religious banquet, at which able men will preach eloquent sermons, and an intellectual and emotional feast will be provided. Let us correct such notions

by the consideration of this ordination, the directions for which were given by God. This ordination suggests—

I. That the person ordained should be chosen of God for his work.

Moses asked the Lord to "set a man over the congregation," &c. (verses 16, 17). "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua," &c. So now the Christian minister should be—

1. *Called by God to His work.* (a)

2. *Appointed by God to his sphere of work.* As the Head of the Church, Christ is deeply concerned in the selection and appointment of its ministers. He both calls His under-shepherds, and appoints them their spheres. The minister himself should feel that he holds his commission and appointment from the Lord. Such a conviction will be to Him an inspiration and strength, &c.

There is one distinguishing characteristic in every man whom God calls; they are all, like Joshua, men "in whom is the Spirit." They are endowed by God with the spiritual qualifications for the discharge of their sacred duties. The Divine call and the Divine qualification are invariably associated. (b)

II. That the ordination is to the most important work.

Joshua was ordained to preside over the Israelites and direct them in all their affairs. "Set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them," &c.

How unspeakably important are the duties of the Christian minister! It is his to publish the glad tidings, to instruct the people of his charge, to counsel, to warn, to rebuke, to encourage, &c. (c)

" 'Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled a Saviour's hands."
—Doddridge

III. That the ordination should be conducted by tried men.

Joshua was ordained by Moses alone. But in the ordination of Timothy, Paul was assisted by the elders of the Church (1 Tim. iv. 14). The cases were different. Joshua was to be chief magistrate; but Timothy was ordained to a purely spiritual ministry. The forms of government also were much altered. Moses's time joined on to the days of patriarchal government; but it was far otherwise in Paul's day. But in both cases they were proved men, men of experience and of good reputation, holy and honoured men. So should it ever be in ordinations to the Christian ministry.

IV. The ordination should be accompanied with the imposition of hands.

"Take thee Joshua . . . and lay thine hand upon him." This was done as a sign of the transference of the government to him, and of the conference of the Holy Ghost upon him. "Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deut. xxxiv. 9). The imposition of hands is a natural and impressive form for the expression of benediction; and seems to have been so used in all ages (comp. Gen. xlviii. 14; Matt. xix. 13, 15; Acts vi. 6; viii. 17; ix. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 14; v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6. (d))

V. That the ordination should include a charge to the ordained.

"Give him a charge." The duties and responsibilities of the office should be laid before those who are being set apart to it; and the experience of godly and approved men should be made available for the direction of the inexperienced. What wise and inspiring things Moses would say to Joshua in this charge! What sage counsels drawn from his ripe experience, &c. ! Nothing is more natural and becoming than to give a charge to any one entering upon new and solemn relationships and duties. The parent gives a charge to his son as he goes forth from home to the battle and burden of life, &c. The veteran who has been in many a battle

is well able to counsel the recent recruit, who is about to gird on the armour for the first time.

VI. That the ordination should be conducted in the presence of the people.

"Set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight." The Christian minister should be ordained in the presence of the congregation, because the office to which he is being set apart is one involving mutual obligations. Moreover, such an arrangement—

1. *Is more impressive to the person being ordained.* There present with him are the immortal souls for whom he has to live and labour.

2. *Tends to influence the people beneficially.* As they hear of the important duties and solemn responsibilities of their minister, they should be awakened to deeper solicitude and more earnest prayer on his behalf, and to heartier co-operation with him. (e)

VII. The ordination should confer honour upon the person ordained.

"Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (comp. Deut. xxxiv. 9).

To serve God in the ministry of redemptive truth is a great honour, even to the holiest and ablest of men—to be an "ambassador for Christ," &c. (f) But in addition to this, when a number of experienced and honoured ministers, who know the person they are about to "lay hands on," unite to ordain him "before all the congregation," by that act they declare that they, knowing him, regard him as a fit and proper person for the holy office of the Christian minister; and so they put of their honour upon him, that the people of his charge may have ampler ground for respecting and trusting him. For this reason, those who take the chief duties in an ordination service should be personally acquainted with him whom they ordain.

VIII. That a person so chosen of

God, should seek special direction from Him, and seeking, shall obtain it.

"And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest," &c. (ver. 21). The general principle here suggested we take to be this,—that every man who is called of God to special responsibilities, should seek and shall obtain special help to fit him for those responsibilities. That such was the case with the Apostles, we see from Matt. xxviii. 18-20; John xiv. 26; and xvi. 12, 13. This should serve—

1. *As a warning against self-sufficiency.* The great Apostle of the Gentiles writes, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves," &c. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6). Again he asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

2. *As a source of encouragement and strength.* We have access to the infinite resources of the Most High God. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," &c. "Our sufficiency is of God," &c. (g).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 23 (a), 50 (c), and 326 (a).

(b) For illustrations on ministerial qualifications, see pp. 328, 329.

(c) For illustrations on this point, see p. 62 (a) and (b).

(d) The laying-on of hands had been, from the time when Moses was directed to lay hands upon Joshua, the regular recognized manner of appointing to an office in the Church of God; and it was just adopted by the Christian Church from having prevailed by God's own command in the Jewish. It is of course a significant appointment; an appointment signifying the delegation of authority to do that which the person appointing is empowered thus to appoint another to perform. Further than that we cannot say respecting it. It is accompanied always with prayer: and the laying-on of hands would probably be considered to denote that that which was applied for in the prayer was granted to the prayer and conveyed to the person appointed. That would seem to be the explanation of the gesture in thus appointing, in the simplicity of the primitive Church.—*H. Alford, D.D.*

(e) It is a popular error to suppose that a gig can go on one wheel. The minister must have the co-operation of his hearers. They must be workers together. The minister cannot beg, and organize, and visit, and preach, and preside—get up bazaars, establish societies, collect for chapel debts, tell anecdotes at sewing meetings, and reconcile all the differences which arise between two-and-ninepence and half-a-crown. He is called to preach the Gospel—work enough for the strongest powers! Let him be encouraged and honoured in his holy vocation.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

(f) Let those who sustain the character of Christian ministers, think what a Master they serve, and in how great a work they are engaged! How little all the titles which the princes of this world can give must appear, when compared with that of the ministers of Jesus, and a servant of God, in the salvation of souls! How low the employments of secular life are, even those in which the nobles and kings of the earth are engaged, in comparison with theirs!—*Philip Doddridge, D.D.*

(g) Brothers! "our sufficiency is of God." Let us betake ourselves to the "throne of the heavenly grace," for our strength must be maintained by prayer. The suppliant leaves the altar clothed with power; the breath of his own prayer is returned into his spirit as an inspiration from heaven. The hope of the ministry is in PRAYER. To the devout mind, the sacred page is lighted with unearthly splendour; on the prayerful intellect, the noblest thoughts alight in their descent from the Eternal Intelligence; on the contrite heart, God bestows the most enriching bliss. Minister of Christ! wouldst thou study profitably? *Pray much.* Wouldst thou preach with soul-arousing energy? *PRAY MUCH.* Wouldst thou edify the believer, reclaim the wanderer, abash the blasphemer, and thrill the indifferent? *PRAY MUCH.* "Them that honour Me I will honour." The pulpit of the prayerful minister will be the scene of most brilliant conquest,—from it will stream the banner of glorious triumph; and instead of appropriating the honour to himself, the minister will exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—*Joseph Parker D.D.*

"THE GOD OF THE SPIRITS OF ALL FLESH."*

(Verse 16.)

"The God of the spirits of all flesh."

Various ways in which we become impressed by Scripture with a sense of the value of the soul—histories of Scripture—promises of Scripture—great transactions of Scripture—Redemption. Now let us learn the same lesson by contemplating the powers of the soul itself, especially in its connection with God.

Our text brings God and man together—spirits and the God of spirits.

I. The affecting view here furnished of the agency and dominion of God in connection with the human mind.

It is affecting. The power of other agents extends chiefly to the body. The oppressor holds the body bound; but knows not what a range the spirit takes unconscious of a chain.

1. *God imparts the powers of the spirit.* We have nothing self-derived. "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." But what is spirit? Of its essence we know nothing—only its properties. We know only the properties and attributes of matter,—hard, soft; hot, cold; wet, dry; resistance, &c.

So of the spirit—by its properties, powers, affections. I see that God has made it like Himself—a being of intellectual order; capable of knowledge, wisdom, devotion; and, like its Author, capable of communicating its own happiness and impressions; and especially, like its Author, capable of purity.

2. *He claims the affections of the spirit.*

3. *He heals the disorders and sympathises with the sorrows of the spirit.*

4. *He alone can constitute the happiness of the spirit.*

5. *He will decide upon the future destiny of the spirit.*

II. The moral uses of these contemplations.

1. *Let them teach you reverence for the human mind.*

2. *Let them impress you with thoughts of the vast importance of personal religion.*

3. *Let it inspire you with practical efforts to benefit and bless society. By education—by missions, &c.*

4. *Let it kindle hope for the prospects of the human race.—Samuel Thodey.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this and the next chapter the laws for the ordering of the worship of the people in their sacrifices and on their great festivals, most of which had been given already, are completed and pre-ented in regular order. During the wanderings in the wilderness the Israelites could not have carried out fully so elaborate a system of ceremonial worship. And now, with their settlement in Canaan so near, the whole law for their sacrificial worship is appropriately promulgated.

* For another homiletic sketch and illustrations on this text see pp. 302-305.

Verses 3-8 (comp. Exod. xxix. 38, 42).

Verse 7. *Strong wine.* רַקִּי = strong drink. It is perhaps used here for יַיִן = wine.

Verses 9, 10. The Sabbath-offering, now first commanded.

Verses 11-15. The offering at the new moons, also now first commanded. The observance of the new moon had been enjoined before (chap. x. 10); but now the offerings are specified for the first time.

Verses 16-25 (comp. Exod. xii. 3-28; xiii. 3-10; Lev. xxiii. 4-8; chap. ix. 1-5; and see pp. 139-143).

Verses 26-31 (comp. Lev. xxiii. 15-22; Deut. xvi. 9-12).

Most of the Homiletic topics suggested by this chapter have already been dealt with in "*The Preacher's*

Comm."; some of them in the work on Exodus, and others in our own work on this book. On the significance of the different kinds of offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116; on the Passover, see pp. 139-143; and on the relations and proportions between different kinds of offerings, see pp. 271-279.

THE MORNING AND EVENING SACRIFICES.

(Verses 1-8.)

These directions for the daily worship of the Israelites suggest—

I. Our daily need of consecration to God.

This is suggested by the burnt offering, which was designed to express the entire devotion of the offerer himself to the Lord.

1. *This personal consecration was claimed by God.* "My offering, and My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season."

2. *This personal consecration was made by man.* By offering the continual burnt offering, the Israelites symbolically expressed the surrender of themselves to the service of God. Keil and Del.: "In the daily burnt offering the congregation of Israel, as a congregation of Jehovah, was to sanctify its life, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord its God." Every morning we need to devote ourselves afresh to God, to seek His accepting and sanctifying grace, &c. "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1).

II. Our daily need of atonement with God.

The burnt offering sometimes expressed the idea of expiation as well as consecration. Thus Dr. Outram observes: "As burnt offerings are said in the Scriptures to 'make atonement' (Lev. i. 4; xiv. 20, 31) for those by whom they were offered, hence the Jews consider this class of victims as expiating certain kinds of sins." In the

"continual burnt offering" "the idea of expiation was subordinate to that of consecrating surrender to the Lord," but it was present in the offering, and it suggests our continual need of the atoning efficacy of our Saviour's blood. As our daily imperfections and sins tend to produce estrangement from God, so we daily need the reconciling influences of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

(a)

III. Our daily need of prayer to God.

"Of the daily burnt offerings Abarbanel says: 'The daily burnt offerings were intended as a species of solemn supplications presented to God, that He would be pleased to remember His mercy towards Israel morning and evening, that He would increase their corn, and wine, and oil: as is evident from the meat offering and drink offering which were to accompany them.' . . . After the Jews were deprived of the opportunity of sacrificing, the Sanhedrim decreed, that instead of the stated sacrifices they should offer stated prayers; evidently considering the design of sacrifices and prayers as one and the same."—*Outram*.

Our daily necessities should lead to our daily prayers. Here are some of our daily needs—

1. *Forgiveness of sin.* Sins of omission or commission, sins secret or open, mark our daily life; and cause us to need daily forgiveness. (b)

2. *"Grace to help."* Daily we need direction in difficulties and perplexities, and strength in our weakness; both

bodily and spiritual supplies are a constant necessity with us. (c)

3. *Protection from dangers both to body and to soul.* There are bodily perils visible and invisible, from accident and disease, &c. There are spiritual perils from corrupt social influences, from spiritual adversaries, &c. Hence our need of Divine guardianship. (d)

4. *Renewal of spiritual strength.* As

in the body there are daily waste and exhaustion which have to be repaired by food and rest; so have we need daily of that spiritual renewal which is obtained by the exercise of prayer and other means of grace. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," &c.

Let us every day offer to God our morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise. (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) See an illustration on this point, by Dr. Parker, on p. 356.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 338 (c).

(c) For an illustration on this point, see p. 409 (b).

(d) It is a blessed state of heart to wait upon God continually in the spirit of humble, fervent, believing prayer. Satan well knows the value of such a spirit, and therefore tries hard to prevent its exercise. He labours to extinguish this sacred fire, kindled in the soul by the Holy Ghost. He endeavours to disturb the mind, to ride upon the wings of the imagination, and to fill the soul with an endless succession of fleeting images: this daily irruption of the enemy constitutes no small part of the Christian warfare.—*Gleanings*.

(e) This morning and evening sacrifice should direct us how and when to worship God; we must remember Him in the morning and in the evening; He must be in our thoughts first and last; we must begin the day and end the day with Him. Let Him be in our first meditations, when we awake out of sleep. If the heart and thoughts be well settled in the morning, they are like to be better ordered and disposed all the day after. This made the prophet say, "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning," &c. (Psa. v. 3; and xxii. 2; lv. 17; cxix. 55, 62, 164; Dan. vi. 10). Then are the faculties of the soul most fresh and cheerful, then are the senses comforted and refreshed, because of the night's rest, and there-

fore best able to perform any duty to God or man. Again, the morning is a time wherein the world, and the business of this life, have not yet forestalled and possessed our hearts and affections, and therefore we are then the most fit to perform any special or spiritual duty required of us. Lastly, it is the first part of the day, and therefore the most worthy to be consecrated to God, after we have newly tasted His great mercy in the night past, which He might have made everlasting darkness unto us, and never raised us up again. Moreover, as the greatest part neglect this time, so do they also at evening; they forget what blessings they have received, what dangers they have escaped, what temptations they have resisted, what wants they have obtained, what decays they have supplied and repaired, for which they should give Him thanks; and, lastly, what sins they have committed for which He might justly destroy them. They remember not to cast themselves upon His protection; they consider not that He might make their bed their grave, and never bring them to see the light and the sun again.—*W. Attersoll*.

They know little of their own wants and emptiness, who are not much in prayer; and they know little of the greatness and goodness of God, who are not much in praise. The humble Christian hath a heart, in some measure framed to both. He hath within him the best schoolmaster, who teaches him how to pray, and how to praise, and makes him delight in the exercise of them both.—*Gleanings*.

THE OFFERINGS OF THE SABBATH AND OF THE NEW MOONS; OR SEASONS OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE.

(Verses 9-15.)

In addition to the two lambs, which were to be offered daily for "a continual burnt offering," on the Sabbath-day two lambs, with their meat offering and

their drink offering, were to be offered as "the burnt offering of every Sabbath." And at the beginning of every month two young bullocks, one ram, and seven

lambs, with their meat offerings and drink offerings, were to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering, beside the continual burnt offering.

Moreover, during the Sabbath all temporal and bodily labours were suspended. And at the new moon they rested from their secular occupations (Amos viii. 5, 6); they feasted (1 Sam. xx. 5); they blew the trumpets (chap. x. 10); and heard from the prophets the word of God (2 Kings iv. 23).

What was the reason of these observances? Why were they instituted? We suggest, because that *in addition to the ordinary daily discharge of religious duties, man needs seasons more especially for religious exercises and occupations.* (a) This need will appear if we consider—

I. The tendency of material and temporal things to engross our attention and regard.

The things of this life and of this world,—present, visible, and tangible—very generally receive much more than their meed of thought and concern and effort. The temptation to worldliness is perhaps more continuous and more subtle than to any other evil. Hence we need seasons which call our mind and heart to spiritual and eternal things. (b)

II. The supreme importance of spiritual things.

Our Lord taught that the soul of man is of more value to him than the whole world. "What is a man profited if he gain?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). The immense worth of the soul may be gathered from its nature, its capacities and powers, and its duration. If it be engrossed in worldly things it is degraded, and will be ruined, lost. It needs to be occupied in the pursuit of truth, holiness, love, beneficence, for in this pursuit it finds its true development and blessedness. And these high things are the real, the permanent, and the priceless things.

Hence the importance of those seasons which call the mind and heart to the contemplation and cultivation of these things.

III. That spiritual engagements and exercises are indispensable to the healthy existence and activity of the spiritual in man.

In human nature, until it is renewed by the Holy Spirit, the spiritual elements are not vital and vigorous. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," &c. "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal." Even after a man "is born of the Spirit," he must exercise his spiritual powers, must "walk in the spirit," or their vitality will decline. Activity is an essential condition of spiritual health and progress. The spiritual life needs culture, training, and action. For these reasons we argue the importance of special times and seasons for religious engagements and exercises.

Many of these seasons of special religious observance have passed away, the end for which they were instituted having been accomplished. But the Lord's day, the successor in a certain sense of the Jewish Sabbath, with its duties and privileges, remains as a priceless boon to mankind. Never were its physical rest and its spiritual associations and occupations more needed than in this age. Let us prize the day; let us use it wisely and well. "Every day," says Trapp, "should be a Sabbath to the saints, in regard of ceasing to do evil, learning to do well; but on the seventh-day-Sabbath our devotions should be doubled. The whole Sabbath should be spent in God's service. Psalm xcii., titled, 'A Psalm for the Sabbath,' mentions morning and evening performances (verse 2). Variety of duties may very well take up the whole day with delights. Besides, God gives us six whole days. Now, to sell by one measure and buy by another, is the way to a curse." (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A man who does not pray usually, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray especially. Who would care to live in a miser's house who starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly, and only abounding in it on particular occasions, when ostentation rather than sincerity may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table, sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times; and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God, select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(b) The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers—

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less
forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.
—*William Wordsworth.*

For another illustration on this topic, see p. 426 (c).

(c) I certainly do feel by experience the eternal obligation, because of the eternal necessity, of the Sabbath. The soul withers without it; it thrives in proportion to the fidelity of its observance. Nay, I even believe the stern rigour of the Puritan Sabbath had a grand effect upon the soul. Fancy a man thrown in upon himself, with no permitted music, nor relaxation, nor literature, nor secular conversation—nothing but his Bible, his own soul, and God's silence! What hearts of iron this system must have made. How different from our stuffed-arm-chair religion and "gospel of comfort"! as if to be made comfortable were the great end of religion. I am persuaded, however, that the Sabbath must rest not on an enactment, but on the necessities of human nature. It is necessary, not because it is commanded; but it is commanded because it is necessary. If the Bible says, "Eat the herb of the field," self-sustenance does not become a duty in consequence of the enactment, but the enactment is only a statement of the law of human nature. And so with the Sabbath.—*F. W. Robertson, M.A., "Life and Letters."*

On pp 285, 286, will be found other extracts illustrative of this topic.

THE FIRST SACRAMENT OF THE YEAR.

(Verse 11.)

"And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord."

It is always advantageous to look back upon the Gospel of the Old Testament, as well as upon the Gospel of the New. Good to light our torch at their fire; good amidst the meridian effulgence of the Gospel to look back upon the early twilight of the Law—since all tends to heighten our sense of present privilege and of present obligation. Our text enables us to do this.

We may well apply the language of our text to the first Sacrament of the year.

I. That approach to God through a sacrifice of His own appointing has always been the privilege of His devoted people.

Four of these sacrifices are here described: daily (vers. 3-8); weekly (vers. 9, 10); monthly (vers. 11-15); yearly at Passover (vers. 16-25) and at Pentecost (vers. 26-31). Concerning each observe—

1. *The authority by which it was prescribed.* "Command the children of Israel" (ver. 2). It was not left to option. This is His commandment. Nothing was to be done on Moses's authority: everything was in God's name. So of Christ. "Whom God hath set forth," &c. (Rom. iii. 25). "Him hath God exalted," &c. (Acts v. 31). Whatever is done in God's service must be done by His direction; for God's Church and instituted religion are more precious than all the world beside.

2. *The peculiar interest which God took in them.* "My offering, My bread for My sacrifices, a sweet savour unto Me." The wine was to be "poured unto the Lord." God sets a high value upon all the means and offices which bring the soul near to Himself; and we should do so too.

3. *The typical end and design of all* was by these various means to prepare for the coming of Christ, and to conduct the soul to Him.

"The precious blood of Christ" — precious in the sight of God for its infinite value; precious to the conscience of the convinced sinner for its purifying virtue; precious to the accepted believer for its blessings; precious to all around the throne, who are there alone through its virtue.

II. That there are some seasons in which the mind is aroused to a special contemplation of the great atonement.

"The beginnings of your months." We may fitly apply this to *the beginning of the year*. God marks the flight of time. "God requireth that which is past." And it quite accords with our feeling that the Sabbaths of the year should commence with a service expressly directing us to the Cross of Christ.

1. *Look back upon the sins and shortcomings of the year past*; and let this be a motive to a more full and direct application "to the blood of sprinkling." "In those sacrifices there is a remem-

brance again of sins every year." Look upon the sins of your holy duties, of your religious acts, of your sacramental services. It was not in vain that the sacrifice was doubled on the Sabbath.

2. *Look forward to the duties, trials, and enjoyments of the coming year*; and then see the influence of pardon and acceptance, softening the one, and heightening the other.

III. That in all our religious engagements we must have an immediate respect to the presence and glory of Him whom we approach.

"Ye shall offer a burnt-offering unto the Lord." We have something to do with man; but everything to do with God. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Think of this—

1. *To give solemnity to your spirit.* "God is greatly to be feared," &c. (Psa. lxxxix. 7). "Put off thy shoes," &c. (Exod. iii. 5).

2. *To give confidence to your faith.* "Let us draw near in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22). "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James i. 6).

3. *To give earnestness and simplicity to your prayers.*

IV. That we are looking forward to a world in which no repetition of these sacrifices and no renewal of these instructions will be required.

. Samuel Thodey.

THE OFFERINGS OF THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.

(Verses 16-25.)

The institution and observation of the Passover have received full consideration in "*The Hom. Comm.*" on Exod. xii. and xiii. 1-10. The subject has also been briefly treated on pp. 139-143

of this work. It does not seem desirable to take up the subject again. On the significance of the various offerings, see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST ; OR, MAN'S CELEBRATION OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN HARVEST.

(Verses 26-31.)

This festival was called "the feast of harvest" (Exod. xxiii. 16), "the feast of weeks" (Deut. xvi. 10), and the feast of Pentecost, because it was observed fifty days after the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, 16). The most important passages of Scripture relating to it, in addition to the text, are Lev. xxiii. 15-22, and Deut. xvi. 9-12.

Jewish writers in modern times generally regard this festival as the commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; but we do not find this taught in the Scriptures. Moreover, we shall not attempt here to indicate all the homiletic suggestions of this feast, but simply those connected with our subject, *Man's celebration of the goodness of God in harvest.*

I. The goodness of God to man calls for religious celebration from man.

By Divine command one day is here set apart for joyful acknowledgment of the goodness of God in the grain-harvest. The celebration was to be marked by—

1. *Rest from worldly labours.* "Ye shall do no servile work" (comp. Exod. xii. 16).

2. *Assembling for religious service.* "Ye shall have an holy convocation." In the days of the Apostles, as we learn from Acts ii. 1, 5-11, many Jews came from foreign countries to celebrate this feast.

3. *Rejoicing in the blessing of God upon their labours.* "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God" (Deut. xvi. 10, 11). It was a joyous occasion. "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest." Joyous worship honours God, and is acceptable to Him. God's goodness to us should be gratefully and gladly celebrated by us. (a)

"O bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die."—Watts.

522

II. The goodness of God to man calls for confession of man's sin to God.

At this harvest festival a sin offering was to be made to God. "One kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you." But now that Jesus Christ hath made "His soul an offering for sin," we have no need to bring a "kid to make an atonement." Yet the principles involved in the offering remain.

1. *God's goodness should deepen our impression of our sin.* It should remind us of our unworthiness, and ill-desert. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."

2. *The deeper impression of our sin should lead us to exercise increased faith in the Great Sacrifice for sin.* "If the blood of bulls and of goats," &c. (Heb. ix. 13, 14). (b)

III. The goodness of God to man calls for the thanksgiving of man to God.

Pentecost was a festival of thanks for the harvest. Such a festival involved—

1. *Acknowledgment of dependence upon God.* It is He who giveth "us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (c)

2. *Expression of gratitude to God.* The "new meat-offering unto the Lord" (verse 26), the two wave loaves of leavened bread of fine flour (Lev. xxiii. 17), and the "two sheep of a year old for a sacrifice of peace-offerings" (Lev. xxiii. 19), were all designed to express the thankful homage of the people to God. The blessings of God to us should lead us heartily to enquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (d)

IV. The goodness of God to man calls for the consecration of man to God.

"Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord; two young bullocks," &c. (verses 27-29, 31).

The principal meaning of the burnt-offering was the self-dedication of the offerer. Two observations are suggested—

1. *Man's consecration to God should be complete.* The burnt-offering was completely consumed on the altar to the honour of God. So man should dedicate himself unreservedly to God. And the blessings bestowed by God on man should impel him to do so. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (Rom. xii. 1). (e)

2. *Man's complete consecration to God*

is acceptable to Him. "Ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord" (see pp. 272, 273).

V. The goodness of God to man calls for goodness from man to his fellowman.

At the harvest festival God called man to liberality and hospitality; to show kindness to the poor, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Lev. xxiii. 22; Deut. xvi. 11). The kindness of God to us should constrain us to show kindness to each other, especially to the poor, &c. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) An extract illustrative of this point will be found on p. 118 (c).

(b) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(c) This topic is illustrated on p. 276 (b) and (c).

(d) And this topic is illustrated on p. 276 (a).

(e) Self-consecration is illustrated on pp. 93 (a) and (b), 101 (b) and (c), 117 (b), and 344 (c).

(f) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 117 (a), and 343 (a) and (b).

CHAPTER XXIX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have directions concerning three great annual religious occasions, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each of these had been previously instituted; and the chief reason of their mention here is for the enumeration of the sacrifices to be offered upon each occasion. The chief treatment of the topics which these occasions suggest will be found in other volumes of *The Preacher's Commentary*, chiefly in that upon *Leviticus*. And as we have already explained the moral significance of the different kinds of sacrifice (see pp. 98, 99, 115, 116), and

considered the relations and proportions between them (see pp. 271-279), the chapter only requires brief treatment from us.

Vers. 1-6. The Feast of Trumpets and its offerings (comp. Lev. xxiii. 24, 25; chap. x. 1-10; and see pp. 156 160).

Vers. 7-11. The great Day of Atonement and its offerings (comp. Lev. xvi.; xxiii. 26-32).

Vers. 12-40. The Feast of Tabernacles and its offerings (comp. Exod. xxiii. 16,—“the Feast of Ingathering;” Lev. xxiii. 34-36, 39 43; Deut. xvi. 13-15; xxxi. 10-13).

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS: HOW TO BEGIN A NEW YEAR.

(Verses 1-6.)

The Feast of Trumpets is “the feast of the new moon, which fell on the first of Tizri. It differed from the ordinary

festivals of the new moon in several important particulars. It was one of the seven days of Holy Convocation.

Instead of the mere blowing of the trumpets of the Temple at the time of the offering of the sacrifices, it was 'a day of blowing of trumpets.' In addition to the daily sacrifices and the eleven victims offered on the first of every month, there were offered a young bullock, a ram, and seven lambs of the first year, with the accustomed meat offerings, and a kid for a sin offering. The regular monthly offering was thus repeated, with the exception of one young bullock." Let us notice—

i. *The time of the celebration.* "And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month." The seventh month was called by the Jews in later times Tizri, but in the Old Testament Ethanim (1 Kings viii. 2). Tradition unanimously affirms it to have been the first month of the civil year. Religious celebrations were more numerous in this month than in any of the others. "It formed," says Scott, "a kind of vacation between the harvest and the ensuing seed-time; and these solemnities during that season might intimate, that the ordinances of God are the rational refreshment from the fatigue of business; and that religion does not at all interfere with our true interest even in this world." (a)

ii. *The meaning of the celebration.* "There seems to be no sufficient reason to call in question the common opinion of Jews and Christians, that it was the festival of the New Year's Day of the civil year, the first of Tizri, the month which commenced the Sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Taking this view of its meaning, we regard the paragraph before us as illustrating *the manner in which we should begin a New Year.*

I. With special attention to religious duties and privileges.

This day was to be marked by rest from ordinary labours, and by a religious assembly. "Ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you." Additional sacrifices were to be offered on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet

savour unto the Lord," &c. (vers. 2-5). And there were to be in addition to "the burnt offering of the month," &c. (ver. 6). It is eminently appropriate to enter upon a new year with religious meditation, and by offering to God the sacrifices of praise and prayer and of beneficence to man. The assembling in "holy convocation" also is as becoming in us, and as helpful to us, as it was to the Israelites. (b)

II. With humble confession of sin and prayer for pardon.

The Israelites were to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for them" (ver. 5). See p. 115. And in entering upon a new year it is wise to seriously review our past lives, to mark where we have rebelled against the holy will of God, how often and sadly we have failed in our duty, &c.; to humbly acknowledge our sin unto God; and to seek forgiveness from Him through our Great Sin-Offering. In this way we should commence the year with our sins forgiven and our souls cleansed by the blood of Christ. (c)

III. With grateful acknowledgment of the Divine mercies.

The Israelites were commanded to offer a "meat-offering of flour mingled with oil," &c. (vers. 3, 4). The meat-offerings, like the peace-offerings, were eucharistic (see pp. 99, 116). How appropriate is it for us at the very beginning of the year to review the mercies of the past! Think of God's mercy in sparing our sinful lives; in forgiving our many aggravated offences; in sustaining us by the constant exercise of His power; in enriching us with countless gifts of His grace, &c. Let us reflect upon His mercy in all this until our heart grows warm with holy fire; and then let us pour out unto Him the offerings of our fervent gratitude. We are not fit to enter upon any year until we have heartily and devoutly blessed God for His great kindness to us in the past. (d)

IV. With complete consecration of ourselves to God.

"Ye shall offer a burnt offering for

a sweet savour unto the Lord," &c. (ver. 2). See pp. 98, 115, 116. An extra burnt offering was required from the Israelites, at the Feast of Trumpets. May we not infer from this that, at the commencement of the year, there are special reasons why we should consecrate ourselves to God, or renew such consecration, if it has already been made? We suggest as such reasons—

1. *"The multitude of His mercies" to us.* We have said that they should be reviewed at this time; and the review should lead to our self-consecration to Him. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c. (e)

2. *The abridgment of our opportunities.* The past years have borne away with them many opportunities of usefulness, &c. "Much of our time has run to waste." We ought to have

devoted ourselves to God long ago. "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." (f)

3. *The uncertainty of the future.* How many who commenced last year well and strong in body, were called away by death before its close!

"To-morrow, Lord, is Thine,
Lodged in Thy sovereign hand;
And if its sun arise and shine,
It shines by Thy command."
—Doddridge.

"Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *NOW* is the day of salvation."

CONCLUSION.

i. *Let the people of God begin the year by renewed and more fervent devotion to Him.*

ii. *Let those who have not hitherto given themselves to Him do so at once, completely, and for ever.*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) The times of the festivals were evidently ordained in wisdom, so as to interfere as little as possible with the industry of the people. The Passover was held just before the work of harvest commenced, Pentecost at the conclusion of corn-harvest and before vintage, the Feast of Tabernacles after all the fruits of the ground were gathered in. In winter, when travelling was difficult, there were no festivals.—*S. Clark, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(b) We stand in the first Sabbath of the new year. It is a time for review and contemplation. He is a genius at stupidity who does not think now. The old year died in giving birth to this: as the life of Jane Seymour, the English Queen, departed when that of her son, Edward VI., dawned. The old year was a queen, this is a king. The grave of the one and the cradle of the other are side by side.—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(c) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 356, 359.

(d) In the dew drops that top every spike of grass, sow the sward with orient pearl, and hang like pendant diamonds, sparkling in the sun from all the leaves of the frost, you see the multitude of His mercies. He crowns the year with His bounty. We have seen other streams dried up by the heat of summer, and frozen by the cold of winter—that of His mercies never. It has flowed on; day by day, night by night, ever flowing; and largely fed of heavenly showers, sometimes overflowing all its banks. To this, and that other one, has

the past brought afflictions? Still, may I not ask, how few our miseries to the number of our mercies; how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings? and even when He smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing of mercy as well as judgment; aye, much more of mercies than judgments? Let us not write the memory of these on water, and of those on the rock.—*Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*

(e) Beloved, remember what you have heard of Christ, and what He has done for you; make your heart the golden cup to hold the rich recollections of His past lovingkindness; make it a pot of manna to preserve the heavenly bread whereon saints have fed in days gone by. Let your memory treasure up everything about Christ which you have heard or felt, or known, and then let your fond affections hold Him fast evermore. Love Him! Pour out that alabaster box of your heart, and let all the precious ointment of your affection come streaming on His feet. If you cannot do it with joy, do it sorrowfully; wash His feet with tears, wipe them with the hairs of your head, but do love Him, the blessed Son of God, your ever tender friend.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) Whatever the joy and peace of a Christian's death-bed, there will always be a feeling of regret that so little has been done, or rather so little attempted for Christ. And while

His firmament glows with the dawns of eternity, and the melody of angels is just stealing on his ears, and the walls of the bright city bound his horizon—if one wish could detain him in the tabernacle of flesh, oh! it would not be the wish of tarrying with the weeping ones who cluster round his bed; and it would not be the wish of providing for children and superintending their education, or of perfecting some plan for their settlement in life; he knows that there is a Husband for the widow and a Father of the fatherless. The only wish which could put a check on his spirit as the plumes of its wing just feel the free air; it is that he might toil a little longer for Christ, and do at least some fraction more of His work before entering into the light of His presence. And what, then, is the reminding him that “now is his salvation nearer,” but the admonishing him that whilst thousands upon thousands are bowing down to the stock and the stone, and vice is enthroned on high places, and an unholy

covenant is made between evil spirits and evil men, to sweep from this globe the name of the believer, there is a swift lapsing of the period during which he may act out his vows of allegiance; that nerve and sinew, time and talent—all must be centred more fixedly than ever in the service of Christ; lest his dying day find him recreant or indolent, and he is summoned to depart ere he have done the little which with all his strenuousness he might possibly effect for the Lord and His kingdom.—*H. Melville, B.D.*

Some of you are spending your last January. You have entered the year, but you will not end it. Somewhere you will shut your eyes in the sleep that knows no waking. Other hands shall plant the Christmas-tree and shake the New Year's greeting. It will be joy to some, sorrow to others. I would leave in your ears five short words of one syllable each—“This year thou shalt die.”—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT; ITS MORAL SUGGESTIONS.

(Verses 7-11.)

The whole of the ceremonies of this day are described in Lev. xvi. Our business is to attend to the moral suggestions of the paragraph under present consideration.

I. That it is our duty to set apart some time for serious reflection upon our sins.

The Israelites were required to set apart this one day in every year for the special remembrance of their sins, and for humiliation and atonement because of them. To seriously reflect upon our sins is a duty we owe—

1. *To ourselves.* Unless our sins be forgiven, they will prove our ruin; unless we sincerely repent of them, they will not be forgiven; unless we recognise and feel them, we cannot repent of them; and unless we consider our life in relation to them, we shall not recognise and feel them, for they are apt to escape our notice, and we are prone to overlook them, or to call them by soft names. Hence the need, &c.

2. *To God.* He calls upon us to consider our ways, to repent of our sins, to turn from them, &c. It is both our duty and interest at times to pause, examine our ways, &c. (a)

II. That reflection upon our sins should lead to humiliation because of them.

The day of atonement was sometimes called the “feast of humiliation” amongst the Jews, who upon it were required to humble themselves before God on account of their sins. Self-examination and reflection on our sins will be unproductive of any good result unless they lead to penitential sorrow because of them. Without true repentance the knowledge of sin tendeth to spiritual death rather than life. (b)

III. That humiliation because of our sins should lead to the mortification of our carnal appetites.

“Ye shall afflict your souls,” was one of the Divine commands to Israel concerning this day. “The expression to ‘afflict the soul,’ appears to be the old term for fasting; but its meaning evidently embraces, not only abstinence from food, but that penitence and humiliation which give scope and purpose to the outward act of fasting.”—*Speaker's Comm.* Fasting is good religiously only when bodily abstinence is an expression of spiritual penitence.

We do not affirm that fasting is a Christian duty. Even amongst the Jews, on this solemn day, children and sick people were exempt from the obligation. But it is the duty of the Christian to keep carnal passions under the control of spiritual principles, and not to allow bodily appetites to damp the ardour of spiritual aspirations. Thus did St. Paul: "I keep under my body," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 27; Gal. v. 24; Col. iii. 5, 6). (c)

IV. That true penitence leads to gratitude and personal consecration to God.

Special burnt-offerings, expressive of self-consecration, with their meat-offerings, expressive of thankfulness, were to be offered unto the Lord on this day. "Ye shall offer a burnt-offering," &c. (ver. 8-10). (d)

V. That our penitence, even when it is true in itself and in its expressions, is imperfect, and needs the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice.

The Israelites were commanded to offer "one kid of the goats for a sin-offering; beside the sin-offering of atonement," &c. (ver. 11). Our ap-

proaches to God in penitence and prayer and praise are defective and faulty. "Though we must not repent that we have repented, yet we must repent that we have not repented better."

VI. That the sacrifices of the ceremonial law were unable to take away sin.

The fact that in addition to the sin-offerings of the great ceremonies of this day (Lev. xvi.), another sin-offering was required, most impressively displays the insufficiency of the legal offerings, in themselves, to secure pardon and cleansing from sin for the offerers. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (comp. Heb. x. 1-18). "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (e)

Thus all the suggestions of this paragraph lead us up to our Lord and Saviour. He is the true hope of the penitent soul. He is the only and the all-sufficient Saviour from sin. Seek Him; trust in Him; live to Him.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) We should weigh our own spirits. In the remembrance that our hearts are "deceitful above all things," we should, in that duty, go carefully and faithfully to work; not satisfied with a mere surface look; not regarding the word and the action merely, but jealously tracing each, as in the sight of God, to its secret source within; testing that source by the application of Bible criterions; desiring to detect not merely motives that are un-mixedly evil, but every secret adulteration of motives that are in the main good—every alloy—every deteriorating ingredient; "keeping our hearts with all diligence;" and looking forward to that day, when the equal balances of Heaven shall try—both in deed, and in principle and motive—"every man's work of what sort it is."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) As certain fabrics need to be damped before they will take the glowing colours with which they are to be adorned, so our spirits need the bedewing of repentance before they can receive the radiant colouring of delight. The glad news of the Gospel can only be printed on wet paper. Have you ever seen clearer shining than that which follows a

shower. Then the sun transforms the rain-drops into gems, the flowers look up with fresher smiles and faces glittering from their refreshing bath, and the birds from among the dripping branches sing with notes more rapturous, because they have paused awhile. So, when the soul has been saturated with the rain of penitence, the clear shining of forgiving love makes the flowers of gladness blossom all around. The steps by which we ascend to the palace of delight are usually moist with tears. Grief for sin is the porch of the House Beautiful, where the guests are full of "the joy of the Lord."—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(c) The flesh warreth against the spirit; and the enemy is never so effectually vanquished, as when he is reduced by famine. That hunger is not holiness we are ready to admit; but that it may easily be improved into a glorious mean or instrument of it, universal practice has asserted, and general experience confirmed. The prophet, therefore, does not barely say (Joel ii. 15-18), "proclaim a fast;" but "sanctify," that is, hallow or render it holy; make it subservient to moral and religious purposes, by availing yourselves

of that humble, and serious, and recollected frame of mind, which bodily mortification has a natural tendency to produce ; and let it lead you to godly sorrow, heartfelt repentance, and strenuous resolutions of immediate reformation.—*W. Busfield.*

It is true that there is no direct and positive command given by Christ that you should abstain from animal and vegetable food, and the drinking of water ; but lest the flesh-pampering man should be too eager to avail himself of this silence, or make a screen of such a supposed authority, I ought to say, that it is in full and manifold proof that such national self-denial, accompanied with sincere faith and humility, has restrained the hand of the Lord from national judgments ; and moreover, that although the practice of fasting degenerated into the Pharisaism of monkish austerities, it was observed by the Church of Christ in its simplest, purest, and healthiest estate ; and that the more pious and holy of the followers of Jesus have left behind them strong testi-

monies to its value and efficacy.—*T. J. Judkin.*

The Church of God would be far stronger to wrestle with this ungodly age if she were more given to prayer and fasting. There is a mighty efficacy in these two Gospel ordinances. The first links us to heaven, the second separates us from earth. Prayer takes us into the banqueting house of God ; fasting overturns the surfeiting tables of earth. Prayer gives us to feed on the bread of heaven, and fasting delivers the soul from being encumbered with the fulness of bread which perisheth. When Christians shall bring themselves up to the uttermost possibilities of spiritual vigour, then they will be able, by God's Spirit working in them, to cast out devils, which to day, without the prayer and fasting, laugh them to scorn.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(d) Illustrations on this point will be found on pp. 93, 101, 117, 344.

(e) For an illustration on this point see p. 141 (b).

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES ; ITS MEANING AND LESSONS.

(Verses 12-40.)

This institution is introduced here simply for the purpose of giving directions as to the offerings to be presented during the feast ; and nothing is said of its origin, or design, &c. Notice—

i. *The number of the offerings prescribed.* The offerings required upon this occasion were far more numerous than those of any other festival. During the seven days of the feast, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs, and no less than seventy bullocks were sacrificed to the Lord ; being twice as many rams and lambs, and five times as many bullocks, as were offered at the Feast of Passover ; and in addition, on the eighth day were offered one bullock, one ram, and seven lambs.

ii. *The daily distribution of the offerings.* The arrangement as to the number of bullocks to be offered each day is peculiar. On the first day thirteen were to be offered, on the second day twelve, and so on, reducing the number by one each day, till on the seventh day seven were offered. This arrangement was instituted, and the total number was also fixed at seventy, probably to bring into prominence the number

seven, “the holy symbolical covenant number, by way of intimation that the mercies of the harvest accrued by virtue of God's covenant.” Bishop Wordsworth, however, suggests “that the gradual evanescence of the law till the time of its absorption in the Gospel is here presignified in the law itself.” And from the fact that at the solemnities of the eighth day, which closed the Feast, only one bullock was offered, Matthew Henry makes a similar suggestion : “It is hereby intimated to them that the legal dispensation should wax old, and vanish away at last ; and the multitude of their sacrifices should end in one great sacrifice, infinitely more worthy than all of them.”

Having repeatedly spoken of the general significance of these offerings, we proceed to notice briefly—

iii. *The meaning of this Festival.* From the fact that the Feast was celebrated in booths, and is always designated by this word (booths, Heb., *succoth*), Dean Stanley argues “that it did not commemorate the tents of the wilderness, but probably the ‘booths’ of the first sabbath (Succoth, Lev. xxiii.

43; Exod. xiii. 20), the point of transition between the settled and the nomadic life." But this view attaches too great importance to the use of a word, and is not in harmony with the statements of the Scriptures as to the meaning of the Feast. We will endeavour to point out the meanings assigned to it in the Scriptures, and the corresponding lessons which it conveys to us.

I. It was a memorial of their emancipation from Egypt, teaching us that we should cherish the memory of former mercies.

That it was such a memorial appears from Lev. xxiii. 43, "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." "The tents of the wilderness furnished a home of freedom compared with the house of bondage out of which they had been brought." The remembrance of God's gracious dealings with us should be piously fostered by us.

1. *Gratitude urges to this.* To forget the kindnesses bestowed upon us is basely ungrateful.

2. *Reason urges to this.* The recollection of past mercies inspires confidence and hope in present difficulties and needs. To forget them is folly. (a)

II. It was a memorial of their life in the wilderness, reminding us that our present condition is that of strangers and pilgrims.

"And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, &c. That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 40-43). "Now the booth in which the Israelite kept the feast, and the tent which was his ordinary abode in the wilderness, had this in common—they were temporary places of sojourn, they belonged to camp life. The seven days of abode in the booths of the festival was thus a fair symbol of the forty years of abode in tents in the wilderness." It suggests, that "here have we no continuing city." We are

dwellers in tents, not in mansions. Life in this state is brief even at the longest. "Our days upon the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding." (b)

But the Feast was to commemorate the blessings of their life in the desert; blessings such as are given to us in our pilgrimage.

1. *Divine guidance.* "The Lord went before them," &c. "The pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day," &c. (Neh. ix. 19). The same is promised to us (Psa. xxxii. 8; Prov. iii. 6; Isa. lviii 11). (c)

2. *Divine support.* "Forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness," &c. (Neh. ix. 21). And still He supports His people (Psa. lxxxiv. 11; Matt. vi. 25-34). (d)

3. *Divine protection.* The pillar of the cloud and of the fire was a protection. The Lord also made them victorious over their enemies. In our pilgrimage He defends us (John x. 28; Rom. viii. 31, 37-39; 1 Pet. iii. 13). (e)

III. It was a thanksgiving for rest and a settled abode in the Promised Land, suggesting the certainty and blessedness of the rest which remains for the people of God.

This aspect of the Feast is clearly expressed in the *Speaker's Comm.*: "No time in the year could be so suitable for the Israelites to be reminded of the wonderful Providence which had fed and sheltered them in the wilderness, where they had no land to call their own, and where there was neither harvest, nor gathering into barns, nor vintage, as the season in which they offered thanksgiving to Jehovah for the fruits of the ground, and consecrated the crops newly stored in. In this way the transition from nomadic to agricultural life, which took place when the people settled in the Holy Land, must have tended to fulfil the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. From that time the festival called to mind the long and weary wanderings in contrast with the plenty and comfort of settled possession." A compari-

son of Lev. xxiii. 40 with Rev. vii. 9, suggests that to the inspired Seer of Patmos the Feast of Tabernacles was a figure of the perfect rest and joy of heaven. Hengstenberg says that the "palms" of Rev. vii. 9, "are beyond doubt those of the feast of tabernacles." There are at least three points of analogy—

1. *Rest.* With this Feast all labour ceased, and winter, the period of rest, began. In heaven the Christian rests from his wanderings, rests from weary labours, rests from the struggle against sin, &c. (f)

2. *Reward.* At this Feast the Israelite had gathered in the entire harvest, had secured the reward of his labours. In heaven the Christian shall reap a rich reward for all his toils on earth, &c. (g)

3. *Rejoicing.* This was the most joyful of all the Jewish feasts. "They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest." The redeemed in heaven

have "entered into the joy of their Lord." (h)

IV. It was a thanksgiving for the completed harvest, teaching us to receive the precious fruits of the earth as the kind gifts of a bountiful Providence.

"The feast of ingathering, in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Exod. xxiii. 16). "When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days" (Lev. xxiii. 39). "Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine," &c. (Deut. xvi. 13-15). Learn from this, that in the harvest we should gratefully recognise the result of the blessing of God upon our labours. He giveth us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). See sketch on chap. xxviii. 26-31. (i)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) Illustrations on *Life, a Pilgrimage*, will be found on pp. 163, 409.

(c) This point is illustrated on pp. 152, 154, 164.

(d) Illustrations on *the dependence of man and the support of God* appear on pp. 154, 155, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(f) The rest of inaction is but the quiet of a stone, or the stillness of the grave, or the exhaustion of a spent and feeble nature. But there is a nobler rest than this. There is rest in health; there is rest in the musical repose of exquisitely balanced powers; there is rest to the desiring faculties when they find the thing desired; there is rest in the rapture of congenial employment; rest in the flow of joyful strength; rest in the swift glide of the stream when it meets with no impediment. Such is the rest of the glorified. Perfect beings in a perfect world, rejoicing in their native element, having no weakness within, and no resisting force without, to check the outflow and expression of their loving natures; their activity, therefore, being easy, natural, and necessary, as light is to the sun, and fragrance to the flowers of spring—activity to them is rest. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest," not from

their works, but only "from their labours." It would be a labour for them not to work. To hush their music, and to stop their action, would be to them intolerable toil; they would be "weary with forbearing, and could not stay." So they "rest;" yet "they rest not day nor night."—*C. Stanford, D.D.*

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 420.

(g) An illustration on the *Rewards of heaven* appears on pp. 6, 7.

(h) For an illustration on the *Joys of heaven* see p. 169.

(i) There is a point at which we must give up and stand still, and say, "We can do no more." That is a matter of certainty in your common daily life; and out of it will come such reflections as these: I have nothing that has not upon it God's signature and superscription. I can work; but my work may come to nothing. I may sow my seed, but if He withhold the baptism of the dew and the rain, and the benediction of the sunlight, all my labour will come to nothingness, to mortification and pain! This must have some meaning. There must, in such a combination of circumstances as these, be a purpose which I ought to know, and understand, and work by. If a man once be started on that course of reflection, the probability is, that he who begins as a reverent inquirer, will end as a devout worshipper.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

CHAPTER XXX.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have regulations as to the force and obligatoriness of vows, with certain cases specified in which they ceased to be binding. Rules for the estimation of things vowed to the Lord had already been laid down in Lev. xxvii. The present chapter appropriately follows the laws regulating the sacrifices, inasmuch as vows frequently related to the offering of sacrifices.

Ver. 1. *Unto the heads of the tribes*, because the questions which are here dealt with would be brought before them for settlement.

Ver. 2. *A vow*. Heb., *neder*, "a positive vow, or promise to give any part of one's property to the Lord."—*Keil and Del.*

A bond. Heb., *issar*, "the negative vow, or vow of abstinence."—*Ibid.*

"A vow involved an obligation to do: a bond, an obligation to forbear doing."—*Speaker's Comm.*

He shall not break his word. Margin: "profane," i.e., by not fulfilling, or by violating it.

Four cases are specially prescribed for: (1) that of a youthful maiden in her father's house (vers. 3-5); (2) that of a woman betrothed, but not married (vers. 6-8); (3) that of a widow, or divorced woman (ver. 9); (4) that of a married woman in her husband's house (vers. 10-12).

Ver. 6. *And if she had at all an husband, &c.* "Rather, 'And if she shall at all be an husband's, and her vows shall be upon her, or a rash utterance of her lips, wherewith she hath bound her soul.' The 'at all' intimates that the case of a girl betrothed, but not yet actually married, is here contemplated."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Uttered ought, &c. "Lit., 'the rash utterance of her lips.'"—*Ibid.* "Gossip of her lips, that which is uttered thoughtlessly or without reflection."—*Keil and Del.*

Ver. 15. *He shall bear her iniquity; i.e.,* "the sin which the wife would have had to bear if she had broken the vow of her own accord."—*Ibid.*

THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION OF RELIGIOUS VOWS.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

Notice—

I. The case supposed.

"If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond."

1. *The vow is made unto God*. He is the only true and proper object of religious vows. There is not a trace in the Bible of vows being made to saints or angels.

2. *The vow binds the soul*. "Swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond." "A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul."

3. *The vow is voluntarily made*. "Vows were not of Divine appointment, but originated with men them-

selves." Spontaneity was of the essence of a vow. The obligations were always voluntarily self-imposed. This is clearly expressed in regard to the offering of Ananias (Acts v. 4). (a)

4. *The thing vowed must be lawful*. No one can rightly bind himself to do an unrighteous thing. Generally vows were solemn promises to consecrate something to God, or to do something in His service and to His honour. But "votive offerings arising from the produce of any impure traffic, were wholly forbidden" (Deut. xxiii. 18). The offering must be pure; the service must be righteous and good.

II. The danger implied.

"He shall not break His word," &c.

This implies temptation to break the word, or peril of failure in fulfilling the vow. There is in human nature a deep-rooted and deplorable tendency to forget in health the vows which were made in sickness, and to ignore in our security and peace the vows we made in our danger and alarm. (b)

III. The command given.

1. *That he shall perform his vow.* "He shall not break his word."

2. *That he shall fully perform his vow.* "He shall do according to all

that proceedeth out of his mouth." (c)
Conclusion.

Appeal to those who have unfulfilled vows resting upon them.

1. *Baptismal vows*, in the case of some of you, are unfulfilled. (d)

2. *Vows made in affliction or danger* by some of you have not been paid.

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it," &c. (Eccles. v. 4, 5). Humbly and earnestly resolve, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now." Resolve and do.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vow is a promise made to God, in the things of God. The obligation of it is, by casuists, deemed to be as great as that of an oath. It is a sacred and solemn bond, wherever a soul binds itself to God in lawful things; and being once bound by it, it is a most heinous evil to violate it. "It is a high piece of dishonesty to fail in what we have promised to men," saith Dr. Hall; "but to disappoint God in our vows is no less than sacrilege. The act is free and voluntary; but if once a just and lawful vow or promise hath passed your lips, you may not be false to God in keeping it." It is with us as to our vows, as it was with Ananias and Sapphira as to their substance: "Whilst it remained," saith Peter, "was it not thine own?" He needed not to sell and give it; but if he will give, he may not reserve; it is death to save only a part; he lies to the Holy Ghost that defalcates from that which he engaged himself to bestow. If thou hast vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, look to it that thou be faithful in thy performance, for He is a great and jealous God, and will not be mocked.—*J. Flavel*.

This topic is illustrated on pp. 92, 93.

(b) In English we say, "The river past, and God forgotten," to express with how mournful a frequency He whose assistance was invoked, it may have been earnestly, in the moment of peril, is remembered no more as soon as by His help the danger has been surmounted. The Spaniards have the proverb too, but it is with them: "The river past, the saint forgotten," the saints being in Spain more prominent objects of invocation than God. And the Italian form of it sounds a still sadder depth of ingratitude: "The peril passed, the saint mocked."—*R. C. Trench, D.D.*

Praises should always follow answered prayer. It was thus with one man. He was very ill; a great strong man in his day: yet disease touched him, shrivelled him up, laid him upon a lowly bed, made him pray to the humblest

creature in his house for favours hour after hour. As he lay there in his lowliness and weakness, he said, "If God would raise me up I would be a new man, I would be a devout worshipper in the sanctuary, I would live to His glory." And God gathered him up again; did not break the bruised reed, did not quench the smoking flax, but permitted the man to regain his faculties. And he was not well one month till he became as worldly as he was before his affliction. He prayed as if his heart loved God; and when he got his health back again he was a practical atheist—he was virtually the basest of blasphemers.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

For another illustration on this point, see p. 186 (b).

(c) I know of two men who started business with this vow: "We shall give to God one tenth of all our profits." The first year the profits were considerable. The next year there was increase in the profits, and of course increase in the tithe; in a few years the profits became very large indeed, so that the partners said to one another, "Is not a tenth of this rather too much to give away? suppose we say now we shall give a twentieth?" And they gave a twentieth,—and the next year the profits had fallen down; the year after that they fell down again, and the men said to one another, as Christians should say in such a case, "Have not we broken our vow? Have not we robbed God?" And in no spirit of selfish calculation, but with humility of soul, self-reproach, and bitter contrition, they went back to God and told Him how the matter stood, prayed His forgiveness, renewed their vow, and God opened the windows of heaven and came back to them and all the old prosperity.—*Ibid.*

(d) The children of pious parents, who in their infancy were dedicated to God in holy baptism, lie under the solemn vows which were assumed in their behalf. Though your parents had authority to promise for you, it is you that must perform it, for it is you that they obliged. If you think they did you

wrong, you may be out of the covenant when you will, if you will renounce the kingdom of heaven. But it is much wiser to be thankful to God, that your parents were the means of so great a blessing to you; and to do that again more expressly by yourselves, which

they did for you; and openly with thankfulness, to own the covenant in which you are engaged, and live in the performance and in the comforts of it all your days.—*Richard Baxter.*

THE VOWS OF WOMEN,—THEIR RATIFICATION AND ABROGATION:

(Verses 3-16.)

These verses suggest the following observations—

I. That religious vows are sometimes rashly made.

They are sometimes “the rash utterance of the lips” (ver. 6). Considering their solemn nature and binding force, they ought never to be made without serious consideration.

II. That religious vows made by females under the authority of a father or a husband, and disallowed by them, cease to be binding.

Three examples are given of the abrogation of the vows of women. (1) A father may annul a vow made by his youthful daughter dwelling with him (vers. 3-5). (2) A man betrothed to a maiden, but not married to her, may annul a vow made by her after her betrothal to him (vers. 6-8). (3) A married man may annul a vow made by his wife (vers. 10-12). But in order to annul these vows the father or the husband, as the case may be, must forbid their fulfilment, and that at once. If he kept silence concerning the vow, by so doing he ratified it (vers. 4, 7, 11). And the prohibition of the vow, if it was to be of any force, must be promptly uttered. “If her father disallow her in the day that he heareth,” &c. (ver. 5, and vers. 7, 8, 12). These regulations were wise and equitable; for the daughter or wife might make a vow which would be “prejudicial to the affairs of the family, perplex the provision made for the table if the vow related to meats, or lessen the provision made for his children if the vow would be more expensive than his estate would bear,” or otherwise seriously

interfere with the measures of the father and husband.

III. That vows made by females under such authority and not disallowed, and vows made by females not under such authority, are binding.

If the father did not without delay protest against his young daughter's vow (vers. 3, 4), or the intending husband against the vow of his betrothed (vers. 6, 7), or the husband against the vow of his wife (vers. 10, 11), such vow remained in full force. And the vows made by widows or divorced wives were as binding as those made by a man (ver. 9). Not being dependent upon a husband or father, such a woman was at liberty to make vows, and having made a vow was bound to fulfil it.

IV. That if a husband improperly annul a vow made by his wife, the guilt of its non-fulfilment will rest upon him.

“But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day,” &c. (vers. 14, 15). In this case the guilt of the unpaid vow would rest upon the husband; and he must either present a trespass-offering for the expiation of his sin (Lev. v. 4-13), or he must bear the punishment due to the sin.

The regulations we have been considering authorise the following *inferences*—

i. *The solemnity of religious vows.* They relate to the soul and to God. They ought not to be lightly made; and when made, they should be performed with scrupulous fidelity.

ii. *The importance and sacredness of parental authority.* Even a vow made

by a maiden to God must be set aside if her father object to it. The Scriptures clearly and repeatedly affirm the authority of parents (Exod. xx. 12; Eph. vi. 1-3). And it is confirmed by the example of our Lord (Luke ii. 51). This authority involves a double obligation—

1. *Parental obligation*—to consider and to promote the welfare of their children, &c. (Gen. xviii. 19; Deut. vi. 7; Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4). (a)

2. *Filial obligation*. (1) To revere their parents (Exod. xx. 12; Mal. i. 6; Eph. vi. 2, 3). (b) (2) To obey their parents. We see from this chapter that “obedience to a father stood higher than a self-imposed religious service.”

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.” (c) (3) To be grateful to their parents. The ceaseless solicitude and tender care and quenchless love of parents for their children should evoke from them deep and thankful affection (John xix. 26, 27; 1 Tim. v. 4). (d)

iii. *The importance and sacredness of marital authority*. The authority of the husband over the wife, as laid down in this chapter, and in other portions of the scriptures, is very great (1 Cor. xi. 3, 7-9; Eph. v. 22-24; 1 Tim. ii. 12-14; 1 Pet. iii. 1-6).

Let the husband “love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (e)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) When children are born to you, the most solemn book is opened, so far as you are concerned, that ever is opened, except that which relates to your own soul's fate. The account that begins to be incurred when parents rejoice because a child is born to them, is the most solemn account that ever is incurred aside from one's own individual duty towards God. I do not mean that all the misconduct and evil doings of the child are to come back upon the parent, and that there is to be in the child no free will, so that no individual account can belong to him. For if a parent has cleansed his skirts of his children, the guilt of their sins will rest on their heads, and not on his. But unless the parent can show that the child's misconduct and wreck of eternity are not attributable to any fault of his, the weight of the child's condemnation will be divided—no, it will not be divided, it will rest undivided on the child's head, and undivided on the parent's head. It is a responsibility assumed by every parent, to look after the welfare, temporal and eternal, of his child. If God had sent to him an angel, with a scroll of heavenly writ, saying, “I send to school to you my well-beloved child; take it, teach it, and bring it back to heaven; and let its education be the test of your fidelity”—if God had sent to the parent such a missive, his responsibility would not be greater or more real than that which is laid upon us when we undertake to bring up children. They are not simply playthings, although they do make playthings. They are not mere little pleasure-bells, although no bells ever ring so sweetly. They are not instruments of music, and pictures, and flowers of dear delight in our household, that we may enjoy them, and that they may enjoy themselves. They are

not frolicsome kittens and singing birds for our pleasure and their own. They are God's immortals. They are sent forth to make an earthly pilgrimage, and you are their schoolmasters and pilots. It is a solemn thing to have such a charge put into your hands.—*H. W. Beecher.*

For additional illustrations on *Parental duties and responsibilities*, see pp. 33, 46, 47.

(b) There are some children who are almost ashamed to own their parents because they are poor or in a low station of life. We will therefore give an example of the contrary, as displayed by the Dean of Canterbury, afterwards Archbishop Tillotson. His father, who was a plain Yorkshireman, perhaps something like those we now call “Friends,” approached the house where his son resided, and enquired whether “John Tillotson was at home.” The servant, indignant at what he thought his insolence, drove him from the door; but the Dean, who was within, hearing the voice of his father, instead of embracing the opportunity afforded him of going out and bringing in his father in a more private manner, came running out, exclaiming in the presence of his astonished servants, “It is my beloved father!” and falling down on his knees, asked for his blessing.—*Dict. of Illust.*

(c) During Havelock's stay in England, a gentleman went one evening to the house of the colonel, in compliance with an invitation. In the course of conversation, Mrs. Havelock turned suddenly round to her husband, and said, “My dear, where is Harry?” referring to her son, whom she had not seen during the whole afternoon. The colonel started to his feet. “Well, poor fellow! he's standing on London Bridge, and in this cold too! I told him to wait for me there at twelve o'clock to

day; and, in the pressure of business, I quite forgot the appointment." It was now about seven o'clock in the evening. The colonel ordered a cab to be called; and, as he went forth to deliver his son from his watch on London Bridge, he turned to excuse himself from his visitor, saying, "You see, sir, that is the discipline of a soldier's family." In the course of an hour, he returned with poor Harry, who seemed to have passed through the afternoon's experience with the greatest good humour.—*Ibid.*

(d) An old schoolmaster said one day to a clergyman who came to examine his school, "I believe the children know the cat chism word for word." "But do they understand it? that is the question," said the clergyman. The schoolmaster only bowed respectfully, and the examination began. A little boy had repeated the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother;" and he was desired to explain it. Instead of trying to do so, the little fellow with his face covered with blushes, said, almost in a whisper, "Yesterday, sir, I showed some strange gentlemen over the mountain. The sharp stones cut my feet; and the gentlemen saw them bleeding, and they gave me some money to buy me shoes. I gave it to my mother, for she had no shoes either; and I thought I could go barefoot better than she." The clergyman then looked very much pleased; and the old schoolmaster only quietly remarked, "God gives us His grace and His blessing."—*Christian Treasury.*

(e) Sometimes we have seen a model marriage, founded in pure love and cemented in mutual esteem. Therein the husband acts as a tender head, and the wife, as a true spouse, realises the model marriage relation. She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, his affection: to her he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all in all, her heart's love belongs to him and to him only. She finds sweetest content and solace in his company, his fellowship, his fondness; he is her little world, her paradise, her choice treasure. To please him she would gladly lay aside her own pleasure to find it doubled in gratifying him. She is

glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no name for herself, his honour is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She would defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak for him. The domestic circle is her kingdom; that she may there create happiness and comfort is her life-work, and his smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress she thinks of him, without constraint she consults his taste, and thinks nothing beautiful that is obnoxious to his eye. A tear from his eye because of any unkindness on her part, would grievously torment her. She asks not how her behaviour may please a stranger, or how another's judgment may be satisfied with her behaviour; let her beloved be content and she is glad. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand, but she believes in them all, and anything that she can do to promote them she delights to perform. He lavishes love on her, and she on him. Their object in life is common. There are points where their affections so intimately unite that none could tell which is first and which is second. To see their children growing up in health and strength, to see them holding posts of usefulness and honour, is their mutual concern; in this and other matters they are fully one. Their wishes blend, their hearts are indivisible. By degrees they come very much to think the same thoughts. Intimate association creates uniformity; we have known this to become so complete that at the same moment the same utterance has leaped to both their lips. Happy woman and happy man! If heaven be found on earth, they have it! At last the two are so welded, so engrafted on one stem, that their old age presents a lovely attachment, a common sympathy, by which its infirmities are greatly alleviated, and its burdens are transformed into fresh bonds of love. So happy a union of will, sentiment, thought, and heart exists between them, that the two streams of their life have washed away the dividing bank, and run on as one broad current of united existence till their common joy falls into the main ocean of felicity.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

CHAPTER XXXI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Moses had already received command to smite the Midianites (chap. xxv. 16-18); and in this chapter we have the order given to him to execute that command, and the narrative of its execution.

Verse 2. *Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, i.e., for the injury*

which the Midianites had done to the Israelites in seducing them to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Peor.

Afterward shall thou be gathered unto thy people. See p. 379.

Verse 3. *Avenge the Lord of Midian, because their seduction of the*

Israelites had violated the Divine honour.

Verse 4. *Of every tribe a thousand.* Margin: "A thousand of a tribe, a thousand of a tribe."

Verse 5. *So there were delivered.* Or, so there were "counted off."—*Fuerst.* Dr. Howard: "And they numbered out."

Verse 6. *Phinehas.* He had manifested his fitness for a prominent position in this enterprize by his zeal for God and against the idolators (chap. xxv. 6-13).

With the holy instruments, and the trumpets. "Or rather, 'with the holy instruments, to wit, the trumpets,' for the trumpets themselves seem to be the instruments intended."—*Speaker's Comm.* Comp. chap. x. 9.

Verse 8. *And they slew, &c.* "Render thus: 'And the kings of Midian they put to death, beside those that fell in the battle; namely,' &c."—*Ibid.* Comp. Josh. xiii. 21.

Verse 10. *Goodly castles.* Rather, "encampments or hamlets."—*Fuerst.* "Hamlets" seems preferable. "Tent-villages."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 11. *The spoil, i.e.,* booty in goods such as are mentioned in vers. 22 and 50.

The prey, i.e., the captives and the cattle seized as booty.

Verse 16. *Caused. . . . to commit trespass.* *Keil and Del.:* "'They have become to the Israelites to work unfaithfulness towards Jehovah,' i.e., they have induced them to commit an act of unfaithfulness towards Jehovah. The word מִסֵּר, which only occurs in this chapter, viz., in vers. 5 and 16, appears to be used in the sense of giving, delivering, and then, like נָתַן, doing, making, effecting."

Verse 17. *Kill every male, &c.* "The object of the command to put all the male children to death, was to exterminate the whole nation, as it could not be perpetuated in the women. Of the female sex, all were to be put to death who had known the lying with a man, and therefore might possibly have been engaged in the licentious worship of Peor (chap. xxv. 2), to preserve the congregation from all contamination from that abominable idolatry."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 19 (comp. chap. xix. 11, 12).

Verse 22. *Brass.* Rather, *copper*, "as the mixture of copper and zinc, now known as brass, was not known to the ancients."—*Alford.*

Verse 23. *Purified with the water of separation* (comp. chap. xix. 9, 17-19).

Verse 49. *There lacketh not one man of us.* A noteworthy proof of the presence and protection of God.

Verse 50. *Chains.* Or "arm bands, arm ornaments, 2 Sam. i. 10."—*Fuerst.*

Rings. "Signet rings."—*Ibid.*

Tablets. "Buckles, bracelets."—*Ibid.* Others say they were ornaments "worn suspended from the neck."

To make an atonement. "An acknowledgment of having received undeserved mercies. These, if acknowledged, would have entailed guilt on the soul."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.* "In value about £20,000."—*Speaker's Comm.* "If we take the golden shekel at 10 thalers (30 shillings), the value of the ornaments taken by the officers under Moses would be about 167,500 thalers (£25,125)."—*Keil and Del.*

THE VENGEANCE OF JEHOVAH ON MIDIAN.

(Verses 1-12.)

This paragraph suggests the following observations—

I. That in the administration of

the Divine government the punishment of sin is certain.

The Israelites were severely pun-

ished for the sins which they committed with the Midianites, and now the Midianites are to receive their punishment. Notice—

1. *The sin which the Midianites had committed.* Their women had seduced the Israelites to the licentious and idolatrous worship of Baal-Peor (see p. 487).

2. *The Author of the punishment of the Midianites.* The Lord Himself commanded it; and it seems to us that He prescribed the arrangements for its execution, and empowered and protected its executioners. (a)

3. *The executioners of the punishment.* The Israelites were called upon to avenge the gross wrongs which the Midianites had done them as the people of Jehovah. It was eminently fitting that as Israelitish men had been corrupted by the Midianites, Israelitish men should execute the judgment of God upon them. (b)

4. *The severity of the punishment.* (1) It fell upon an immense number. "They slew all the males." This does "not mean that they exterminated all the men of the nation, but only that they slew all who withstood them; for the nation itself consisted in considerable strength, and was able in a few generations to bring the Israelites themselves under subjection." And, in addition, vast numbers were taken captives, many of whom were afterwards slain. (2) It fell upon persons of every rank. "The kings of Midian they put to death, besides those that fell in the battle; namely, Evi," &c. Against the punishments of God, princes and potentates are as defenceless as plebeians and paupers. "There is no respect of persons with God." "He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor." (3) It involved the destruction of their towns and villages, and the loss of their property. "The children of Israel took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt," &c. (vers. 9-11). (c)

In the righteous government of God

sin ever brings forth sorrow, tribulation follows transgression. (d)

II. That God can work by many, or by few, in the execution of His purposes.

Out of an army of more than six hundred thousand (chap. xxvii. 51), only twelve thousand men were sent to this war. The number was probably small, as compared also with the forces which they had to encounter. The accomplishment of the purpose of God by this small force was fitted to answer three ends—

1. *To teach them that this expedition was, in a special manner, the Lord's.* He was concerned in the punishment of the sin of Midian, and in the vindication of His honour, &c.

2. *To teach them that He can effect His purposes "by many or by few"* (1 Sam. xiv. 6; and Judg. vii.). (e)

3. *To check any temptation or tendency to self-glorification on the part of the soldiers.* (f)

III. That God honours the holy zeal of His servants by employing them as leaders in the execution of His purposes.

"Moses sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, even the trumpets to blow in his hand." Phinehas went with the army as the priest of the Lord, to encourage them in fighting, because the war was a holy one against the enemies of the Lord their God (comp. chap. x. 9). His appointment to this duty, on this occasion, may be viewed—

1. *As the employment of an agent of approved fitness for his duty.* Phinehas had shown his fitness for this appointment (chap. xxv.). In the accomplishment of His purposes, God employs suitable agents and instruments. (g)

2. *As the reward of distinguished service.* He who is brave and faithful in one duty shall be called to other and more arduous duties (comp. Matt. xxv. 21).

IV. That God enriches His people with the spoils of their enemies.

"And they took all the spoil, and all the prey," &c. (vers. 11, 12).

Those who have assailed the Church by persecution have defeated themselves, and confirmed and extended the Church. "The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church." And they who have attacked it with capacious criticism and bitter controversy, have contributed to the strength of its defences and the extension of its

triumphs. They have aroused the scholars and the thinkers of the Church to the marshalling of the evidences of our religion, and to the vindication of its claims. God frustrates the designs of the enemies of His cause, and overrules them for the accomplishment of His purposes and the extension of His kingdom. (h)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on the *justifiableness of war*, see pp. 19, 20.

(b) For illustrations on the *Executioners of Divine judgments*, see pp. 252, 312.

(c) Among the causes which justify war, none is more unanimously asserted by political writers, than an attempt on the part of one community against the civil institutions, and so against the integrity and internal peace, of another. The Hebrews had therefore an undoubted right, even apart from the Divine command, to attack the people of Midian, who had treacherously endeavoured to withdraw them from their allegiance, and thus to unsettle the foundations of all their union, prosperity, and peace, and prepare them to become an easy conquest to their own arms.

Now, if it be right to wage war at all, it is not only right to wage it in such a manner as shall accomplish its object, but it would be wrong to wage it in any other manner. War is, in its very nature, the infliction of suffering in order to an ulterior good; and the infliction of any degree of suffering is unjustifiable, unless so far as it may lead to this result. If, therefore, in the prosecution of a war, the measures adopted are of such lenity as to be insufficient to produce the end in view, namely, protection for the present and security for the future, the mitigated evil then becomes uncompensated by any ulterior good. It is then a causeless and unjustifiable evil; it is not mercy, but cruelty and crime. This principle is clear, and is theoretically acknowledged; yet when any application of it however wise and just, tends to severities which we are not accustomed to regard as belonging to the necessities of the case, our feelings are naturally shocked. Yet the principle continues to operate, and is acknowledged in all our warfare, although, with the progress of civilisation, it has come to be understood in civilized communities, that inflictions formerly resorted to shall be forborne. But in their conflicts with barbarous nations, who have no such understanding, they are accustomed to adopt harsher measures; and this for the simple and sound reason, that the object would not otherwise be gained, and that if they were to allow a war to be to their adversaries a less evil than these adversaries were in the habit of expect-

ing it to prove, such a self-prostrating lenity is ascribed to weakness, and not to the pride of conscious strength. Severity, in short, is beneficent, when it is suited to guard against the necessity of its own repetition; and how much or how little is adequate to that end, is a question to be determined by reference to some existing state of society. The Israelites conducted their warfares on the principles generally recognised in their time; and to have done so on any other or milder principle, against such enemies as they had to contend with, would have been ruinous and suicidal. Thus only could it be effectual; and war not intended to be effectual should not be waged at all. It is confidently hoped and believed, that the time is coming, is near at hand, when war, as now conducted by ourselves—when any war,—will be looked back upon with the same feelings of disgust and horror, as those with which we now regard the conflicts of the nations beyond the Mediterranean three-and-thirty centuries ago.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(d) For illustrations on the *Certainty of the punishment of sin*, see pp. 89, 225, 258, 312, 318, 374.

(e) The straw cannot beat the mountain into flying dust. The hand of man cannot crumble the great gigantic bulwarks behind which error has entrenched itself. You are quite right. But God hath chosen the weak things to throw down the mighty. It is not the straw that does it; it is the hand that wields it. Shakespeare dips his pen into the ink, and writes *Hamlet*. I take up the same pen, dip into the same ink, but I can't write *Hamlet*. It is not the pen that does it; it is the writer. It is not the little instrumentality; it is the God who is able to do, and who has done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

The weakness of the instrument is a small matter when the hand is infinitely strong. You and I have said, "We are men full of infirmities. What can we do? We have but few talents, we have no social position, we have not the opportunities of doing good that some have, and, therefore, we are discouraged." But the Lord knows thy heart, my brother. If thou wert meaner in the scale of society; if thou hadst not even one, but only half a

talent; if thou wert less able to speak than thou art, and wert a man slow of speech like Moses; yet if God be behind thee, dost thou not know that every weakness of thine is according to His own intent and purport, and is as much designed as the strength of the strongest to illustrate the majesty of His might? Oh, didst thou believe, thy weakness would be thy glory; thou wouldst rejoice even to be nothing, that in this the great All-in-all might the more resplendently display Himself.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

(f) This point is illustrated on p. 276.

(g) The opinion is very prevalent, and the impression still more so—though neither so prevalent as they used to be—that God is in the habit of employing unlikely instruments; that, for the purpose of revealing His all-sufficiency and bringing honour to Himself, He delights to contrast results with their secondary causes, and to disappoint the calculations founded on the supposed efficiency of human agents. To hear some men talk, you might conclude that God cannot be

properly said to employ instruments at all, that in nature, and still more in providence, and most of all in grace, they are not so much instruments that He employs as obstacles, not so much things having a tendency and fitness to accomplish His designs, as things altogether unsuitable and inappropriate. Now, this belief or feeling is entirely erroneous, and woefully mischievous. It is dishonouring to God, and injurious to men. Such is not God's custom, such is not even God's exceptional act. We rejoice in the thought that, in a sense, God does all things, that there is no power but of God, that even physical instruments and moral agents derive all their force from Him, owing to Him their existence and their efficiency; but we also hold fast by the conviction that power and wisdom go together; that God acts by laws and delights to honour them, and that in all His operations He pays profound respect to the inherent relevancy of things.—*A. J. Morris.*

(h) An illustration on this point appears on p. 472.

THE DOOM OF THE DOUBLE-HEARTED.

(Verse 8.)

“Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.”

Balaam had taken the field against Israel,—against a people whom he had pronounced blessed,—whom he had pronounced invincible both by earth and hell. Yes; Balaam “the son of Beor,”—he, and not another of the name,—*he* rushes on the bosses of the Almighty's buckler; *he* defies Israel and Israel's God!

But he fails. He would fain have cursed Israel; but he could not. He counselled Moab to seduce Israel by temptation, and his device succeeded too well. He now fetches the last stroke. In vain. He perishes ignobly. He is slain with the sword which he had defied.

Such is the end of the backslider; of one who knew the truth but did it not; who once said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” It was certainly not the end he prayed for; yet it was the end to which his whole life had been tending. He reaped what he sowed, and in him “God was not mocked.”

He died as he lived, in fellowship

with Moab, yet in heart persuaded that Israel was the beloved of the Lord, and that Jehovah was God. His life had been with Midian, and so was his death.

His grave is with the unclean. He passes from earth with none to soothe his death-bed and close his eyes; none to lament for him or build his monument. Sad end of a life of halting and indecision, and resistance of the Spirit, and braving of conscience, and rejection of light, and wretched covetousness. He “loved the wages of unrighteousness,” and verily he had his reward.

Let us see what he wanted and how he failed; how ambitious he was, yet what a life of utter failure and disappointment was his. He would fain have risen, but he sunk. He would fain have been rich, but he lost everything. What a wasted life! Yet the life of one who knew better things, but did them not; who knew that the world was vanity, yet followed it; who knew that Israel's portion was the best, yet chose that of Moab; who knew the true God and the true Messiah, but preferred the idolatries of Israel's enemies. He saw Him “from the top

of the rocks," but that was all. He got a passing glimpse of the cross, but no more. It was all he saw of the way of life, ere he plunged into death and woe.

I. He wanted to serve two masters.

These were the same as the Lord in after days designated God and mammon. He wanted not to offend either; to please both. He was like Issachar crouching between two burdens. But it would not do. He failed. Such is the certain failure of all who make the like attempt. "*Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" He *loved* the one master, mammon; and he *dreaded* the other; but would fain do the will of both. He could not afford to lose the favour of either. Miserable life! More miserable death! The life and death of one whose whole career was one long attempt to do the bidding both of God and the devil.

II. He wanted to earn two kinds of wages.

The wages of righteousness and the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. ii. 15), were both in his eyes; he would fain have the pay both of God and of the devil. He was unwilling to do or say anything which would deprive him of either. He was as cautious and cunning as he was covetous. He would not work without wages; and he would work for a hundred masters if they would only pay him well. How like many so-called "religious" men amongst ourselves.

III. He wanted to do two opposite things at the same time.

He wished both to bless and to curse. He was willing to do either according as it might serve his interests. The only question with him was, "Would it pay?" If the blessing would pay, he would take it; if the curse would pay, he would take it; if both would pay, he would take them both. Blessing and cursing were both alike to him; confessing and denying the true God, worshipping Baal or Jehovah, it mattered not, if by "this craft he could have his wealth." So with many among us. If Sabbath-keeping will pay, they

will keep the Sabbath; if Sabbath-breaking will pay, they will break the Sabbath. True Balaams — without principle, without faith, and without fear.

IV. He wanted two kinds of friendship.

He would fain be friends with every body. Perhaps he was timid; of those whom Scripture calls fearful (Rev. xxi. 8); perhaps, also, he was ambitious, and sought great things for himself wherever these could be obtained (Jer. xlv. 5); certainly he had before him "the fear of man which bringeth a snare," and the love of man's approbation which brings no less a snare; he *dreaded* Israel's God, of whom he knew much, but he *dreaded* also Moab's gods, though whether he really believed in them we know not. Made up of these contradictions, and acting not by faith but unbelief, he tried to secure the friendship of all whom he counted great, whether in heaven or on earth. He shut his eyes not only to the sin but to the *impossibility* of such a course; he saw not that the friendship of the world is the enemy of God, and that whosoever will be the friend of the world must be the enemy of God.

V. He wanted to have two religions.

He saw religion to be a paying concern, a profitable trade, and he was willing to accept it from anybody or everybody, to adopt it from any quarter if it would but raise him in the world, and make his fortune. Perhaps he thought all religions equally right or equally wrong, equally true or equally false. He would rather not offend any god if he could help it. He would make concessions to "religious prejudices" of any kind if the prejudiced people will only help him on. . . . Two gods and two religions he wanted to have.

But this double service, and double friendship, and double religion, would not do. He would make nothing by them. They profited him nothing either in this life or that to come. His end was with the ungodly, his portion with the enemies of Israel. And his

soul, where could it be? Not with Israel's God, or Israel's Christ, or in Israel's heaven. He reaped what he sowed.

He was a good specimen of multitudes in these last days. An educated and intelligent man, shrewd and quick-seeing, of respectable character; high in favour with the rich and great, a *religious* man, too, after a fashion, not unsound in creed so far, for he acknowledges Jehovah as the true God. But he is fond of the world, fond of money, fond of preferment: one that would not let religion stand in the way of his advancement; who could pocket all scruples if he could pocket a little gold along with them; hollow of heart, but with a fair outside. He would rather not risk offending God, but yet he would not like to lose Balak's rewards and honours. He would rather not take up his cross, nor deny himself, nor forsake all for his God.

So is it with multitudes amongst us. They want as much religion as will save them from hell; not an atom more. The world is their real god; gold is their idol; it is in mammon's temple that they worship. Love God

with all their heart! They don't so much as understand the meaning of such a thing. Sacrifice riches, place, honour, friends, to Christ! They scoff at the thing as madness.

Oh, be on the side of God, out and out. . . . You may follow Christ in *some* things, but if not in all, what is your following worth? This world *or* the world to come, that is the alternative; not this world *and* the world to come. Christ *all* or *nothing*. No middle ground; no half-discipleship; no compromise. The new birth, or no religion at all.

Look to thy latter end. *What* is it to be? *Where* is it to be? *With whom* is it to be? Anticipate thy eternity. Is it to be darkness or light, shame or glory?

Do not sear your conscience by praying Balaam's prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous." What will that avail you? It is the *life* of the righteous that God is calling you to lead; and He will take care of your death. Decide, halt not; else surely yours will be a wretched life, and a still more wretched death.—*H. Bonar, D.D.* Abridged from "*Light and Truth*."

THE RETURN OF THE VICTORIOUS ARMY.

(Verses 13-24.)

Let us notice—

I. The reception of the returning warriors.

"And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp." Thus the chief men of the nation honour the brave men who had been avenging the Israelites and Jehovah upon the Midianites.

Learn, *that services rendered to the public should be heartily recognized by the public.*

II. The remonstrance with the returning warriors.

"And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, the captains over thousands," &c. (vers. 14-16). The

women had been the chief offenders in the matter which the army had been sent to avenge; they had seduced the men of Israel into sin; therefore in the execution of their commission (ver. 3) the soldiers should have slain them. "The sword of *war*," says Scott, "should spare women and children, as incapable of resisting; but the sword of *justice* knows no distinction, except that of guilty or not guilty, and more or less guilty. This war was the execution of a righteous sentence upon a *guilty* nation, in which the women were the principal criminals; and perhaps particular instructions had been given on this head: therefore Moses was angry when he found the women had been spared."

Learn, *the sinfulness of omissions of duty or of the merely partial performance of duty.* (a)

III. The retribution to the Midianitish women.

"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man," &c. (vers. 17, 18). This may be viewed—

1. *As a punishment.* The law concerning adultery was, "the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xx. 10). It is almost absolutely certain that many of these women had committed adultery with the Israelites in the matter of Baal-Peor. The Lord had himself put to death by the plague the Israelites who thus sinned; and now as part of His vengeance upon Midian the women who sinned are to be put to death. The tempted having been punished, it would not have been right for the tempters to escape. And since it was impossible, except by miracle, to separate the guilty from the innocent, all the women were slain (comp. 1 Pet. iv. 17).

2. *As a precaution.* The women who had been engaged in the abominable worship of Baal-peor, would, probably, had they been spared, have seduced the Israelites again into sin: and so their death may have appeared necessary for securing the purity and security of Israel. And the boys, on growing into manhood, would probably have conspired to avenge the slaughter of their parents upon Israel, and so they were

put to death. Moreover, as an example of Divine retribution, it was thus rendered more impressive, "warning parents not to imitate the guilt of the Midianites, lest they should involve their beloved offspring in destruction." (b)

Learn, *that it is our duty to avoid every occasion of temptation to sin* (comp. Matt. v. 29, 30) (c)

IV. The purification of the returning warriors, their captives, and their spoils.

"And do ye abide without the camp seven days," &c. (vers. 19-23). The camp of Israel was regarded as holy because of the presence of the Lord God there; and the soldiers having become ceremonially unclean by their contact with the slain, could not enter therein until they were purified (comp. chap. v. 1-4; xix. 11-20). And the captives having by their captivity become "to some extent a constituent part of the Israelitish people," needed purification also, especially as they had practised abominable idolatry. And the spoil, as being taken from a heathen people, would need purification, before it could be admitted into the camp, and appropriated to the use of the people of God.

Learn, *that it is the solemn duty of the Church of God to maintain moral purity within its borders.* "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them," &c. (2 Cor. vi. 16—vii. 1). (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 278, 279.

(b) A more difficult point is the command of Moses, that the adult females and the male children among the prisoners should be put to death. Pained as we are by the recital of such horrors, and glad as we feel that such usages have passed away from the practices of war, close examination will enable us to see that the principles which have been laid down (see p. 538), supply an adequate excuse for a course which Moses himself must have regarded as distressing. His course was designed to act *in terrorem*, with a view to fu-

ture security. It is clear that he had no satisfaction in the task. On the contrary, he appears to have been strongly excited when he beheld the array of prisoners, and to have uttered a rebuke which shows that he would far rather that whatever severity needed to be exercised should have been finished in the furious haste of onset, than that it should thus be left for execution in cold blood. As it was, however, the prisoners were upon his hands, and he had to dispose of them as the recent hazards and the present condition of the state demanded, in an age when the necessities of the world's government involved the use of

a much harsher instrumentality than is now requisite. Taking these considerations with us, it may be asked, What was to be done with these prisoners? Should they be sent home unharmed, or should they be welcomed on an equal footing to the hospitality of Israel? Then if the views already stated (p. 538) are sound, the war ought not to have been undertaken. This follows, even without insisting upon the circumstance, that had the latter alternative been adopted, the youthful sons of the Midianitish warriors would soon have grown up to be a sword in the bosom of the still feeble state, and possibly to compel the hazards and hardships of another conflict. Then, with regard to the adult females, it is to be considered that it was their wicked instrumentality which had led Israel to sin, and had given occasion to the recent war; and, on the other hand, the danger to be apprehended from them, if they were allowed again to try their seductive arts upon the Israelites, had just been proved to be such as the infant state would by no means tolerate.

Keeping in view, therefore, the time and country in which Moses lived, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded, it will be a bold thing for anyone to say, that as a man entrusted with the welfare of a nation he acted wrongly. That he acted only from a strong sense of duty, every one who has studied his character must know; and who among us, in these

altered times, is better able than he was to judge of what his duty exacted? But if in this case he did err, in judging that the stern obligations of political duty allowed him to show no pity on more than one class of his prisoners, let him alone bear the blame of the deed. He appears to have acted on his own judgment, and does not, as usual, adduce the command of the Lord for the course which was taken.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(c) A man who has been corrupted by the fire of intoxication, says, "I cannot resist the cup when I sit with my companions and it is being passed over my shoulder; I have to drink; I am seized as with an afflatus of infernal fire, and I cannot help drinking." It may be that, when you bring yourself where liquor is dispensed, you cannot help drinking; but you can avoid going there. Once having tried it and found that you could not resist the temptation, the next time you are guilty, not for not resisting it, but for going where the cup that is irresistible to you is handed about; and you are just as guilty as though you could resist the temptation and did not, only the guilt takes hold one step further back. Men are responsible for their volitions, and for those conditions which produce volitions—and this is the opinion of men generally.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 78, 94.

THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM.

(Verse 16.)

How shall we characterise the conduct of Balaam in this transaction? Consider—

I. The measure of his criminality.

To do this we must form some estimate of his knowledge of what was right for him to do towards Israel. He knew *everything* concerning Israel, and their relation to God. His sin was thus committed knowingly, consciously, wilfully. He set himself to do wickedly.

II. His motives in this course.

The meanest. He "loved the wages of unrighteousness."

III. The baseness of the method he adopted to accomplish his design.

God had revealed to him, in prophetic insight, the secret of Israel's greatness and strength. And Balaam used that very inspiration to injure, fatally, God's own chosen people.—*W. Roberts. Quoted in The Biblical Museum.*

THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOILS OF THE WAR.

(Verses 25-47.)

The Lord God gave directions to Moses as to how the booty taken from the vanquished Midianites should be

divided. This would tend to prevent dissatisfaction and complaint, &c. Notice—

I. In this distribution the claims of all classes of the community were recognised.

The soldiers who had fought the battle and seized the booty did not retain the whole of it. They had been chosen out of the whole congregation to conduct the war for the congregation, which had therefore a just claim to share in the spoils. They "that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and all the congregation," the priests, and the Levites, all received a share.

Learn, *that public servants should seek to benefit the entire community.* (a)

II. In this distribution the claims of each class were considered and equitably dealt with.

Though all classes shared in the booty, all classes did not have equal portions. And this was just. The soldiers who had returned from the war, though only one fiftieth of the entire congregation, received for their share as much as all their brethren who had remained at home. And it was right that, inasmuch as they had borne the hardships and hazards of the war, they should be rewarded for their services. Again, the portion of the Levites was ten times as much as that

of the priests, as they were vastly more numerous. But the portion of each individual among the priests must have been considerably greater than that of each individual among the Levites, as was fitting on account of the more exalted and responsible character of their office. The proportion allotted to each class seems to have been conspicuously just and fair.

Learn, *that God requires us to act equitably in all our dealings.*

III. In this distribution the claims of the Lord were practically acknowledged.

The portions which were given by the warriors to the priests, and by the congregation to the Levites, were "a tribute unto the Lord"—"a heave offering of the Lord." Surely this was right and comely. He had given them the victory over the Midianites; and they would have been guilty of injustice and ingratitude if they had not presented a thank-offering to Him.

Learn, *that of all our gains a portion should be devoted to the Lord God.* "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (comp. Deut. viii. 10-18). (c)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) All personal and private interests must be sacrificed to the call of duty. In the higher walks of benevolent activity, there is no such thing as a life of inglorious ease. . . .

This sublime principle of self-annihilation is conspicuous in the Christian system. Compared with the one act of the Saviour's consecration and surrender, the flame of a thousand worlds would have gone out in cold ashes. Having loved us even unto death this was the last possible point to which His self-devotion could reach, and never was there such a perfect oblivion of self as in His one offering on the Cross. Drinking into this spirit, His disciples forsook all and followed Him. Martyrs and confessors stand before us magnanimous in the spirit of a self-forgetting love. If the Greeks provided that their citizens might be brave in mind, and strong in body, Christianity must ever be looked upon as the religion of heroism. We must be prepared to give up whatever comes between the call of duty and our own individual interest. We

know little of the power of the Cross, if it has not crucified us to the world, and crucified the world to us. In proportion as we are filled with the power of the Cross, do we become superior to the littleness and the selfishness of our nature, and devote ourselves to the cause of universal good.—*R. Ferguson. LL.D.*

(b) Justice is the greatest interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. Wherever her temple stands, and so long as it is duly honoured, there is a foundation for social security, and general happiness, and the improvement and progress of our race. And whoever labours on this edifice with usefulness and distinction, whoever clears its foundations, strengthens its pillars, adorns its entablatures, or contributes to raise its august dome still higher in the skies, connects himself in name and fame and character with that which is and must be as endurable as the frame of human society.—*Webster.*

(c) A man gives away a sovereign in Christ's name and for Christ's sake. Look at the elements which constitute that act and give it value. The man made the sovereign honestly; it is his, in point of fair service, by what is called right. If he keeps that sovereign, he will break no law in commerce; if he will it away to his family, he will violate no law in social equity; if he spend it upon himself, society will not condemn him. Yet the man deliberately gives that sovereign away to a poor child, to a friendless stranger, to a Christian society. See what lies behind the deed. The man says, in effect if not in words, "The money may be mine, but I myself am not my own. How then can anything, except temporarily, and under laws of stewardship and responsibility? I have no property

in myself; I am bought with a price; I am God's agent. So far as I have given society an equivalent for the sovereign, it is mine; but the strength, the skill, the knowledge by which I gained it are the gifts of God. The image is Caesar's, but the gold is God's. I will hold what I have as Christ's; holding it so, I instantly yield it at His call, saying,—Thine—oh, wounded blessed Christ—Thine is the right!" So this giving away of the sovereign is not an off-hand deed; it is not done flippantly; it is not done to save appearance; it is not done from external social pressure; it becomes a great religious act, a solemn sacrifice, a holy thank-offering.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Additional illustrations on this point appear on pp. 342-344.

A NOBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY FAVOUR.

(Verses 48-54.)

We have here—

I. An extraordinary favour received.

"And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands," &c. (vers. 48, 49). God had not only given them a complete victory and great booty, but He had given them these things without the loss of a single man. In this we have "striking proof of the protection of God; but it is not so marvellous as to furnish any good ground for calling in question the correctness of the narrative. *Rosenmuller* has cited an example from *Tacitus* (Ann. xiii. 39), of the Romans having slaughtered all the foe without losing a single man on the capture of a Parthian castle; and another from *Strabo* (xvi. 11, 28), of a battle in which 1,000 Arabs were slain, and only two Romans. And *Havernick* mentions a similar account from the life of *Saladin* in his introduction (i. 2, p. 452)." It is also important to bear in mind that "the Midianites were a nomad tribe, who lived by rearing flocks and herds, and therefore were not a warlike people. Moreover, they were probably attacked quite unawares, and being unprepared, were completely routed and cut down without quarter."—*Keil and Del.* Again, in this extraordinary preservation of the army of

Israel we view the hand of the Lord their God. "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." He "covered their heads in the day of battle." At His express command they went forth to the war; and He protected them from harm. Their preservation would stamp the war and the victory as His; and so add to the impressiveness of the warning it was intended to convey. (a)

II. An extraordinary favour acknowledged.

When the officers discovered that every man who went forth to the war had returned from it safely, they went to Moses and declared the fact, taking with them a handsome thank-offering as an acknowledgment of their gratitude to God. Their acknowledgment was—

1. *Voluntary.* No one commanded them or exhorted them to do this: their action was spontaneous and hearty; they offered "not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

2. *Practical.* They had not only thanks upon their lips, but a generous offering in their hands. They sought to express their gratitude by their gifts. (b)

3. *Humble.* They offered this oblation "to make an atonement for their

souls before the Lord." This does not mean that the offering was to expiate any particular offence which they had committed; but to acknowledge unmerited mercies. They felt themselves unworthy of the distinguished favours bestowed upon them. (c)

4. *Liberal*. "All the gold of the offering that they offered up to the Lord was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels," the value of which is variously estimated from £20,000, to £25,000. It was, indeed, a right noble offering. (d)

Learn, that the reception of special mercies should be followed by special acknowledgments thereof. (1) Such acknowledgments are due to God. They cannot be withheld without sin. (2)

Such acknowledgments are a benefit to man. "It is good to give thanks unto the Lord," &c. The practical expression of gratitude enriches the heart. (e)

III. The acknowledgment of extraordinary favours accepted.

"And Moses and Eleazar, the priest, took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord." This means, as we see from Exod. xxx. 16, that the gold was placed in the treasury of the tabernacle.

Learn, that God is graciously pleased to accept the offerings of humble and grateful hearts. (f)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) No prince ever returns safe out of a battle, but may well remember how many blows and bullets have gone *by* him; that might easily have gone *through* him; and how little, odd, unforeseen chances death has been turned aside, which seemed in a full, ready, and direct career, to have been posting to him. All which passages, if we do not acknowledge to have been guided to their respective ends and effects by the conduct of a superior and a Divine Hand, we do by the same assertion cashier all Providence, strip the Almighty of His noblest prerogative, and make God, not the Governor, but the mere Spectator of the world. —*Dr. South*.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 341. (c)

(c) Objects seem large or little according to the medium through which they are viewed. In the microscope, what a remarkable change they undergo! The humble moss rises into a graceful tree; the beetle, armed for battle, flashes in golden or silver mail; a grain of sand swells into a mass of rock; and, on the other hand, a mountain looked at through the wrong end of a telescope sinks into a mole hill, and the broad lake into a tiny pool. Even so, according as we look at them, with the eyes of self-condemning humility, or of self-righteous pride, God's mercies seem great or little. For example, a minister of the Gospel passing one day near a cottage, was attracted to its door by the sound of a loud and earnest voice. It was a bare and lonely dwelling; the home of a man who was childless, old, and poor. Drawing near this mean and humble cabin, the stranger at length made out these words, "This, and Jesus Christ too! this, and Jesus Christ too!"

as they were repeated over and over again in tones of deep emotion, of wonder, gratitude, and praise. His curiosity was roused to see what that could be which called forth such fervent, overflowing thanks. Stealing near, he looked in at the patched and broken window; and there in the form of a grey, bent, worn-out son of toil, at a rude table, with hands raised to God, and his eyes fixed on some crusts of bread and a cup of water, sat piety, peace, humility, contentment, exclaiming, "This, and Jesus Christ too!" —*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 101, 117, 342.

(e) It is well to feel that whatever good your gift may do to the Church or the poor, or the sick, it is twice as much benefit to you to give it. It is well to give, because you love to give; as the flower which pours forth its perfume because it never dreamed of doing otherwise; or like the bird which quivers with song, because it is a bird, and finds a pleasure in its notes: or like the sun, which shines, not by constraint, but because, being a sun, it must shine; or like the waves of the sea, which flash back the brilliance of the sun because it is their nature to reflect and not to hoard the light! Oh, to have such grace in our hearts that we shall joyfully make sacrifices unto our God! —*C. H. Spurgeon*.

(f) On our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a four-penny pie with a hole in it; they like to do it to show their love; and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in heaven. What are our Sunday-school teachings and

our preachings, and all that, but these cracked fourpenny pieces? Just nothing at all; but the Lord allows us to do His work for His own love's sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him — *Ibid.*

The other day, in walking down the street, a little beggar boy, having discovered that I loved flowers, came and put into my hand a faded little sprig which he had somewhere found. I did not look directly at the scrawny, withered branch, but beheld it through the medium of the boy's heart, seeing what he would have given, not what he gave; and so looking, the shrivelled stem was laden with blossoms of beauty and odour. And if I, who am cold, and ignorant, receive so graciously the offering of a poor child, with what tender joy must our heavenly Father receive the sin-

cere tribute of His creatures when He looks through the medium of His infinite love and compassion? . . . Christ does not say, "Take the noblest things of life, and bring them perfect to Me, and I will receive them." He says, "Take the lowest and most disagreeable thing; and if you bring it cheerfully for My sake, it shall be to Me a flower of remembrance, and I will press it in the Book of Life, and keep it for ever." Go, then, search for flowers to bring to Christ; and if you cannot find even road-side or pasture weeds—if there are only nettle and briars, and you are willing for His sake to thrust your hand into the thorn bush and bring a branch from thence, He will take it lovingly, and cherish it evermore.—*H. W. Beecher.*

CHAPTER XXXII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have the account of the allotment of the territory conquered by Israel on the east of the Jordan to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Verse 1. *Jazer* (see on chap. xxi. 32).

Gilead, "a mountainous region east of the Jordan; bounded on the north by Bashan, on the east by the Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Gen. xxxi. 21; Deut. iii. 12-17)." — *Bibl. Dict.*

A place for cattle; a district of "rich pasture land, with shady forests, and copious streams." — *Ibid.*

Verse 3. *Ataroth*, &c. (see on verses 34-38).

Verses 8-13 (see chaps. xiii. and xiv.).

Verse 8. *Kadesh-barnea* (see on chap. xiii. 26).

Verse 9. *Eshcol* (see on chap. xiii. 23).

Verse 17. *Go ready armed*. Keil and Del.: "Equip ourselves hastily."

Verse 23. *Be sure your sin will find you out*. "Lit.: 'Know ye of your sin that it will find you out.'" — *Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 28. *Moses commanded Eleazar*, &c. (comp. chap. xxiv. 17-29).

Verse 33. *And unto half the tribe of Manasseh*. "The participation of this half tribe in the possession is accounted

for in ver. 39." — *O. v. Gerlach* (see also Josh. xvii. 1). At this time Moses only gave to the two tribes and a half a general promise of this country. The determination of their respective allotments, and the taking possession of them, was not effected until some time afterwards.

Verses 34-36. Places restored and fortified by the Gadites.

Verse 34. *Dibon* (see on chap. xxi. 30).

Ataroth—"crowns," probably identical with the ruins Attarus, on Jebel Attarus, and seven miles north-west of Dibon.

Aroer—"ruins," now in ruins and called Arâir, upon the very edge of the precipitous north bank of the ravine through which the Arnon flows. Not to be confounded with "Aroer that is before Rabbah" (Josh. xiii. 25).

Verse 35. *Atroth, Shophan*. This should be written Atroth-Shophan; Shophan being added to distinguish it from the Ataroth of the preceding verse. The situation has not been identified.

Jazer, or Jazer (see on chap. xxi. 32).

Jogbehah, now in ruins and called Jebeiha, seven miles north-west of Jazer.

Verse 36. *Beth-nimrah*—"house of

sweet water ;" in ver. 3 contracted into Nimrah ; situated five miles north of Libias ; now in ruins and called Nahr Nimrin, where the waters of the Wady Shoaib enter the Jordan.

Beth-haran, the same as Beth-aram, which should be Beth-haram (Josh. xiii. 27). Herod Antipas named it Libias, in honour of Livia, the wife of Augustus Cæsar. It is now in ruins, and is called Rameh ; situated not far from the mouth of the Wady Hesbân.

Verses 37, 38. Places restored and fortified by the Reubenites.

Verse 37. *Heshbon* (see on chap. xxi. 25).

Elealeh, now called El-A'al, a little more than a mile north-east of Heshbon.

Kirjathaim, was probably situated three miles south of Heshbon, where the ruins of et-Teym are now found.

Verse 38. *Nebo*, a town on or near Pisgah, in the mountains of Abarim (see chap. xxi. 20). "A ruined village of the name Neba has been mentioned by travellers as still existing in those parts, and from the latest account seems to be on the most elevated of the crests" of Pisgah, "due west of Baal-meon, and three miles south-west of Heshbon."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Baal-meon, called Beon in ver. 3 ; Beth-Baal-meon in Josh. xiii. 17, and Beth-meon in Jer. xlvi. 23, was probably about two miles south-east of Heshbon, where the ruins of Myun are now found.

Shibmah, more correctly Sibmah (Isa. xvi. 8), probably four miles east of Heshbon, and now marked by the ruins es Sameh. "All the places built by the Reubenites were but a short distance from Heshbon, and surrounded this capital. . . . The insertion of the

words *their names being changed*, before Shibmah, is an indication that the latter place did not receive any other name. Moreover, the new names which the builders gave to these towns did not continue in use long, but were soon pressed out by the old ones again."—*Keil and Del.*

And gave other names, &c. Margin : "Heb., 'they called by names the names of the cities.'" "A roundabout way of saying, they called the towns by (other, or new) names."—*Ibid.*

Verse 39. *Machir the son of Manasseh* (comp. Gen. i. 23).

Went. Rather "had gone." "The imperfects in ver. 39 are to be understood in the sense of pluperfects."—*Keil and Del.*

Gilead. "More strictly part of north Gilead" (comp. Deut. iii. 13).

Verse 41. *Jair the son of Manasseh*. "Jair was the grandson of a daughter of Machir the son of Manasseh, and therefore a great-grandson of Manasseh on the mother's side. His father, Segub, was the son of Hezron of the tribe of Judah, who had married a daughter of Manasseh (1 Chron. ii. 21, 22) ; so that Jair, or rather Segub, had gone over with his descendants unto the maternal tribe, contrary to the ordinary rule, and probably because Machir had portioned his daughter with a rich dowry like an heiress."—*Keil and Del.*

Took the small towns (comp. Deut. iii. 14).

Havoth-jair—villages of Jair.

Verse 42. *Nobah*. This is the only mention of him in the Scriptures.

Kenath. Now "Kenawât, a ruined town at the southern extremity of the Lejah, about 20 miles north of Bûsrah."—*Bibl. Dict.*

THE SELFISH REQUEST OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 1-5.)

This request exhibits—

I. Mean selfishness.

It is marked by an utter absence of

regard for the interests of others. These two tribes think and plan, and petition solely for themselves. In the competi-

tions of business and of professional and social life there is often very much of mean selfishness, and that even amongst persons who are avowedly Christians. But selfishness is utterly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ; and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (a)

II. Predominant worldliness.

"Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle," &c. (ver. 1). The one consideration which actuated them was this, "The country is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle." They had no care for the unity and prosperity of the nation. Their *patriotism* utterly succumbed to the force of their worldliness. They had no solicitude as to the relation of the coveted country to the institutions of national worship. *Religion* was not sufficiently strong in them to bear up against their eagerness for worldly gain. They resembled Lot in this respect, that they had so keen an eye for worldly gain as to be almost blind to every other consideration (comp. Gen. xiii. 10-13). In this day there are many, who regard themselves as Christians, who resemble the Reubenites and Gadites,—many who are chiefly influenced by temporal and worldly considerations in (1) the selection and conduct of their business; (2) the formation of matrimonial alliances; and (3) the determination of their residence. Temporal gain, social surroundings, salubrity of atmosphere, and similar things, are often deeply considered, while sacred and spiritual things are well-nigh overlooked. (b)

III. Disregard of the interests and rights of their brethren.

They manifest no concern for the settlement of their brethren of the other tribes in suitable inheritances; and silently they ignore their equal claim to the country which they sought for themselves. The brethren whom the Reubenites and Gadites thus disregarded had shared with them all the toils, hardships, and dangers of the battles by which the land they sought for themselves had been secured; but in

their selfishness the two tribes pay no heed to this fact. The tendency of selfishness is to produce disregard of the claims of others, which is often most unjust. (c)

IV. Disparagement of their Divine calling and destiny.

"Let this land be given unto thy servants," &c. (ver. 5). Contrast their, "Bring us not over Jordan" with the fervent prayer of Moses, "O Lord God, I pray Thee, let me go over," &c. (Deut. iii. 25). If they did not actually despise the glorious destiny which had been the hope of their ancestors for ages previous, yet they grievously depreciated it. What vast numbers practically despise their exalted spiritual calling in the Gospel for the passing and perishing things of this world!

V. Want of faith in the Divine promise.

It is not improbable that they had their doubts as to their taking the good land beyond Jordan, and therefore sought to secure for themselves what the nation had already conquered. Such unbelief is a grievous dishonour to God.

Conclusion.

Mark the *folly* of this request of the Reubenites and Gadites. The country which they desired had very grave disadvantages. It was most exposed to the attacks of their enemies; and it was very difficult of united and successful defence, because the Jordan to some extent cut them off from the great bulk of their nation. Their position very speedily gave rise to misunderstanding between them and their brethren on the other side of Jordan. Their association with heathen neighbours led them into idolatry; and they were the first of the Israelites that were carried into captivity (1 Chron. v. 25, 26). How foolish did Lot's choice of Sodom prove! (Gen. xiv. 12; xix. 15-26). He who renounces spiritual and eternal advantages for material and temporal prosperity makes a fool's choice. "For what is a man profited?" &c. (Matt. xvi. 26). A selfish policy is generally a self-defeating policy. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) What amazing selfishness visibly appears in the general conduct of mankind, and how little are they, amidst all the culture of education and humanity, all the restraints of law, and all the illuminations, injunctions, and threatenings of religion, disposed to act agreeably to the dictates of truth, righteousness, and benevolence towards each other! A little prosperity, a little power, a very humble office, or some other trifling object of ambition, will at any time make those who have been for life bosom friends, vehement and irreconcilable enemies. In the common bargains between men again, how rarely is it the design to exchange an equivalent for that which is received, although the only possible rule of honesty; and how generally to make what is called a good, and what is in reality a fraudulent, bargain. How many persons obtain their whole living, and spend their whole lives, in this kind of fraud! What pains are taken to conceal or belie the state of the markets! of our own circumstances, our real intentions, or our ability to fulfil the engagements into which we enter! What base deceptions are practised in cases of bankruptcy; and what frauds perpetrated in order to attain legally the character and immunities of a bankrupt! How difficult has it been even to make a law which can at all secure to creditors an equitable share in the actual remains of a bankrupt's property! How strange would these observations appear in a world of honest, virtuous beings. *Timothy Dwight, D.D.*

I warn every aspirant for wealth against the infernal canker of selfishness. It will eat out of the heart with the fire of hell, or bake it harder than a stone. The heart of avaricious old age stands like a bare rock in a bleak wilderness, and there is no rod of authority, no incantation of pleasure, which can draw from it one crystal drop to quench the raging thirst for satisfaction.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(b) There are business men in our city to-day who have schemed for a future which, if analysed, would disclose nothing but a careful regard for personal and domestic comfort. I can give you the brief programme of such men; it runs after this fashion—Country, Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements. I thought I could have mentioned a fifth object of pursuit, but I believe this exhausts the whole scheme. Now it is for them to say whether they will persist in urging this request. They are at perfect liberty to leave the City, to abandon the poor, to get away from all that is fœtid, noisome, and otherwise offensive; but let them beware lest, in reaching the supposed heaven, they find that they have gone in the wrong direction, and that where they expected heaven to begin they find that they have only reached the outward edge of earth. Men who make arrangements exclusively with a view to physical comfort never

ask the questions which are the chief inquiries of souls that truly live. They do not say, What kind of preaching shall we have in the locality to which we propose to move? What scholastic advantages will be available? What libraries will be accessible? No! What they want is Country Garden, Quietness, Out-door amusements—and they get them; but the fruit which they had coveted so eagerly turns to ashes in their mouths.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

Another illustration on this point appears on p. 166

(c) You would be indignant if you saw a strong man walk into a theatre or lecture-room, and calmly choosing the best place, take his feeble neighbour by the shoulder, and turn him out of it into the back seats or the streets. You would be equally indignant if you saw a stout fellow thrust himself up to a table where some hungry children were being fed, and reach his arm over their heads and take their bread from them. But you are not the least indignant if, when a man has stoutness of thought and swiftness of capacity, and, instead of being long-armed only, has the much greater gift of being long-headed—you think it perfectly just that he should use his intellect to take the bread out of the mouths of all the other men in the town who are of the same trade with him; or use his breadth and sweep of sight to gather some branch of the commerce of the country into one great cobweb, of which he is himself to be the central spider, making every thread vibrate with the points of his claws and commanding every avenue with the facets of his eyes. You see no injustice in this.—*John Ruskin, M.A.*

(d) It is a singular thing this: That men by grasping lose; that by scraping they get nothing; that by having great bunches of keys to lock up seven-fold doors they can't find what they have locked away—there must be some way inside from the back, some way spirits get into it—at all events the thing goes. God has many ways of turning selfish man's very success to failure and disappointment. The darkness, the mildew, the locust, the frost, the lightning, the winds, are His servants. Thou shalt carry much seed into the field and shalt gather but little in, for the locusts shall consume it. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with holes." "Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight, and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied." How God mocks the bad man! How He can turn the wicked man's very success into failure and how out of selfish ambition He can bring the scorpion whose sting is death.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

THE FAITHFUL REBUKE OF MOSES TO THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 6-15.)

In this rebuke Moses indicates—

I. The injustice of their proposal.

“Moses said unto the children of Gad and the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?” Their request, or proposal, was unjust towards their brethren. Why should they have as their inheritance that country which all had assisted to conquer, and leave their brethren to conquer other possessions for themselves without their aid? But did Moses misinterpret their request as regards their intentions in this matter? Some think that he did, and that the Reubenites and Gadites intended to aid their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. This view of their conduct does not commend itself to our judgment; for, “when Moses reproved them, the speakers did not reply that they had not cherished the intention attributed to them, but simply restricted themselves to the promise of co-operation in the conquest of Canaan.” It is probable that, from “the rapid and easy defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og,” they had come to the conclusion “that the remaining ten tribes were quite strong enough to conquer the land of Canaan on the west of Jordan.” Whatever view may be taken of their request in this respect, they cannot be acquitted of a want of brotherly feeling, and of interest in the welfare of the nation as a whole; and, therefore, they deserved the rebuke which Moses addressed to them.

Selfishness gravitates towards injustice. (a)

II. The tendency of their proposal to dishearten their brethren.

“Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?” Their request was calculated to produce discouragement, because if it were granted it would be likely to—

1. *Reduce their numbers.* They would have fewer soldiers with which to conquer the land.

2. *Engender dissatisfaction.* The ten tribes would feel that they had reason for dissatisfaction and complaint.

In entering upon any course of public action, we are morally bound to consider what its probable effect will be on the community at large. “None of us liveth to himself.” (b)

III. The wickedness of their proposal.

“And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men,” &c. Their request was a sin against God, inasmuch as it involved—

1. *Unbelief of His word.* They doubted His promise to give them the good land.

2. *Depreciation of His goodness.* They practically disparaged the inheritance to which God had called them. (See the preceding homily, in which these points are noticed.) (c)

IV. The tendency of their proposal to call down the wrath of God.

1. *The cause of His anger.* “Ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord.” With awful intensity His wrath ever burns against sin. It is the “abominable thing which He hates.” (d)

2. *The expression of His anger.* “For if ye turn away from after Him, He will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.” If the unworthy desires of the Reubenites and Gadites had spread to the other tribes, it would have been most just that God should exclude them from Canaan. The expressions of the Divine wrath are ever perfectly just and right.

3. *The subjects of His anger.* “All this people.” The sad consequences of sin are not confined to the actual transgressors. One member of a family sins,

and all the members suffer by reason of that sin. In the nation, one class or party pursues an evil course, and all classes or parties suffer loss or pain. An argument against sin. (e)

• V. The solemn example by which Moses enforced his rebuke. (Verses 8-13.)

See our exposition of chapters xiii., xiv.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For an illustration on *Injustice* see p. 550.

(b) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 428, 485.

(c) Illustrations on this point may be found on p. 252.

(d) God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial, and eternal hatred. A hatred, a hostility, inexorable, unappeasable, which blasts the scoundrel, and all scoundrels ultimately, into black annihilation and disappearance from the sum of things. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword: he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning, as with unquenchable fire, the false and the deadworthy from the true and lifeworthy; making all human history, and the biography of every man, a God's Cosmos in the place of a Devil's Chaos. So it is in the end; even so

to every man who is a man, and not a mutinous beast, and has eyes to see.—*Thos. Carlyle*.

Other illustrations on *the Wrath of God* appear on pp. 220, 221.

(e) Sages of old intended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrated it thus:—"A vessel sailing from Joppa, carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth, cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made lies under my own berth.'"

The ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.—*C. H. Spurgeon*.

THE AMENDED PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 16-27.)

Our subject has three main branches—

I. The amended proposal made.

"And they came near unto him and said, we will build," &c. (verses 16-19). The chief terms of the proposal are these—

1. *That they should provide at once for the safe settlement of their families and their flocks and herds.* "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones, and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land." A reasonable proposal: for it was their duty to look to the safety of their wives and little ones and possessions; and when this was done, they would be more free to go forth to the conquest of the land.

2. *That they would assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan.*

"We ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place." They would take their full share in the hardships and dangers which were to be encountered in taking the country.

3. *That they would not leave their brethren until that conquest was completely effected.* "We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance." They would not return unto their homes until their brethren ceased to require their services.

4. *That they would not seek for any inheritance with their brethren on the other side of the Jordan.* "We will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward." They would not seek for any additional territory as compensa-

tion for helping their brethren in their wars, but would be content with the inheritance for which they were now asking.

Such are the chief terms of the amended proposal of the Reubenites and the Gadites; and they are manifestly reasonable and equitable.

II. The amended proposal accepted.

"And Moses said unto them, if ye will do this," &c. (verses 20-24).

1. *Moses re-affirms the chief terms of their proposal.* He "said unto them, if ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, and will go all of you armed over Jordan," &c. (verses 20-22). In this way he would impress them with the importance of the engagements they were making, and the solemnity of the obligations incurred by them.

2. *He accepts their proposal as righteous.* "Then afterwards ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep: and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth."

3. *He warns them that if they fail to faithfully fulfil its terms punishment will overtake them.* "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." "The guilt will

haunt you at heels, as a bloodhound, and the punishment will overtake you." Their sin would certainly bring its own punishment. (a)

III. The amended proposal confirmed.

"And the children of God and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. Our little ones," &c. (verses 25-27). And the proposal thus ratified was faithfully fulfilled (Josh. iv. 12, 13).

Lessons.

i. *The duty of manifesting a practical regard for the rights and interests of others.* "We are members one of another." "The members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26). It behoves us not merely to cultivate kind feelings towards others, but also to render practical help in the toils and trials of life. (b)

ii. *The importance of faithfully fulfilling the engagements into which we enter.* Our covenants we should always keep. Our promises should always be translated into performances. (c)

iii. *The delusiveness of the notion that any one can sin and escape the punishment of sin.* The penalty follows the transgression as an inevitable consequence. (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) A vessel was going from Bassorah to Bagdad, the author of *Persian Stories* relates, with several passengers on board. In the course of the voyage the sailors, by way of a joke, put a man in irons, as he lay asleep, and he became a subject of diversion to the whole party till they drew near to the capital. But when the sailors wanted to let him loose the key was nowhere to be found, and after a long and fruitless search they were compelled to send for a blacksmith to knock off the fetters. When, however, the blacksmith came, he refused to do what they wanted till he had authority of the magistrate, for he thought the man might be some criminal whom the officers of justice had laid hold of, and that his friends wished to favour his escape. To the magistrate they accordingly went, who sent down one of his attendants to see into it. But the officer,

when he had heard their story, and had taken the evidence of some of the most respectable among the passengers, shook his head, and with a look of solemnity said it was much too serious a case for him to decide. So they repaired in a body to the magistrate, and carried the poor captive with them. So strange a procession was sure to attract notice, and a crowd soon collected about them, each curious to know the prisoner's offence, and to catch a sight of him; till at length one man, springing forward, seized the captive by the throat and exclaimed, "Here is the villain I have been looking for these two years, ever since he robbed and murdered my poor brother!" Nor would he quit his hold till they came before the magistrate, and the murder being clearly proved, the man who had been confined in joke only was given up to death, as punishment for the

blood he had shed.—*The Sunday School Teacher.*

Another illustration on this point is given on p. 90.

(b) "Two," says Solomon, "are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." The cobbler could not paint the picture, but he could tell Apelles that the shoe latchet was not quite right, and the painter thought it well to take his hint. Two neighbours, one blind and the other lame, were called to a place at a great distance. What was to be done? The blind man could not see, and the lame man could not walk. Why, the blind man carried the lame one; the blind one assisted by his legs, the other by his eyes. Say to no one, then, "I can do without you;" but be ready to help those who ask your aid, and then, when it is needed, you may ask theirs. Mankind are so much indebted to one another, that they owe mutual attention.—*Anon.*

Man is not himself his own work; he is precisely the most wonderful piece of God's workmanship extant. In this best piece not only he is bound to take delight, but cannot, in a right state of thought, take delight in anything else, otherwise than through himself. Through himself, however, as the sun of creation, not as *the* creation. In himself, as the light of the world; not as being the world. Let him stand in his due relation to other creatures, and to inanimate things—know them all and love them, as made for him, and he for them; and he becomes himself the greatest and holiest of them. But let him cast off this relation, despise and forget the less creation round him, and instead of being the light of the world, he is as a sun in space—a fiery ball, spotted with storm.

All the diseases of mind leading to fatal ruin consist primarily in this isolation. They are the concentration of man upon himself; whether his heavenly interests or his worldly interests, matters not; it is the being *his own* interests which makes the regard of them so mortal. Every form of asceticism on one side, of sensualism on the other, is an isolation of his soul or of his body; the fixing his thoughts upon them alone; while every healthy state of nations and of individual minds consists in the unselfish presence of the human spirit everywhere, energizing over all things; spaking and living through all things.—*John Ruskin, M.A.*

(c) When Justice North, afterwards the Lord Keeper Guildford, during one of his circuits, visited the Duke of Beaufort, at his princely seat at Badminton, the Lord Arthur, then a child about five years old, was very angry with the judge (he said) for hanging men. The judge replied, "that if they were not hung, they would kill and steal." "No," said the little boy, "you should make them promise upon their honour they would not do so, and then they would not." How delicate must the noble principle have been in the breast of this infant noble, and how rich a soil wherein to plant and to cherish it.—*Biblical Museum.*

I have somewhere met with an anecdote of Lord Chatham, who had promised that his son should be present at the pulling down of a garden wall. The wall was, however, taken down during his absence, through forgetfulness; but, feeling the importance of his word being held sacred, Lord Chatham ordered the workmen to rebuild it, that his son might witness its demolition, according to his father's promise.—*F. F. Trench.*

(d) Illustrations on this topic are given on pp. 89, 225, 318, 374.

CONFLICT THE CONDITION OF ATTAINMENT, AND SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN.

(Verses 20-23.)

Old Testament histories are New Testament instructions. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime," &c. (Rom. xv. 4). They teach that human nature is the same in all ages; that God's government is the same, &c.

I. A truth to be confirmed—that those who would share in the inheritance must engage in the conflict.

In this warfare not to fight is to perish. To obtain the possession we must "go armed before the Lord to war." Life is a scene of conflict between the seed of the Serpent, &c.

1. *This is opposed to the thoughtless impiety of the worldling*; who, intent upon present objects, has no sympathy with the claims of Truth, the designs of God, or the conflicts of the Church.

They forget that in the great struggle always going on between truth and error, holiness and sin, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell, every man must take a part—for Christ against Satan, or for Satan against Christ. The moment that the life of faith begins, the fight of faith begins. We cannot put off our armour till we put on our

shroud. It was a striking saying of a celebrated captain: "There's the enemy; if you don't kill them, they will kill you."

They forget that this war, like that against Canaan, is divinely appointed. Six times in this connection it is stated that it was "before the Lord" they were to "go armed to war." The conflict was begun at His command; and not to end but with His permission.

Reuben and Gad are fitting types of worldly men. They had a fine eye for worldly gain. They would willingly engage with the warriors up to the point of securing their inheritance, and then fall back. Every unconverted man is a Reubenite at heart. For the world all eagerness, &c.

2. *This is opposed to the sinister and selfish designs of the hypocrite*; who is always pursuing some secondary object. We are to guard against "all the deceits of the world." Calvin, speaking of the Reubenites, thinks there was "much amiss in the principle they went upon, preferring their own ease to the Church's good, and having no such regard to the honour of God and the Covenant of Promise, as they ought to have had." Their request seemed to arise from contempt of the good land, or doubt of God's power to bring them through. It argued a culpable neglect of their brethren. But the men of Reuben, like other hypocrites, had other ends. No man acts on a single motive. Reuben had lost his birthright, and could not claim a first inheritance. Manasseh, though the elder, was always eclipsed and overshadowed by Ephraim, the recognised head of ten tribes. And Gad had a blot on his escutcheon, being descended from Zilpah, Leah's handmaid. Each of these, therefore, had a reason for wishing an inheritance on that side the Jordan.

3. *As opposed to the baseness of the Antinomian*; who is all for privilege, and nothing for obligation.

II. A warning to be applied—that sin brings punishment; and that those who think to sin with impunity, under a dispensation of mercy, will find them-

selves fearfully disappointed. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

No impression seems more common than the hope of escape; but none more fallacious. Some think they can stop at a certain point; others that they can skilfully conceal their transgression; or that they can repent in time. Sinning on a plan.

But the certain connexion between crime and punishment is part of the public creed of all nations. Hence the tendency to convert calamities into judgments. We look for and record any token of retributive justice, by which the consequences of men's actions are brought home to themselves.

1. *In the way of natural consequence.* The law that regulates the succession of the seasons is not more certain than that which regulates the just recompense of reward that follows sin. God who gives to every seed its own body, makes the harvest of guilt answerable to the seed time. The interval may be long, but the result is certain. The man who is undutiful to his parents, may be visited by the equal undutifulness of his own child. Jacob, who deceived Isaac, was himself deceived by Laban and Leah, and by his own sons. Agag, who made mothers childless, was slain by Samuel, and his mother made childless.

2. *In the way of Providential dispensation.* God sees sin wherever it exists: He is angry with the wicked. For sin He drowned one world, &c.

See it in guilty nations. The Jews crucified our Lord: they were crucified by the Romans in the siege, &c. The Roman emperors persecuted the Christians: they themselves came to untimely deaths. Spain founded the Inquisition: she has been sunk to the level of a third-rate power. France persecuted the Huguenots: she has been a hot-bed of revolutions.

See it in guilty men. Cain, Joseph's brethren, Gehazi, Achan, David

3. *In the way of final retribution.*

III. A personal application to be made.

.

Samuel Thodey.

THE CERTAINTY THAT SIN WILL FIND US OUT.

(Verse 23.)

The fear of punishment, if not the best, is certainly the most common preservative from sin. Under the Mosaic dispensation, it was the principal motive with which the Divine commands were enforced. Nor did St. Paul think it wrong to "persuade men by the terrors of the Lord." Consider—

I. In what manner we have sinned against the Lord.

It would be useless to attempt an enumeration of all the sins we have committed

1. We shall confine ourselves to *that view of them which the context suggests*. The sin against which Moses cautioned the two tribes was unfaithfulness to their engagements; and a preferring of their present ease to the executing of the work which God had assigned them. Now, we promised to renounce the world, &c., but how have we kept the covenant which we solemnly entered into? &c.

2. *But the sin referred to in the text will scarcely bear any comparison with ours*. The Israelites were to maintain a warfare with men; we with the devil (Eph. vi. 11, 12). They were to fight for an earthly portion; we, an heavenly (1 Cor. ix. 25). They might have urged that *their* aid was unnecessary when *God* was engaged; and that after all the prize was an inadequate reward for such fatigue and danger. But can we hope to conquer without exerting our own powers? Or can we say that the prize held out to us is not worth the contest? If our engagements be more solemn, our work more noble, and our reward more glorious than theirs our sin in disregarding all must be proportionably greater. Yet who amongst us must not confess that he has forgotten all his vows? Then we may say to all, "Ye have sinned against the Lord."

II. What assurance we have that our sin shall find us out.

1. *Sin may be said to find us out when it brings down the Divine judgments*

upon us. Conscience, stupefied or scared, often forgets to execute its office; nor speaks till God, by His providence or grace, awaken it. Sometimes years elapse before it reproves our iniquities (Gen. xlii. 21, 22). Sometimes it testifies to our face as soon as our sin is committed (Matt xxvi. 74, 75; xxvii. 3, 4). Whenever it thus condemns us, our sins may be said to find us out. But the expression in the text imports rather the visitation of God for sin. There is a punishment annexed to every violation of God's law (Ezek. xviii. 4). And sin then finds us out effectually when it brings that punishment upon us.

2. *That it will find us out, we have the fullest possible assurance*. (1) *The perfections of God's nature* absolutely preclude all hope of impunity. If He be omnipresent, He must see; if omniscient, remember; if holy, hate; and if just, punish the violations of His law. If He be possessed of veracity and power, He must execute the judgments He has denounced (2) *The declarations of His Word* abundantly confirm this awful truth (Psa. xxi. 8; Prov. xi. 21; Isa. iii. 11; Rom ii. 6, 9). Sin leaves a track which can never be effaced; and evil, however slow-paced, will surely overtake it (Psa. cxi. 11; Prov. xiii. 21). However scoffers may exult in their security, their ruin is fast approaching (Deut. xxix. 19, 20; 2 Pet. ii. 3; iii. 4, 9). (3) *The remarkable instances of sin being detected and punished in this world* afford strong additional testimony (Josh. vii. 14-18; 2 Sam. xii. 9-12; 2 Kings v. 26, 27). How much more then shall the most hidden things be brought to light hereafter! (4) *The appointment of a day of final retribution* puts the matter beyond a possibility of doubt (Eccles. xii. 14). We may, then, say to every sinner, "Be sure your sin," &c.

INFER—

i. *How earnest should we be in search-*

ing out our own sins! (Psa. l. 21; Luke xiii. 3.)

ii. *How thankful should we be that a way of escape is provided for us!* The Man Christ Jesus is an hiding place from the impending storm. Every perfection of Deity is pledged to save a believing penitent (1 John i. 9). We are confirmed in this hope by the most

positive declarations of Scripture (Isa. xlv. 22; Mic. vii. 18, 19; Heb. viii. 12). We have most authentic and astonishing instances of sin forgiven (2 Sam. xii. 13; Luke vii. 47; xxiii. 43). Let this blessed assurance encourage us to take refuge under the Saviour's wings (Matt. xxiii. 37).—*C. Simeon, M.A.*

THE SELF-RETRIBUTIVE NATURE OF SIN.

(Verse 23.)

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

The text teaches the solemn and admonitory truth that sin carries with it its own punishment, which will eventually seize upon the sinner. This truth is confirmed by—

I. The germinal character of human actions.

Every action of life resembles a seed, which brings forth fruit after its kind. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" &c. (a)

II. The exercise of memory.

In the exercise of its retentive function, memory holds all the sins we have ever committed; and in the exercise of its reproductive function, it may at any moment bring them forth, an awful procession, in clear and terrible aspects. Memory is "the bane of the wicked;" for it torments them by vividly appalling representations of their evil deeds. In this way the sin overtakes and smites the sinner. (b)

III. The operations of conscience.

The awakening of conscience to a sense of its guilt is the kindling of a hell within the breast from which there is no escape, except through the Cross of Christ. Guilt made Macbeth, the noble and brave soldier, cry out:—

"How is't with me when every noise appals me!"

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth" "The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them: and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall

fall when none pursueth." "Terrors take hold on him as waters."

"That pang where more than madness lies!"

The worm that will not sleep, and never dies. Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night.

That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light:

That winds around, and tears the quivering heart,

Ah! wherefore not consume it and depart?" —*Byron. (c)*

IV. The power of habit.

"Habit," says Sir W. Hamilton, "is formed by the frequent repetition of the same action, or passion, and this repetition is called *consuetude*, or *custom*."

"All habits gather by unseen degrees,
As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas."
—*Dryden.*

"Habit is at first like a spider's web; if neglected, it becomes a thread of twine; next, a cord or rope, and eventually a cable; and then who can break it?" "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." (d)

Conclusion—

i. *Warning against sin.* Let the certainty of its punishment deter you from the commission of sin.

ii. *Motive to trust in Christ.* Through Him we may obtain forgiveness of sin, cleansing from its stains, and freedom from its power.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This topic is illustrated on pp. 89, 265, 481.

(b) I knew a man who said, that in falling twenty feet, when he expected to die, the thoughts of a lifetime seemed to pass through his mind. He thought of his business, of his wife, of his children, and of that eternity to which he was going. A life seemed to pass through his mind, and nothing was lost. So it will be when memory summons the acts of a life at the last tribunal. Nothing is lost. Thoughts once impressed, but apparently lost, will come out again. A life is written on our memory, as with invisible ink. It is apparently lost to our frail sight while here; but, in the judgment light, it will be seen enveloped around us, and will be unrolled till every line and letter is made visible. I knew a sailor once, who said, that when in a storm, on the giddy mast, while trying to furl a sail, and could not, he cursed God. It passed out of his mind for twenty years; but then, in a season of excitement, he said, "Now I remember it. I am lost."—*H. W. Beecher*.

Let a man try to forget any dreadful thing, of which he hates the remembrance, and the more he tries to forget it, the more surely he remembers it, the more he bodies it forth, and every thrust he makes at it causes it to glare up anew, reveals some new horror in it. Doubtless, this peculiarity in our mental constitution is destined to play a most terrific part in the punishment of men's sins in eternity; for there can be nothing so dreadful as the remembrance of sin, and nothing which men will strive with more intense earnestness to hide from and forget, than the recollection of their sins; and yet every effort they make at such forgetfulness only gives to such sins a more terrible reality, and makes them blaze up in a more lurid light to the conscience. Oh, if they could but be forgotten! But the more intense is the earnestness of this wish, the more impossible becomes the forgetfulness, the more terribly the dreaded evil stands out. There are cases, even in this life, in which men would give ten thousand worlds, if they possessed them, could they only forget; but how much more in eternity! The man that has committed a secret midnight murder, how often, think you, though perhaps not a human being suspects it, would he give the riches of the material universe, if he had them at command, could he but forget that one moment's crime! But it is linked to his very constitution; and every time he tries to cut the chain, he does but rattle and rouse the crime out of its grave into a new existence.—*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*

Will no remorse, will no decay,
O Memory, soothe thee into peace?
When life is ebbing fast away,
Will not thy hungry vultures cease?

Ah, no! as weeds from fading free,
Noxious and rank, yet verdantly

Twine round a ruined tower;
So to the heart, untamed, will cling
The memory of an evil thing

In life's departing hour:
Green is the weed when grey the wall,
And thistles rise while turrets fall.

Yet open Memory's book again—

Turn o'er the lovelier pages now,
And find that balm for present pain
Which past enjoyment can bestow:

Delusion all, and void of power!
For e'en in thought's serenest hour,

When past delights are felt,
And Memory shines on scenes of woe,
'Tis like the moonbeam on the snow,

That gilds, but cannot melt;
That throws a mocking lustre o'er,
But leaves it cheerless as before.

—*J. A. Heraud.*

(c) My dream was lengthened after life;
O, then began the tempest to my soul!
I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,
With that grim ferryman which poets write of
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,

Who cried aloud—*What scourge for perjury
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?*
And so he vanished: Then came wand'ring by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood; and he shrieked out aloud,
*Clarence is come,—false, fleeting, perjured
Clarence—*

*That stabb'd me in the field by Tewkesbury;
Seize on him, furies, take him to your torments!*
With that, methought, a legion of foul fiends
Environed me, and howled in mine ears
Such hideous cries, that, with the very noise,
I trembling waked, and, for a season after,
Could not believe but that I was in hell;
Such terrible impression made my dream.

I have done these things
That now give evidence against my soul.

—*Shakespeare, Richard III. i. 4.*

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the dirt'st degree;
All several sins all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all—*Guilty! guilty!*
I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And, if I die, no soul will pity me—
Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself.

Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

—*Ibid. v. 3.*

(d) Here is a young man who says, "I cannot see why they make such a fuss about the intoxicating cup. Why, it is exhilarating. It makes me feel well. I can talk better, think better, feel better. I cannot see why people have such a prejudice against it." A few years pass on, and he wakes up, and finds himself in the clutches of an evil habit which

he tries to break, but cannot; and he cries out, "O Lord God, help me!" It seems as though God would not hear his prayer, and in agony of body and soul he cries out, "It biteeth like a serpent, and it stingeth like an adder." How bright it was at the start! how black it was at the last!—*T. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

SIN WILL COME TO LIGHT.

(Verse 23.)

"Be sure your sin will find you out."

Men, when they commit sin, wish to think that they are done with the thing for ever. Few succeed in convincing themselves of this huge error; but some do think that the Most High doth not regard, and will never call them to account. Others think that the day of God's dealing with them will not come till by some means, not sanctioned by Scripture, not approved by sound reason, they will make all right. In many ways sinners practise deceit on themselves and harden themselves in iniquity. Men are not done with sin when they have committed it. After sin comes a dread account. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"

I. God certainly shows His purpose to punish sin by the way He causes woe to come on some sinners here.

The drunkard, the glutton, and the cheat, the liar and the lewd, are not the only examples. Most frauds are exposed. Nearly all murders are brought to light. Men may plot very secretly, and think their crimes are hid. But Providence calls on stones and beams of timber, on tracks and pieces of paper, to be witnesses of the crime. Then all that class of sins which are not punishable by human laws, God often punishes with a loss of respect, esteem, or confidence. After twenty-four years of concealment, Joseph's brethren are brought to feel and say that God had found out their iniquity. Ibycus, a famous Grecian poet, was going to Corinth. Robbers attacked and murdered him. As he was falling and dying, he looked around to see if

there were no witnesses or avengers. All he could see was a flock of cranes high in the air. He called on them to avenge his blood. You may think that was an idle call. The robbers thought so. They got their prey, and came to Corinth. They went to the open theatre. As they sat there, they looked up and saw above them a flight of cranes, and one scoffingly said, "Lo, there are the avengers of Ibycus." The words were heard by some one near them. Already fears of the poet's safety began to be common. The gang, on being questioned, betrayed themselves, and *The Cranes of Ibycus* became a proverb, like that we have in English, *Murder will out*.

II. Men might be sure that their sin will find them out by the sore judgments which God sometimes sends on men for their sins.

On this matter we should exercise candour, caution, and charity, and not call that an angry judgment which is but a dark doing of love. Still there are on earth sore and marked judgments. Look at the history of Achan, of Korah, &c. Of ~~thirty~~ Roman Emperors, Proconsuls, and high officials, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and rage against the early Christians, it is recorded that one became speedily deranged after an act of great cruelty; one was slain by his own son; one became blind; the eyes of one started out of his head; one was drowned; one was strangled; one died in a miserable captivity; one fell dead in a manner that will not bear to be told; one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians

were put to death, because they could not abide the stench that filled his room; two committed suicide; a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the bloody work; five were assassinated by their own servants or people; five others died the most horrible deaths, having many and strange diseases; and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners. Men have more to do with sin than to commit it.

III. One may escape detection and strange judgments, and still his sins may find him out in the fears, and clamours, and remorse of conscience.

Remorse is remorseless. Like fire, it burns all around it. No man can protect himself against his sins flashing him in the face at any moment. The Bible, preaching, singing, praying, a marriage, a trial in court, the sight of the man he has injured, or one that looks like him, or anything may arouse his conscience into fury at the most inconvenient time.

IV. But even if one escape all these things, yet if he dies unpardoned his sins will find him out in the next world.

Luke xii. 2; 1 Tim. v. 24; Eccles. x. 20.

Why do not men admit the force of these truths, and act accordingly? The reasons are very clear.

1. *Some think their sins will not find them out because God has not yet called them to account* (Eccles. viii. 11). Such men forget that with the Lord one day is "as a thousand years," &c. (2 Pet. iii. 8-10).

2. *In this world sinners often forget their sins, and think God has also forgotten them* (Ps. x. 11). But God forgets nothing.

3. *Some think their sin will not find them out because they doubt whether God is holy and just, and whether He takes notice of human actions* (Ps. xciv. 5-7). But that is practical atheism (Prov. xv. 3; Eccles. xii. 14).

4. *Some think their sin will not find them out because God is merciful.* But mercy slighted and rejected can save no man. All the cooling fountains can do no good to him who does not drink them.

O sinner, "be sure your sin will find you out." You may now live in ease and in error. You may now harden your heart in pride. But you must meet your sins at God's tribunal. Remember that. O be wise, be wise unto salvation. — *W. S. Plumer, D.D.*

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CARRYING OUT THE PROPOSAL OF THE REUBENITES AND GADITES.

(Verses 28-42.)

In these verses there are several things which require a brief notice.

I. The arrangements made by Moses for carrying out the agreement into which he had entered with the Reubenites and Gadites.

1. *His command to Eleazar and Joshua.* "Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun," &c. (vers. 28-30). Knowing that before the engagements could be fulfilled he would "be gathered unto his people," he charges the authorities of the nation to carry them out.

2. *His grant of the land to the two and*
560

a half tribes. "Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben," &c. Thus he provides as carefully and completely as possible for the fulfilment of the agreement into which, as the head of the nation, he had entered. Learn from the conduct of Moses—

i. *That men drawing near to the close of life should provide for the fulfilment of the engagements which they have made.* It behoves them "to set their house in order," &c. (comp. 2 Kings xx. 1).
(a)

ii. *That men should not enter into en-*

gements for the fulfilment of which they are unable to make provision.

II. The renewal of the promise of the Reubenites and Gadites.

"And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered," &c. Here are two considerations—

1. *The engagement which they renew.* They pledge themselves, for the third time, to do the will of Jehovah by aiding their brethren in the conquest of Canaan. "As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do," &c.

2. *The object which they had in view in renewing the engagement.* "That the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours."

III. The bestowment upon the half tribe of Manasseh of northern Gilead and Bashan.

"And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh," &c. (vers. 40-42). This half tribe of Manasseh had not asked for their inheritance east of the Jordan. Wherefore, then, was it assigned to them there? Of the three tribes "who had elected to remain on that side of the Jordan, Reuben and Gad had chosen their lot because the country was suitable to their pastoral possessions and tendencies. But Machir, Jair, and Nobah, the sons of Manasseh, were no shepherds. They were pure warriors, who had taken the most prominent part in the conquest of those provinces which up to that time had been conquered, and whose deeds are constantly referred to (ver. 39; Deut. iii. 13-15) with credit and renown. 'Jair the son of Manasseh took all the tract of Argob. . . . sixty great cities' (Deut. iii. 14; 4). 'Nobah took Kenath, and the daughter towns thereof, and called it after his own name' (ver. 42). 'Because Machir was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan' (Josh. xvii. 1). The district which these ancient warriors

conquered was among the most difficult, if not the most difficult, in the whole country. It embraced the hills of Gilead, with their inaccessible heights and impassable ravines, and the almost impregnable tract of Argob, which derives its modern name of *Lejah* from the secure 'asylum' it affords to those who take refuge within its natural fortifications" (*Bibl. Diet*). Thus their inheritance may have been assigned to them there—

1. *As an acknowledgment of their bravery.* The words of ver. 39 suggest this, "The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had gone to Gilead, and taken it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. And Moses gave Gilead," &c.

2. *As a precaution for the common safety.* The occupation of this frontier country by these bold and valiant warriors would tend to promote the security of the nation. Moses might have had this in view in settling them there.

IV. The alteration of the names of the places.

"Nebo and Baal-meon (their names being changed), and Shibmah; and gave other names unto the cities which they builded." The alteration of the names of the towns arose probably from—

1. *A desire not to mention the names of the heathen deities after which some of them were called.* Nebo and Baal are such names. The Israelites were commanded not to utter the name of false gods (Exod. xxiii. 13; Josh. xxiii. 7).

2. *A desire to perpetuate their own names.* "Nobah took Kenath, and called it Nobah, after his own name." "They call their lands after their own names" (Ps. xlix. 11). Deep is the desire of men to be remembered on the earth when they have passed away from it for ever. (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Illustrations on the *Fulfilment of promises* appear on p. 554.

In connection with the important subject of
O O

preparation for death—for we have all to die, and the sooner we distinctly understand what it requires to do so honourably and safely, the

better,—allow me to mention, first, a wise and equitable arrangement of your temporal affairs. “Have you made your will?” There is an admirable tract with this title. I wish it were better known, and more generally read. He who has property that will survive him, and a family possessing indisputable claims on his remembrance, ought not to give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids, till he has made such a testamentary disposition of his estate as shall be to the honour of his Christian character, and save his family from contention, litigation, and strife, in the event of his removal.—*Thos. Raffles D.D. LL.D.*

But not that way do all men make their departure. Men ought to have their worldly affairs settled, so that the executors and administrators will not be confounded; and so that what they have honestly earned be not scattered among those who have no right to it. If the sudden announcement should be made to you to-night, what would be the state of your families? Have you done all that you can to fit them for heaven? Could you feel, “Whatever I, as father or mother, could do, I have done. They will remember how I prayed for them and talked with them; and when they look at my picture, they will say: ‘That was a Christian parent. I want to go in the same way, and gain the same heaven’”??

The keys of this organ are twelve feet from the organ-pipes; but every time those keys are touched the pipes resound. So these parents are now exercising influences which will respond far on in the eternity of their children. If they play an anthem now, it will be an anthem then. If they play a dirge now, it will be a dirge for ever.—*P. De Witt Talmage, D.D.*

(b) Various are the contrivances of vain men to have their names written on earth, and to procure, after their deaths, an imaginary immortality, for themselves and their families, in the memory and conversation of posterity; which is not often obtained; and, if obtained, is of no value; when, with less trouble, they might have had their names written in heaven, and have secured to themselves a blessed immortality, in the glorious kingdom of their Redeemer.—*Bp. Horne.*

“Some sink outright,
O’er them and o’er their names the billows
close,
To-morrow knows not they were ever born.
Others a short memorial leave behind;
Like a flag floating when the bark’s engulfed,
It floats a moment, and is seen no more.
One Cæsar lives; a thousand are forgot.”
—*Young.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

In this chapter we have a list of the places at which the Israelites encamped from their departure from Egypt unto their arrival at the Jordan (vers. 1-49), and directions as to the conquest and distribution of Canaan (vers. 50-56).

Verses 1 and 2, form the introduction to the list of encampments.

Verse 3. *Rameses*, a city in “the western part of the land of Goshen.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 4. *Buried*. “Rather, ‘were burying.’”—*Speaker’s Comm.*

Verse 5. *Succoth* — “booths” or “tents,” situated probably “nearly due east of Rameses, and fifteen miles distant in a straight line.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 6. *Etham*, which is in the edge of the wilderness. “It is reasonable to place Etham where the cultivable land ceases, near the *Seba Biâr*, or Seven Wells, about three miles from the west-
562

tern side of the ancient head of the gulf.”—*Ibid.*

Verse 7. *Pi hahiroth*. The word is most probably Egyptian, and signifies, “the bed of reeds.”

Baal zephon, or “*Typhon*, a name of Baal as representative of the opposite of mundane order and harmony, or of the god ruling in winter”—(*Fuerst*). But Mr. Stuart Poole in *Bibl. Dict.* gives as its meaning “place of Zephon;” and he says, “We place Baal-zephon on the western shore of the gulf of Suez, a little below its head, which at this time was about thirty or forty miles northward of the present head.”

Migdol = “a tower.” Sometimes, a military watch tower, or a look-out in a vineyard. “Migdol and Baal-zephon,” says Mr. Poole, “must have been opposite to one another, and the latter behind Pi-hahiroth with reference to the Israelites.”

Verse 8. *Wilderness of Etham*; “i.e.,

that part of the great wilderness of Shur which adjoined Etham"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Marah. "A satisfactory site has been found for Marah. Howârah, at the head of Wady Amârah, where even now caravans halt in their journey to Sinai, possessing a spring at times so bitter that neither men nor camels can drink of it."—*Alford.*

Elim "is generally acknowledged to be the present Wady Ghurundel, two and a-half hours S.E. of Mara, and even now a famous watering-place of the Arabs."—*Ibid.*

Verse 10. *By the Red Sea.* This "must almost certainly be at the descent of the Wady Taiyibeh on the sea, or in some portion of the plain of Mürkhâh, before they again turned up into the mountains."—*Stanley.*

Verse 11. *Wilderness of Sin.* "The whole of this district between Elim and Sinai is probably the wilderness of Sin" (*Alford*). Knobel, however, maintains, and with him Keil agrees, 'that the wilderness of Sin is the great sandy plateau Debbet er Ramleh, between the desert of Et-Tih and Sinai. This plateau begins near Elim and stretches S. Eastwards towards the range in which Sinai must be included.'—*Ibid.*

Verse 13. *Dophkah Alush,* not mentioned in Exodus, were most probably situated somewhere in the northern portion of the wilderness of Sin; but their respective sites have not been identified.

Verse 14. *Rephidim* = "rests" or "stays," was most probably situated in Wady Feiran (see *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 38-42).

Verse 15. *The wilderness of Sinai.* The Sinai of the Law was most probably the Râs Sûfsâfeh, which is not a distinct mountain, but the northern portion of Jebel Mûsa, and is thus described by Dean Stanley: "The cliff rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur, from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of 'the mount that

might be touched,' and from which the 'voice' of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain below." The people were most probably assembled in er-Râhah, "the most suitable spot imaginable for the assembling of many thousands of people. It is upwards of two miles long and half a mile broad" (see *Sinai and Pal.*, pp. 39 44; *Alford* on *Exod.* xix. 1; and *Dr. Smith's Bibl. Dict.* art. *Sinai*).

Verse 17. *Kibroth-hattaavah* (see on chap. xi. 34; p. 181).

Hazereth (see on chap. xi. 35, p. 181).

Verse 18. *Rithmah*, derived from *retem*, the broom plant, was in the desert of Paran (chap. xii. 16), and probably the same locality as "the Wady Abu Retemat, which is not very far to the south of Kadesh, 'a wide plain with shrubs and *retem*,' i.e., broom. This spot was well adapted for a place of encampment for Israel, which was so numerous that it might easily stretch into the desert of Zin, and as far as Kadesh" (chap. xiii. 21, 26).—*Keil and Del.*

Verses 19-36 give the names of the places of encampment "during the years of penal wandering. The determination of their position is difficult, because during the period there was no definite line of march pursued."—*Speaker's Comm.* "Of all the seventeen places not a single one is known, or can be pointed out with certainty, except Ezion-geber."—*Keil and Del.*

Rimmon-perez = "the pomegranate of the breach." The locality has not been identified.

Verse 20. *Libnah* = "whiteness." "Probably the Laban of Deut. i. 1, and situated on or near either the Elanitic gulf or the Arabah."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 21. *Rissah* = "heaps of ruins." Probably identical with Râsa of the Roman tables, "32 Roman miles from Ailah (Elah), and 203 miles south of Jerusalem."—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 22. *Kehelathah* = "assembling." Nothing is known of the place.

Verse 23. *Mount Shapher* = "beau-

tiful mountain." — *Fuerst*. Perhaps "the hill now known as Jebel-esh-Shureif, about 40 miles north-west of Râs-el-Kâ'a, north-west of Ezion geber, and west or south-west of el-Beyâueh." — *Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 24. *Haradah* = "place of terror." — *Fuerst*. "Probably Wady-el-Khâraizeh, about 15 miles south-east of Jebel-esh-Shureif." — *Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 25. *Makheloth* = "Places of meeting." Unknown.

Verse 26. *Tahath* = "a depression or valley." — *Fuerst*. The site has not been identified.

Verse 27. *Tarah* = "station." Situation unknown.

Verse 28. *Mithcah* = "sweet fountain" (*Fuerst*); or "place of sweetness" — *Bibl. Dict.* Unknown.

Verse 29. *Hashmonah*. The meaning of this word is doubtful; it may be "fat" or "fertile soil." Probably it is the Heshmon of Josh. xv. 27, and identical with "the fountain Ain Hasb, in the north-west of the Arabah." — *Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 30. *Moseroth* = "place of chastisement." — *Fuerst*. In Deut. x. 6, we have the singular form of the word (*Moserah*) instead of the plural, as in this place. In that place it is said, "there Aaron died." Its site has not been identified.

Verse 31. *Bene-jaakan* = "the children of Jaakan" (see Gen. xxxvi. 27; 1 Chron. i. 42). In Deut. x. 6, "Beeroth (*i.e.* wells) of the children of Jaakan." There it is stated that "the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera;" whilst here, it is said, "they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Bene-jaakan." The two passages probably relate to different journeys. This one to a journey during the thirty-seven years of penal wanderings; and that in Deut. to the march in the fortieth year, when they journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor, where Aaron died (chap. xx. 22-29). Beeroth-bene-jaakan "may be identical with the wells of sweet water now known as el-Mayein, which lying up high among

the hills, more than 60 miles due west of Mount Hor, would be likely to be visited by the Israelites either immediately before or after their encampment at Moserah." — *Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 32. *Hor-hagidgad*. "If the initial letter be *Kheth* (as in Tex. Recep., Syr., and later Targum) the name will denote the cavern of Gidgad; if *He* (as some few MSS., Samaritan text, earlier Targ., LXX, Vulg. read) it will denote the summit of Gidgad. In Deut. x. 7, we read simply Gudgodah or Gudgod." — *Ibid*. The situation has not been identified.

Verse 33. *Jotbathah* = "goodness." "In Deut. x. 7, 'Jotbath (Heb. *Jotbathah*) a land of rivers of waters.' This place is perhaps to be identified with Wady Tâbah, six miles south-west of the head of the Elanitic gulf; where is a broad plain running down to the sea, containing many palm trees and tamarisks, and well supplied with water." — *Ibid*.

Verse 34. *Ebronah*; "*i.e.* 'passage.' This station apparently lay on the shore of the Elanitic gulf, at a point where the ebb of the tide left a ford across. Hence the later Targum renders the word 'fords.'" — *Ibid*.

Verse 35. *Ezion Geber* = "the giant's back bone." "Ezion Geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (1 Kings ix. 26). Dean Stanley says, "There is nothing to fix the precise site of Ezion Geber." But it seems almost certain that it was at what was then the northern extremity of the Elanitic gulf, some miles north of the present head of the gulf, at Ain-el-Ghudyân.

Verse 36. *The wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh*. See on chaps. xii. 16; xiii. 21, 26; xx. 16.

Verse 37. *Mount Hor, &c.* See on chap. xx. 22.

Verses 37-40. See on chaps. xx. 22 — xxi. 3.

Verses 41-43. *Zalmonah, . . . Punon, . . . Oboth*. See on chap. xxi. 10.

Verse 44. *Ije-abarim*. See on chap. xxi. 11.

Verse 45. *Dibon-gad*. See on chap. xxi. 30.

Verse 46. *Almon-diblathaim* is almost certainly identical with Beth-diblathaim mentioned by Jeremiah (xlviii. 22), in connection with Dibon and Nebo. Its site is unknown; but "it is to be sought for to the north or north-west of Dibon."

Verse 47. *The mountains of Abarim, before Nebo*, "is only another name for the 'valley of the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah.'" See on chap. xxi. 20.

Verse 48. *The plains of Moab, &c.* See on chap. xxii. 1.

Verse 49. *Beth-jesimoth* = "house of the wastes," a town situated on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea (Josh. xii. 3). Later it was allotted to the Reubenites (Josh. xiii. 20).

Abel-shittim. See on chap. xxv. 1.

Verse 50—chap. xxxvi. 13. "This last portion of the book concludes the record of the long wandering of the

people by certain directions respecting that conquest and allotment of the Promised Land, with which the wandering terminated. These regulations are divided into two sections by the re-insertion at xxxv. 1 of the introductory formula with which xxxiii. 50 opens. Of these portions the former contains commands concerning (1) the extermination of the Canaanitish nations, xxxiii. 50-56; (2) the boundaries of the Promised Land, xxxiv. 1-15; (3) the names of the men who should allot the land, xxxiv. 16-29."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 52. *Pictures*. Rather, "idols of stone" (comp. Lev. xxvi. 1).

Molten images; "idols cast from brass."

High places, where altars were erected for the worship of idols.

THE ITINERARY OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1 and 2.)

Moses kept this record of the marches and encampments of Israel "by the commandment of the Lord." There must, therefore, have been some good and sufficient reason for it. And it seems to us that it was intended for a memorial, which was calculated in many ways to benefit primarily the Israelites, but also all others who might make acquaintance with the history. It is probable that the history of every station and march had its suggestions for the instruction, or encouragement, or admonition of the people. Of many of these encampments we know nothing except the name; but of others we know something of the occurrences and events connected with them, and in these instances we shall endeavour to briefly point out their moral suggestions. The verses before us, which are the introduction to the record, lead us to consider its general uses, and these as suggested by the fact that it was commanded by God.

It was calculated to be useful as—

I. An incentive to gratitude to God.

His goodness and mercy to the Israelites are manifest throughout the entire history. They are especially seen in His—

1. *Emancipating them from bondage in Egypt*. "With a strong hand the Lord brought them out of Egypt."

2. *Repeatedly delivering them from their enemies*. From the Egyptians at the Red Sea, the Amalekites at Rephidim, the Canaanites at Arad, &c.

3. *Infallibly guiding them in their journeys*. "In the day time He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." "He led them forth by the right way," &c. (a)

4. *Constantly providing for them in the desert*. "He rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food; He sent them meat to the full. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like the sand of the sea." "He clave the rocks in the

wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths;" &c. (b)

5. *Inviolably guarding them from dangers.* Excepting on those occasions when they forfeited His protection by their aggravated offences, He shielded them from the perils both of the desert through which they passed and of the enemies whom they encountered. (c)

The record which, by suggestion, reminded them of so much goodness and mercy, was eminently adapted to inspire their warm and deep gratitude to Him from whom these blessings flowed. And can we survey the path of our pilgrimage without discovering many and cogent reasons for gratitude to God? "What shall I render unto the Lord?" &c. "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" &c. (d)

II. **An encouragement to obey and trust God.**

The history makes it clearly manifest that in obedience to the Divine will Israel realized peace, security, and prosperity. This was a reason for continued and complete obedience. And since God in His dealings with them had displayed so much kindness and wisdom, faithfulness and power, He had surely proved Himself to be worthy of their unlimited and hearty confidence. He is unchangeable; therefore His past doings are examples of what we may expect Him to do in the future. History, properly studied, will be the nurse of faith and hope (comp. Psa. lxxviii. 3-8). (e)

III. **A monitor against sin.**

Very impressively the history reveals—

1. *Man's proneness to sin.* The Israelites sinned at the Red Sea (Exod. xiv. 11, 12), in the wilderness of Sin (Exod. xvi. 2, 3), at Rephidim (Exod. xvii. 1-4), at Sinai (Exod. xxxii.), at Kibroth-hattaavah (chap. xi.), at Kadesh (chap. xiv.), &c. How sadly in human life to day is the history of Israel in this respect reproduced!

2. *God's antagonism against sin.* See this at Sinai, at Kibroth-hattaavah, at Kadesh, in the rebellion of Korah and his company (chap. xvi. 31-50), in the sin "in the matter of Peor" (chap. xxv. 1-9). God is the unrelenting foe of sin. (f)

3. *The great evil of sin.* This itinerary shows by intimation how it had cursed Israel. All their sorrows and afflictions had resulted from sin. Many of these stations would never have been visited but for their sins. More than thirty-seven years of their wanderings were caused by them. They had painfully proved that sin "is an evil thing and bitter" (comp. Jer. ii. 19). (g) All this was calculated to warn them against committing it. This use of history is distinctly mentioned in Psa. lxxviii. 9. And this, we think, was one of the ends why Moses was commanded to keep this diary of travel. Let the miseries which sin has caused us check every inclination to it. (h)

Conclusion.

Every man should remember his own history, and profit by his own experiences.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This point is illustrated on pp 152-154, 164

(b) Illustrations on the *Divine provision* are given on pp. 154, 189, 190, 202.

(c) The *Divine protection* is illustrated on pp. 105, 154, 164, 176.

(d) For illustrations on this point see pp. 101, 276.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 407, 416, 417.

(f) and (g) For illustrations on these points see p. 327.

(h) An illustration on *Discouragements to sin* is given on p. 288.

MOSES'S DIARY OF TRAVELS, AND ITS TEACHINGS.

(Verse 2.)

This chapter is a compilation from Moses's diary, recording the journeys on the way from Egypt to Canaan. The text tells us that God told Moses to keep this record, and to publish it. Human life is not to be forgotten; it is a thing of interest and moment to the person living it, and it is full of instruction to others observing it. God wished the people to remember these journeys; and He wishes all ages to know of them and to learn from them. Let us notice a few of the lessons God intends these journeys to teach us.

I. They impress upon us the great fact of God's continued presence and interest in human life.

As we read the incidents recorded of these journeys, we see God feeding, guiding, protecting the people. In the census taken at His command, we see that He knows every individual and keeps a record of every life. Then we see Him giving the people laws, sanitary and moral tending to health and comfort, purity and holiness. These journeys show us that God knew all, was interested in all, and was the best Friend of all. He is still the same, &c.

II. They point out to us that God is the one safe and true Guide through life.

The people in the wilderness were ignorant of the way, exposed to many dangers, and quite helpless in themselves. These journeys show that God with them was more than equal to all emergencies. They prove that while they trusted God, they were never in want; while they followed Him, they never missed the way; and while they obeyed Him, they never suffered harm. To us, as to them, the journey of life is a perilous one: the way is unknown to us, and we need a guide. Let the record of these journeys commend to us Israel's Guide. He knows the way; He never errs; He can ever protect; He is one we can wholly trust; and He is willing to be our Guide.

III. They present to us a picture of human life and thus tend to give us correct views of life.

What is life as seen from these records? A pilgrimage of varied and chequered experiences. In no place had they a "continuing city"; and in their mysterious wanderings to and fro, they met with all kinds of experiences. They were constantly finding fault with God; and yet He was leading them in a straight, the best way. Such is life to us all; and it is well for us to know it, so as to have right views of life. "Here have we no continuing city;" this is not our rest. God is often leading us in a way which is mysterious to us; His paths are to us often in the deep waters; and we are often perplexed. But let us look at these journeys. He is ever doing right—doing all things well. And the way He leads His people now, as then, is the best way to rest. As in these journeys so in our life; we have Marah and Elim, storm and calm, trouble and comfort; and let us not forget that God led the people to both. Let none then build their hopes on the earth; let none despair in passing through trials and afflictions. Our life here is a mingled one.

"Bits of gladness and of sorrow,
Strangely crossed and interlaid:

Days of fever and of fretting,
Hours of kind and blessed calm:

Tears of parting, smiles of meeting;
Paths of smooth and rugged life.

Such are our annals upon earth,
Our tale from very hour of birth,
The soul's true history.—*Bonar.*

IV. They show to us that the greatest evils of life and its only dangers come from sin.

Journeying through this world cannot be all pleasant. In the nature of things, trials and troubles must and do come; for we are in an enemy's land,

we are passing through a course of discipline, &c. But the greatest evils and the only dangers of life come from sin. Look at these journeys. Nothing really injures man but sin. God led the people to the Red Sea, to Marah, to the wilderness, &c.; it was often trying to them; but God never failed them; He was equal to all; they lost not a man; they wanted nothing while they were faithful to Him. Invariably we find that sin was their curse. So with us. There is nothing to *fear* in poverty, illness, death, &c. They are hard to bear; we need patience under them; but they cannot *hurt* us. Yea! God can turn them into blessings for us. But as for sin, it is ever a curse, and nothing but a curse; it ruins body and soul; injures us for time and eternity. Yet people love sin, &c.

O that all such would read the record of these journeys! &c.

V. They suggest the comforting thought that by trusting in God and following Him we are sure to possess the inheritance which He has promised to His people.

Difficulties, trials, opposition are met on the way to heaven; but following after God, we shall safely reach the "good land beyond Jordan," as did the people the record of whose journeys God commanded Moses to write.

We are all journeying through life; soon, soon the journey will end. Let each ask himself, Whither am I going? Who is my guide? What will the end be? And let these journeys of Israel urge us all to seek for Israel's God.—
David Lloyd.

THE DEPARTURE FROM THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE.

(Verses 3, 4.)

Concerning the departure of Israel from Egypt, the text sets forth the following facts—

I. Their departure succeeded the observance of a significant and sacred memorial.

"They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow after the Passover." See pp. 139-141.

Learn: *The importance of commemorating the Divine mercies to us.* Such commemorations tend to foster our gratitude to God, to encourage our confidence in Him, &c. (a)

II. Their departure was public and triumphant.

"The children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

1. *It was public.* "In the sight of all the Egyptians." There was no thing clandestine or ignominious in the way in which they left the land of their oppressors (comp. Isa. lii. 12).

2. *It was triumphant.* "With an high hand." God had displayed a

little of the awful might of His strong right hand to the Egyptians. He effected the deliverance of Israel, &c.

Learn: *The certainty of the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, and the fulfilment of the Divine promises.* Notwithstanding the most powerful and persistent opposition, He carries forward His plans to triumphant issues. A reason for trusting Him, &c. (b)

III. Their departure took place when their oppressors were engaged in the most mournful occupation.

"For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them." How deep and keen must have been the anguish of the Egyptians! The sorrow of "one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," is spoken of in the sacred Scriptures as the most sharp and sore. And how universal was this sorrow! "There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead."

Learn: *The greatest sorrows are the result of our sins.* The anguish of the Egyptians arose from their oppression

and cruelty to the Israelites, and their persistent refusal to comply with the demand of God, and let them go. Shun sin, &c. (c)

IV. Their departure had been brought about by the most awful displays of the Divine judgments.

"All their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments."

1. *On the Egyptians.* "The whole kingdom of Egypt," says Dean Milman, "had been laid waste by successive calamities: the cruelty of the oppressors had been dreadfully avenged; all classes had suffered in the indiscriminating desolation. Their pride had been humbled; their most sacred prejudices wounded; the Nile had been contaminated; their dwellings polluted by loathsome reptiles; their cleanly persons defiled by vermin; their pure air had swarmed with troublesome insects; their cattle had perished by a dreadful malady; their bodies broken out with a filthy disease; their early harvests had been destroyed by the hail, the later by the locusts; an awful darkness had enveloped them for three days;" and, finally, they were smitten with a calamity more dreadful than all these, the instant death of all their firstborn, both of man and cattle.

2. *On their idols.* "Upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments." The meaning of this clause is very doubtful. From the fact that the words are here connected with the burying of

the firstborn, "it has been supposed," says Dean Alford, "that the destruction of the firstborn is meant by the phrase, seeing that among them would be many animals worshipped by the Egyptians. Calvin supposes that the judgment would consist in the demonstration of the worthlessness of the help and guardianship of Egypt's gods. But it must be confessed that both these explanations fall short of any satisfactory elucidation of the words. The Pseudo Jonathan gives a perhaps more likely interpretation, when he refers it to a destruction of the images of Egypt's gods: 'The molten images shall liquefy, those of stone shall be smitten in pieces, those of earth be broken up, those of wood shall be burnt to ashes' (comp. 1 Sam. v. 3, f.). We have very similar denunciations in Isa. xix. 1; Jer. xliii. 13; x'vi. 25; Ezek. xxx. 13, in three of which places is a distinct reference to the destruction of the *images*. But if this is meant, there is, of course, far more beneath it: the gods of Egypt are demoniac powers, and Jehovah's discomfiture of them, beginning with the failure of the magicians, was consummated" in the destruction of the firstborn.

Learn: *The utter folly of any creature opposing himself to God.* "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?" "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 407, 416, 417.

(b) For an illustration on this point, see p. 460.

(c) Illustrations on this point are given on pp. 97, 258, 327.

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 252, 312.

SUCCOTH AND ETHAM: THE DETERMINATION OF THE ROUTE.

(Verses 5 and 6.)

"Succoth, their first station, seems to have been the general rendezvous after their hasty flight, and from thence

their journey proper began." Here various Divine instructions seem to have been given to the Israelites, the

consideration of which is beyond the scope of our work. There is, however, one question connected with the encampment at Succoth, which cannot be overlooked in any satisfactory treatment of this itinerary, viz., the determination of the route to be pursued; for it is in the account of their brief stay here that we first read of that route. From Succoth to Palestine, through the land of the Philistines, the usual caravan way, is comparatively a short journey. "From Rameses to Gaza," says Kalisch, "is a straight and much frequented way of eight or ten days, either northwards, through the pass of Djebel-el-Tih, or more eastwards, through that of Djebel-el-Edshmeb; and the sons of Jacob journeyed, in not many days, from Palestine to Egypt to buy corn." Why then were the Israelites led by the long and trying "way of the wilderness of the Red Sea"? The answer is given in Exod. xiii. 17.

The following homiletic sketch on the determination upon this route as illustrating *The tender consideration of God for His people* is taken from Buddicom's *Christian Exodus*.

The Christian life is a growth, and if assailed by some temptations in its infancy, the consequences might be fatal. He, therefore, who commences and maintains the process of our salvation, gradually accustoms His soldiers and servants to the difficulties of their warfare. Their faith, love, zeal, and self-denial are thus *exercised* rather than *oppressed*.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites.

They had been redeemed from bondage. They were commencing their journey to the Promised Land, every spirit filled with pleasure. They were confident of their power to endure the trials of the way. The heart-searching God knew their deficiencies; and a variety of circumstances connected with their feeble faith determined Him in wisdom to divert their feet towards Canaan by a devious path.

1. *The Philistines, who lay between them and the promised inheritance, were*

a brave and warlike people, against whom the sons of Jacob, numerous as they were, could not hope to succeed in battle. Wisely, therefore, did the Lord judge that they would shrink from such enemies. Such are the Christian's foes. Satan has triumphed over man in every age. And thinkest thou, Christian, that the enemies of the soul are enfeebled? What, then, would be the consequences if God led thee past them to Canaan? Wisely and graciously are you led by the wilderness.

2. *The Israelites were unarmed, and therefore utterly unable to cope with the Philistines, who were prepared with every means of offence and defence which a people whose delight was in war could invent.* The young believer just escaped from the house of bondage is defenceless. His enemies are armed. He cannot expect to wield the sword of the Spirit with the full energy of one who has been accustomed to fight with it.

3. *In thus estimating the goodness of God towards the children of Israel, we must add that their spirits were bowed down by long captivity.* The hard bondage in mortar and brick was not the school in which to learn courage. Hence Israel was not fitted to match against the free soldiers of Philistia. The slavery of Satan unfits for conflict with the foes of the soul.

II. The dealing of God towards them.

God might have made Israel at peace with the Philistines; or have given them courage to defeat their foes. But this would have comprehended less of moral discipline.

1. *He avoided the nearest way to the Promised Land, and led them by the way of the wilderness.* The Israelites would be astonished at the line of march; they would be disposed to murmur. Has not God often contradicted your desires? The passenger ignorant of navigation cannot direct the course of the ship. The ship-master knows the rocks: God knows our path best.

2. *He saw fit that they should pass*

through the dangers of the Red Sea, and sojourn in the wilderness of Sin. Could this be the result of wisdom? "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." It is the exclusive province of unerring wisdom to draw an exact line between the discipline necessary for our moral good, and that severity of affliction which might overwhelm us. We

must confide in our Heavenly Father.

3. *Although the journey of the Israelites was contrary to their expectations, their wishes, and their clouded judgment, it was the safest and the best path to Canaan.* "He led them forth by the right way." Let us learn, then, to leave the choice of our course simply and solely to God.

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, STANDING STILL IN THE MIDST OF DANGER.

(Verse 7.)

Departing from Etham, "on a sudden," to quote the words of Dean Milman, "the march of the Israelites is altered; instead of pressing rapidly onwards, keeping the sea on their right hand, and so heading the gulf, they strike to the south, with the sea on their left, and deliberately encamp at no great distance from the shore, at a place called Pi-hahiroth. The king, recovered from his panic, and receiving intelligence that the Israelites had no thought of return, determined on pursuit: intelligence of this false movement, or at least of this unnecessary delay on the part of the Israelites, encouraged his hopes of vengeance. The great caste of the warriors, the second in dignity, were regularly quartered in certain cities on the different frontiers of the kingdom, so that a considerable force could be mustered on any emergency. With great rapidity he drew together 600 war chariots, and a multitude of others, with their full equipment of officers. In the utmost dismay the Israelites beheld the plain behind them glittering with the hostile array; before them lay the sea; on the right, impracticable passes. Resistance does not seem to have entered their thoughts; they were utterly ignorant of military discipline, perhaps unarmed, and encumbered with their families, and their flocks and herds. 'Because there were no graves in Egypt,' they exclaimed, in the bitterness of their despair, 'hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?'

Their leader alone preserved his calmness and self-possession."

Let us fix upon some of his remarkable words to them as suggesting instructive and helpful considerations: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day" (Exod. xiv. 13). Consider—

I. The deplorable effect of slavery upon the Israelites.

This, the first peril which they encountered, revealed their almost utter destitution of manliness. Notice—

1. *Their cowardice.* Soon as they saw the advancing hosts of Pharaoh "they were sore afraid." They were in great consternation, prepared for anything mean and unmanly; totally unprepared for anything noble or brave.

2. *Their faithlessness.* All the signs and wonders of the Divine Hand wrought on their behalf are lost sight of by reason of their present difficulty and danger.

3. *Their ingratitude.* How disgracefully they reproached Moses! "Because there were no graves in Egypt," &c. What a base return for all his disinterested and noble efforts on their behalf! They go so far as to *apostatise* in spirit. "Better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." A man would have said: "Better death than slavery; better anything than to again bow our neck beneath the yoke of the oppressor. When freedom and honour are no more,

life is not desirable." But slavery had crushed the manhood out of them. The degradation of their position had done its mischievous work by degrading themselves, and reducing them in spirit to mere serfs. In estimating their conduct, we must thus take into account their previous disadvantages and sufferings. And this principle should be observed in analogous cases in our own day. Apply it in the case of the *reclaimed drunkard*. It is unreasonable to complain because he is not at once a man of refinement, &c. It will take years to repair the waste and injury of the years of intemperance. Let us be thankful for the transformation of the drunkard into a sober man, and wait with patience for the exhibition of the characteristics of a noble manhood. Apply it to the *spiritual life*. After we are delivered from the bondage of sin, we shall often discover evil results of our former life clinging to us, and retarding our progress. The strength and courage of mature Christian manhood are not attained at once. Sainthood is a growth. Let us patiently and hopefully persevere, &c.

II. The distinguished heroism of Moses.

Amid all the excitement, danger, alarm, and reproaches of the people, Moses was sublimely calm and magnanimous. He uttered no reproach to his craven-hearted followers; but addressed to them words of lofty inspiration and encouragement. "Fear ye not, stand still," &c. The crisis that revealed the mean cowardice and base ingratitude of his followers, revealed also the noble generosity and triumphant heroism of the leader. That which brought out their want of faith in God, also brought out the strength and firmness of his faith in Him.

III. The remarkable exhortation of Moses.

"Fear ye not, stand still," &c. This exhortation warrants the inference, that *there are times when our highest wisdom is to "stand still" and wait the Divine directions; when the best thing we can do is to do nothing but look to God to indi-*

cate our course. We do not counsel indolence either in temporal or spiritual things. There can be no progress without effort; or attainment without industry; or conquest without conflict. Yet there are seasons in life when it is the part of the wise man and the Christian not to exhaust himself in fruitless efforts, but to "stand still" and wait with all possible calmness for the interposition of God. When we have done all that we can do, and can do no more, and yet the end is not attained, we are not extricated from our difficulties, it is wise in us not to exhaust ourselves in frantic cries and efforts which merely beat the air, but to wait until God shall appear for our help. (a) This principle is applicable to—

1. *Our personal salvation.* We are commanded to "work out our own salvation;" and only by patient and earnest effort can we advance in the Christian life. But there is a very important part of our salvation in which we can do nothing but "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Thus it is in relation to our acceptance with God. Our part in this is not to endeavour to commend ourselves to His favour, or strive to justify ourselves before Him, or labour to merit His grace. Our part is to accept His grace, to leave ourselves to His mercy, to receive Christ as our Saviour, to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord."

2. *The exigencies of life.* There are seasons when we find human and earthly resources utterly inadequate to our need. There are burdens which no human friend can help us to bear; difficulties from which no human skill can extricate us; crises in which we are thrown either into unmanly, enforced submission, or into the frenzies of despair, or upon the help of God. In these crises let us "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord;" let us hopefully appeal to Heaven for help. Thus did David (Psa. lx. 11; cxlii. 4, 5). We are exhorted in the Scriptures to do so (Psa. xlv. 10; Isa. xxx. 7, 15). (b) Nor is it less brave, at such times,

to "stand still" and wait the help of God. The coward may struggle frantically in the terrible crises of life; but only the heroic can wait the time when action is serviceable, and wait that time calmly. To stand still in the moment of supreme anxiety, and wisely estimate our resources and scan our prospects, and determine the best mode and time for action, and cast ourselves upon

God—this demands a brave man, and one whose courage springs from faith. There are times when it is more heroic to "stand still" than to fight, and crises when it is wiser to wait than to work. (c)

The great lesson of our subject is this, *trust in God*. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) One of our hardest lessons is to find out the wisdom of our hindrances; how we are to be put forward and upward by being put back and put down; encouraged by being rebuked; prospered by being baffled. When the company in the "Pilgrim's Progress" had to sit up watching all night at the house of Gaius, Greatheart kept them awake with this riddle, "He that would kill must first be overcome"; and the truth in it has been practically dug out, by trials that broke sleep, through many a hard fortune, in every Christian experience since. It needs wakeful watchers, spiritual eyesight, to read that riddle of life, how defeat helps progress; how a compulsory standing still speeds us on; how humiliation exalts; how putting a cross on the shoulders lightens the burden of the race. But Christ has solved the wonder of His own cross, humbling Himself, becoming obedient unto death, and in His humiliation having His judgment taken away.

Gradually, to believing eyes, the fact comes out. Standing still at the right time, in the right way, for the right purpose, is the surest advance. Waiting on God brings us to our journey's end faster than our feet. The failure of our favourite plans is often the richest success of the soul. Let the pressure of trouble drive you down from your heights of health and pride, and you will come upon the primary foundation, and grow strong out of the rock. Be exiled from the convivial fellowships of comfort and popularity, and you make new acquaintances with stronger friends,—Christian self-possession, and wholesome repentance, and a mastery of your moral forces, and faith in your Lord.—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

(b) In the midst of our own houses, there are more secret sorrows than I need to name. Every life has its own. Perhaps there are erring, ungrateful, and ungracious children, with parents' hearts breaking and bleeding over them, and agonizing in daily prayers for their return. "Have faith in God;" every prayer pierces the Heaven of heavens; the Intercessor and Mediator pleads with it; and its answer is committed to some strong angels

at the right hand of the Throne. There are anxieties, alienations, unavailing affections, crossed desires and hopes. There are memories running back from pews in this house of prayer to the graves of those that worship no more in earthly temples. Rest, mourners, in the Lord. Seek not the living among the dead. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all else shall be added. "Let us be still beneath God's hand; for though His hand be heavy upon us, it is strong and safe beneath us too: and none can pluck us out of His hand." O, impatient griefs, and sorrows that have no hope, be still; and ye hopes that would outrun the wisdom of a healing Providence and a saving Mercy, be still; all unreasonable and rebellious thoughts, be still; know that the Lord, He is God. Remember that "the darkness is God's as well as the light"; and "if we cannot walk" and work therein, "we can" at least kneel down and "pray."—*Ibid.*

(c) If we learn to measure the bravery of Christian acquirements rather by the inward effort they cost than by their display, if we estimate character more by the standard of Christ's beatitudes than by what we short-sightedly call "results," we shall find some of the sublimest fruits of faith among what are commonly called passive virtues: in the silent endurance that hides under the shadow of great afflictions; in the quiet loveliness of that forbearance which "suffereth long and is kind"; in the charity which is "not easily provoked"; in the forgiveness which can be buffeted for doing well and "take it patiently"; in the smile on the face of diseased and suffering persons, a transfiguration of the tortured features of pain brightening sick rooms more than the sun; in the unostentatious heroism of the household, amidst the daily dripping of small cares; in the noiseless conquests of a love too reverent to complain; in resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for Him. Have you yourself never known the time when you found it a harder lesson to learn how to be still in your room than to be busy in the world? Of masculine natures that is apt to be the special cross. And so that may

be the point where faith and virtue need to rally their strength, if you would be a triumphant disciple. It is a fact which not all of us may have noticed, that of the nine beatitudes of our Lord, all, unless it be one, pronounce their blessing on what the world would

call tame and passive traits, from "the poor in spirit," to those who are reviled and persecuted without revenge. So does Christianity turn upside down the vulgar vanity of our ambition, and empty our worldliness of blessedness.—*Ibid.*

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, A LONG SEPARATION.

(Verse 7.)

There are other remarkable words of Moses, spoken at this station, which we shall do well to consider before we pass on. Having uttered the words which we have already noticed, he said: "For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exod. xiv. 13). In these words we have an illustration of—

I. The triumphant faith of Moses.

It rose superior to difficulties and dangers; the abject terror of his followers could not diminish its vitality or vigour; the almost desperate aspect of affairs could not overcome it; it was splendidly victorious over all. Let us emulate Moses in this respect.

II. The suicidal hardihood of the wicked.

Most terrible was the development of Pharaoh's character. His resistance of the Divine commands although they were authenticated by the most striking and dreadful signs; and his hardening of himself in rebellion against God—how appalling are these! Madly he rushed into ruin; blindly he courted destruction. His is a typical case. Sin seems to infatuate men—drives them mad. Spiritually, men are their own executioners; they of their own accord rush into the sea that engulfs them. Sin is madness. The persistent sinner is beside himself.

III. The working of God in history.

1. *Delivering the oppressed.* The Israelites had long cried unto Him; and the only result seemed to be that their position became worse. As we reckon time, His interposition was long delayed. Does God hear? Does He judge amongst men? Yes. "He

sitteth in the throne judging right." "He will avenge His own elect," &c.

2. *Retributing the oppressor.* Long time had God borne with Pharaoh; but at length His forbearance ceases and He visits him in judgment. "Because sentence against an evil work," &c. (Eccles. viii. 11). "Though hand join in hand," &c. (Prov. xi. 21). "Thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii. 3-6). "He that being often reprov'd," &c. (Prov. xxix. 1).

3. *Developing in all His own wonderful purposes.* Consider these Israelites,—they were cowardly, ungrateful, preferring to return into slavery than to die fighting for freedom. How unlikely that they should ever become a truly great nation! How unlikely that through them should come to the human race the greatest blessings! the clear revelation of the will and purpose of God, and the Redeemer of men! How unlikely! Yet such was God's purpose; towards its accomplishment these events were tending; and in due season it was realized. History should be studied reverently, for God is working in it. In all and by all He is developing His own glorious plans.

IV. Separations which are taking place amongst men in the present

1. *There are many persons whom having seen them once we "shall see them again no more for ever."* In the thronged thoroughfare, in the railway carriage, at the summer retreat, we see many persons once, and never more in this life. Join to this the fact that we may influence them by act, or word, or look; and how solemn is the con-

sideration! What an argument for a true life at all times!

2. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same circumstances.* We meet them again; but, so changeful are all things here that, the surroundings of their life are altered. The poor have become prosperous; the prosperous, impoverished; the distressed have become happy, and the happy, miserable, &c. This changefulness makes many a separation very anxious. We ask,—“Shall we meet again as well and as happy?” &c.

3. *There are persons whom we separate from to "see them again no more for ever" in the same character.* We part from a person who is ungodly and

profane; years roll away, and we meet him a reverent and religious man. A youth leaves home reckless and wild; he returns a thoughtful and earnest man. A young man or woman leaves home comparatively innocent and pure; but the man returns with a blasted character, and the woman a moral wreck. This is the most separating separation. Separation of time, or space, or even of world, does not so painfully separate as division of character.

V. The great separation which will take place amongst men in the future.

See Matt. xiii. 30, 39-43; xxv. 31-46.

In that great final separation, where shall we be found?

PI-HAHIROTH; OR, GOING FORWARD IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES.

(Verse 7.)

The time for standing still and waiting was soon at an end. Moses sought direction from God; and at once received the Divine answer: “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. xiv. 15).

It must have seemed strange to the Israelites to be commanded to advance. To “go forward” seemed like rushing from one difficulty into another. Pharaoh and his army were an alarming danger behind them; before them the sea appeared a danger no less to be dreaded. Yet the order was, “Go forward.” Notwithstanding the threatening sea, they were to advance. We regard this as an illustration of *Christian Progress in the Face of Difficulties*. It is an established fact of the Christian life, that God calls us to advancement though there are immense difficulties in our path. He commands us to “Go forward” in despite of dangers which appear inevitable and fatal.

I. In the Christian life advancement is demanded.

Progress is a great law of the universe. In nature all things move onward. Winds, and streams, and stars,

are ever advancing. The history of science, philosophy, and art, is a record of progress. The Religion of Jesus Christ also has advanced and grown constantly. Progress is a law of all life. Where progress ends decay begins. So in the spiritual life the command is, forward, upward, heavenward, Godward. Continuance in the same condition is impossible. Advancement to higher attainments, and nobler developments, and more perfect conditions of being, is ever demanded of us. “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” “Grow in grace,” &c. “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,” &c. (2 Peter i. 5-7). “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” “Go forward.” (a)

II. In the Christian life advancement is demanded with a full recognition of the obstacles in the way of it.

He who commanded the Israelites to “go forward” was perfectly acquainted with the sea which rolled forbiddingly before them, and all the succeeding

difficulties which awaited them; yet He gave the order to advance. He does likewise in the Christian life. He hath forewarned us "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Yet He ever summons us to advance, ever calls us to ascend. The path of Christian progress is seldom an easy one. Dangers and difficulties are numerous. We pass from conquest to renew the conflict. We throw one foe and advance to engage another. We surmount one difficulty, and another challenges us to effort. Yet knowing all these things, the Lord says, "Go forward." (b)

III. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, may be surmounted.

In ordinary life we frequently witness proofs of this principle. Man, by the force of a sound and active understanding, and iron will, and persistent effort, is constantly removing mountains, accomplishing that which is pronounced impossible.

"Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star,"

he can do wonders—almost "all things are possible to him." Let the same mind and will and activity be under the guidance of God, and nerved by faith in Him, and difficulties shall melt away before them. "All things are possible to him that believeth." "Faith laughs at impossibilities." The Israelites moved forward at the command of God; and before the majesty of such reliant obedience, the sea parted. The difficulty vanished in the presence of believing obedience. When God saith, "Go forward," though it be towards the deep sea or trackless mountain, let us advance, and some unseen path will open before us, or the waters will divide at our feet.

"Dark and wide the sea appears,
Every soul is full of fears,
Yet the word is onward still,
Onward move and do His will;
And the great deep shall discover
God's highway to take thee over." (c)

IV. In the Christian life, obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, contribute to our advancement.

Obstacles are disciplinary. Every difficulty that has vanished before the obedience of faith is an argument for future and greater reliance. Every conflict, courageously entered upon and continued, must end in conquest; and every conquest fits us for more severe conflicts, and makes our final victory more sure. Through the grace of God, difficulties, dangers, and foes, are all contributing to our progress. (d)

V. In the Christian life we are incited to progress, notwithstanding obstacles, by a host of encouragements.

Here are some of our encouragements.

1. *Believing prayer is mighty with God.* Moses cried unto the Lord; and the Lord responded to his prayer by dividing the sea. He still attends to the requests of men. (e)

2. *Glorious examples incite us onward.* Think of Paul: "I count not myself to have apprehended," &c. And later in life: "I have fought a good fight," &c. Think of that glorious and ever-increasing multitude who by faith have triumphed over all hindrances, perils, and adversaries. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience," &c. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about," &c.

3. *The character of our great Leader encourages us forward.* His path has been one of splendid victories; His career one of constantly increasing glory. He is equal to every emergency. With Jesus at our head we need not fear to advance.

What earnest voices unite in urging us to "Go forward"! Voices of the glorified urge us onward. They who have passed from the semblances of time to the realities of eternity call upon us to advance. The rest that awaits us invites us forward. We do not pine for our rest before God wills it. We long for no inglorious rest. We are thankful rather for the invaluable training of difficulty, the loving discipline of danger and strife. Yet in the midst

of it all, the prospect of rest attracts us heavenward. Through all, and above all, God cries, "Go forward;" "Come up hither."

"Forward! be our watchword,
Steps and voices joined;
Seek the things before us,
Not a look behind:

Burns the fiery pillar
At our arm's head;
Who shall dream of shrinking,
By our Cap ain led?
Forward through the desert,
Through the toil and fight:
Canaan lies before us,
Zion beams with light."—*Alford*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Certainly advance is the great law of the Christian life, as well as of the universe. All things in nature and history go forward. The stream moves forward, not a wave of it turns back, its every eddy even is, in reality, advancing. The winds move forward, pausing, indeed, often on their journey, lingering amidst the locks of the pine or in the cleft of the rock, but speedily resuming their onward sweep again. The stars—the earth included—move forward, "having not, resting not," seeking, it is said, some distant centre. How we saw the comet of 1858 shooting like an arrow towards its broad target, the sun! Science, art, philosophy, literature, every species of knowledge, move forward; invention following invention—discovery, discovery; one man of genius eclipsing another, to be in his turn outshone. Time moves forward—oh how rapidly! and how his vast wings seem to say as they rush along, "I have an engagement at the judgment-seat. I have an appointment in eternity, and I must fulfil it. My 'King's business requireth haste.'" Christ Himself never rested. He was never in a hurry, but He was always in haste. The difference between Him and many of His people is, His life was short, and He knew it, and did the most in it; theirs, too, is short, but they know it not, and do not with their might what their hand findeth to do. God Himself even, with all the leisure of eternity, is not losing an hour, but is carrying on His broad plans with undeviating regularity and increasing swiftness, and surely men should aspire in this respect to be imitators of, and fellow-workers with, God. Christ's religion, too, has been active and progressive; sometimes frozen up for a time like a river, but, like a river, working under the ice, and when spring arrived, making up for the time lost by the increased rapidity of its course. And so with the path of the individual; like the river, the winds, the stars, the Eternal Himself, it must advance. Our motto

should be "Excelsior."—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

(b) The progress of the Christian is often from one difficulty to another, and very idle for him, in this earth, to expect an unvaried course of even moderate peace and happiness. He only exchanges one difficulty for another. After old obstacles are surmounted, new ones are sure to arise. The children of Israel probably thought they had buried all their difficulties in that ocean. And how loud and bold rung their psalm, as if it were a challenge to the wilderness, on the verge of which they stood. But the wilderness accepted the challenge, and what with thirst, hunger, wild beasts, and, at last, Divinely-appointed death, it engulfed almost all that multitude which had shouted for victory on the shore of the Red Sea. And so with the desert of this world. The Slough of Despond is exchanged for the Hill Difficulty, and that for the Castle of Giant Despair. We disguise not the pleasures of the wilderness, its wells, arbours, angels, Delectable Mountains, but notwithstanding all this, it is a wilderness at the best, and grows often more dreary the longer we pursue our path.—*Ibid.*

(c) For an illustration on this point see p. 393 (a).

(d) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 393, 394.

(e) Beloved, if you can conceive of an age that is worse than another, so much the more is it a fit platform for the heavenly energy; the more difficulty, the more room for omnipotence to show itself; there is elbow-room for the great God when there is some great thing in the way, and some great difficulty that He may overturn. When there is a mountain to be cast into the valley, then there is almighty work to be done; and our covenant God only needs to see work to do for His praying people, and He will shortly do it.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

Illustrations on the *Power of Prayer* appear on pp. 183, 225.

THE DIVIDING OF THE RED SEA.

(Verse 8.)

"And they departed from before Pi-hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness."

P P

I. This dividing of the sea was miraculous.

1. Because it took place, and the

waters closed again, upon the outstretching of the hand of Moses, and in fulfilment of his word (Exod. xiv. 13). The sea is less manageable by man, perhaps, than any other force of nature. "The sea is God's, and He made it" (Psa. xcv. 5), and to Him only will it render obedience. The obedience in this case to Moses was, therefore, the result of a supernatural interposition. (a)

2. *Because the waters stood upright on either side of the path.* When waves roll back and leave their bed dry for a short space of time, they break, and return again; a strong wind would drive back the water on one side only and leave the water perhaps knee-deep or ankle-deep, but the wall of water on either side, and the dry land in the middle, could have been produced by miraculous power alone.

II. The fact of the miracle is proved by the present existence of the nation which was that day born.

No nation in the world, except the Hebrew, can point to the place and the day on which it began its national existence. All other ancient nations have lost their identity, but the Jews retain theirs, and the miracle of the Red Sea has always been the foundation fact of their history (Isa. lxiii. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 12, &c.).

Lessons.

i. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than physical convenience.* The Israelites could have entered Canaan by a much nearer way than through the Red Sea, but that way was chosen for them to teach them many important truths in connection

with God. The shortest way to attain an end is not always the best way. A short way to a fortune may not be so conducive to the formation of a worthy character as one which it takes much longer to travel. This truth is taught in the temptation of our Saviour (Luke iv. 5-8). Satan proposed a short way to that universal dominion, which our Lord knew could only be safely and truly attained through Gethsemane and Calvary.

ii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the uninterrupted operation of the ordinary laws of nature.* This is not at all surprising. The laws of nature are God's servants, and it is only reasonable to expect that, when He can reveal His power and mercy better by suspending their action, and operating, as it were, upon the forces of the world, without their instrumentality, He should do so. When the special end is accomplished they return to their wonted service. They have kept the bed of the Red Sea covered ever since the day when the waters closed over Pharaoh and his hosts.

iii. *The attainment of moral ends is more important than the preservation of bodily life.* This is an acknowledged fact. The life of a rebel is considered of less importance than the upholding of the law that condemns him to death. The lives of many men are oftentimes considered of less importance than the establishment and upholding of freedom, and the downfall of that which degrades the higher life of the human race and prevents its development.—*W. Harris.*

ILLUSTRATION.

(a) On a sudden Moses advances towards the sea, extends his rod, and a violent wind from the east begins to blow. The waters recede on both sides, a way appears; at night-fall, probably about eight o'clock, the caravan begins to defile along this awful pass. The wind continued in the same quarter all the night; but immediately they had passed over, and while the Egyptians, madly plunging after them, were in the middle of the passage, the wind as suddenly fell, the waters rushed

back into their bed, the heavy chariot-wheels of the pursuers sank into the sand, broke and overthrew the chariots, and in this state of confusion the sea swept over the whole host, and overwhelmed the king and all the flower of the Egyptian army.

Such is the narrative in the book of Exodus, which writers of all ages have examined, and, according to the bias of their minds, have acknowledged or denied the miraculous agency, increased or diminished its extent.

At an early period, historians (particularly in Egypt), hostile to the Jews, asserted that Moses, well acquainted with the tides of the Red Sea, took advantage of the ebb, and passed over his army, while the incautious Egyptians, attempting to follow, were surprised by the flood, and perished. Yet, after every concession, it seems quite evident that, without one particular wind, the ebb tide, even in the narrowest part of the channel, could not be kept back long enough to allow a number of people to cross in safety. We have, then, the alternative of supposing, that a man of the consummate prudence and sagacity, and the local knowledge, attributed to Moses, altered, suspended, or at least did not hasten his march, and thus deliberately involved the people, whom he had rescued at so much pains and risk, in the danger of being overtaken by the enemy, led back as slaves, or massacred, on the chance that an unusually strong wind would blow at a particular hour, for a given time, so as to keep back the flood, then die away, and allow the tide to return at the precise instant when the Egyptians were in the middle of their passage. . . .

Wherever the passage was effected, the Mosaic account cannot, by any fair interpretation, be made consistent with the exclusion of preternatural agency. Not to urge the

literal meaning of the waters being a wall on the right hand and on the left, as if they had stood up sheer and abrupt, and then fallen back again,—the Israelites passed through the sea with deep water on both sides; and any ford between two bodies of water must have been passable only for a few people at one precise point of time. All comparisons, therefore, to marches like that of Alexander, cited by Josephus idly, and in his worst spirit of compromise, are entirely inapplicable. That bold general took the opportunity of the receding tide to conduct his army round a bluff headland in Pamphylia, called Climax, where, during high water, there was no beach between the cliffs and the sea. But what would this, or any other equally daring measures in the history of war, be to the generalship of Moses, who must thus have decoyed his enemy to pursue him to the banks of the sea, and so nicely calculated the time, that the lowest ebb should be exactly at the hour of his greatest danger, while the whole of the pursuing army should be so infatuated, and so ignorant of the tides, as to follow them without any apprehension of the returning flood? In this case Moses would appear as formidable a rival to the military fame of Alexander, as to the legislative wisdom of Solon or Lycurgus. —H. H. Milman, D.D.

MARAH; OR, ASPECTS OF THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.

(Verse 8.)

“And they went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.”

Human life in this world is a journey, which begins at birth and ends at death. Certain aspects of this journey are brought before us by the journey of the Israelites from the Red Sea to Marah, and their life at Marah.

I. The privations of this journey.

“They went three days’ journey in the wilderness of Etham.” And we learn from Exod. xv. 22, that during those days they “found no water.” We have already briefly treated this topic on p. 366. (a)

II. The disappointments of our journey.

“And pitched in Marah.” “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” How intensely

painful must their disappointment have been! (b)

An illustration of some experiences in our own life. We have looked upon some thing or some position, and have felt and said to ourselves: “When I attain that I shall be satisfied and happy.” We have attained it, and found it unsatisfactory and bitter. Napoleon III., when an exile, deemed the throne to be all he needed to secure his happiness. He attained it; and in a few years he confessed: “In changing my destiny, I have but changed my joys and sorrows. Formerly I bore the afflictions of exile; now I have to sustain the cares of power.” One has looked at *wealth* as the one thing needful to his happiness; secured it; and been filled with bitter disappointment. Another has so judged concerning *leisure*, and attained it, with a similar result. Many have

thus estimated *married life and offspring*. Countless mothers, on the birth of their first son, have said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." But how often, like Cain, has he wrung that mother's heart with anguish! How often has a father's beloved turned out a second Absalom! We have looked upon many things as the pleasant fruit of our life; grasped them; and discovered a foul worm at the core. God disappoints us with the waters of Marah in order to lead us to Him who can make them sweet. When we over-estimate things and creatures, He has ordered that they shall disappoint us in order to lead us to Him who can fully meet our highest and vastest expectation.

III. The sins of our journey.

When the Israelites found that they could not drink the waters of Marah, they "murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Notice—

1. *Their unreasonableness and ingratitude towards Moses*. Why murmur against him? Was he responsible for the lack of drinkable water? Could he make the bitter water sweet? Their murmurings were childish. Moreover, he had been their benefactor. He had dared and sacrificed bravely for them. How ungrateful, then, was their conduct towards him!

2. *Their unbelief and ingratitude to God*. They had soon forgotten practically their deliverance from Egypt and their passage through the Red Sea. Three days ago they were singing the song of victory; to-day they are murmuring. Past interpositions of God on their behalf should have inspired present confidence in Him. Gratitude should have precluded murmuring. We also are prone to sin in like manner in our life-journey; to overlook past deliverances in present dangers; to fret and murmur at the inconveniences and trials of the way; to be unbelieving and ungrateful, &c. (c)

IV. The all-sufficient Resource of our journey.

In answer to the prayer of Moses God made the bitter waters sweet for

them (Exod. xv. 25). He is our Resource, and he is—

1. *All-sufficient*. He is equal to every emergency and every need. To Him there are no emergencies. He sees the whole of our journey, knows every step of the way, and has wisely and amply provided for every need. (d)

2. *Always willing to help*. We have not to overcome by our prayers any unwillingness on His part to bless us. We have but sincerely to seek His aid, and He will impart it to us. (e)

3. *Ever available*. We can approach Him at all times and in all places. The cry of supplication or the song of praise will always reach His ear and secure His regard.

Brothers, we are all journeying, and sometimes with weary and aching hearts. Life's changes sometimes clothe our life in shade, and weigh down our hearts with sadness. Its disappointments surprise and grieve our spirits. Our own sins often fill our hearts with shame and sorrow. But here is our unfailing Resource. Our Lord can take away the sin. He can sanctify changes and disappointments to our spiritual and eternal advantage. Let our trust be in Him. We are all journeying; but we may each find the end of our journey to be a secure and blessed home. In that home there shall be no more changes saddening our souls, no more disappointments distressing us, no more sins to harass and grieve the soul; but pure and peaceful life, &c.

"Tuneful is the sound

That dwells in whispering boughs;

Welcome the freshness round,

And the gale that fans our brows.

But rest more sweet and still,

Than ever nightfall gave,

Our yearning hearts shall fill,

In the world beyond the grave.

"There shall no tempests blow,

No scorching noon-tide heat,

There shall be no more snow,

No weary, wandering feet.

So we lift our trusting eyes

From the hills our fathers trod,

To the quiet of the skies,

To the Sabbath of our God."

—Hemans.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Three days they marched without finding any water. We do not, with some, suppose, that during all this time they were without water. This was impossible. They must have brought water in their leathern bottles with them from the last station. But this time having passed without an opportunity of replenishing their vessels, the supply was at length exhausted, and they began to suffer fearfully from thirst. Let us not think lightly of their distress. Thirst is a cruel thing; and it is known to be such even in a humid clime, where the sensation is rarely and lightly experienced, and is very easily removed. But amid the hot sandy waste, under a burning sky, without any means of relief, the suffering is horrible. There is nothing like it. If we reflect that this vast host of men, women, and children, with numerous herds of cattle, had to travel over the sandy waste mostly on foot, with the burning sun over their heads, we may be able to form some faint and inadequate idea of their condition. But if we endeavour to picture to ourselves the circumstances of their case, and the unmistakable signs of suffering and misery which it presented, we shall have a more distinct apprehension of their wretched condition. They plod moodily and heavily on, no man speaking to his fellow. Many cannot speak if they would. Their tongues are parched and rough, and cling to the roofs of their mouths; their lips are black and shrivelled; and their eyeballs are red with heat, and sometimes a dimness comes over them, which makes them stagger with faintness. There is not one in all that multitude who probably would not have given all he possessed in the world, who would not have parted with a limb or have given up his life for one cool draught of water. And this was suffered by a people who had been used to drink without stint of the finest water in the world.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) But lo! their misery, they think is past. In the distance they behold trees and bushes clad in refreshing green, and they know there must be water near. With glad looks

and quickened steps they push joyously on.

"For sure through that green meadow flows
The living stream! And lo! their famished
beast

Sees the restoring sight!

Hope gives his feeble limbs a sudden strength,
He hurries on."—*Thalaba.*

What a rush to the water! what eagerness to gulp the refreshing flood! But whence that universal groan, and horror, and despair? The water is bitter—so bitter as to be loathsome even to their intense agony of thirst. Pity them; but judge them not too severely, if, in that awful moment of disappointed hope, with the waters of Marah before their faces, and the waters of the Nile before their thoughts, they did murmur, they did complain that they had been brought from unfailing waters to perish in that thirsty desolation. They should have trusted in God. They had been rescued from more imminent danger; and it was no arm of flesh, but the sacred pillar of cloud, which had indicated their way and brought them to that place. They should have prayed to their Divine Protector to supply their wants, as He was well able to do; and although there is much in the real misery they suffered to extenuate *this* offence, their forgetfulness and neglect were most blameworthy. Yet, in consideration of their sufferings, God Himself excused them in this more readily than man has done. It will be seen in the sacred record that He dealt tenderly with them. He did not, as on other occasions, when they sinned in like manner without the like excuse, reprove them; but when Moses cried to Him for help, He, in the tenderness of His great pity, at once healed the waters, and made them sweet and salutary.—*Ibid.*

(c) For illustrations on *Murmuring*, see pp. 247, 266, 267; on *Ingratitude*, pp. 247, 368; and on *Unbelief*, p. 252.

(d) An illustration on this point appears on p. 369 (d)

(e) This point also is illustrated on p. 369 (e)

THE HEALING OF THE WATERS OF MARAH.

(Verse 8.)

"And they pitched in Marah."

I. There are four bitter things of which Marah's waters are a likeness.

1. The bitterness of man's *heart*. The heart is by nature a bitter fountain sending forth its bitter waters.

2. The bitterness of man's *afflictions*. Affliction was intended to be a bitter

thing to flesh and blood, for it was part of that punishment which sin brought with it.

3. The bitterness of *God's wrath* which we have incurred. The displeasure of Him whose favour is life, from whom alone all good cometh.

4. The bitterness of the *death* that

we must die. This is as the waters of Marah to an ungodly man: "the sting of death is sin."

II. Let us see what answers to the tree, which, being cast into the waters, made them sweet.

The Gospel is able to sweeten all the bitters.

1. *The wrath of God.* Jesus cast Himself into those bitter waters and made them sweet. It was the very God who made the waters bitter, who

pointed out the means of healing them. It was the very God "to whom vengeance belongeth" who hath sent His Son into the world to save us from it.

2. *Afflictions.* It furnishes a *motive* for patience and an *example* to encourage.

3. *The heart of man.* The fountain of the heart is cleansed by grace.

4. *Death.* To him who cordially believes in Jesus, the sting of death is drawn by sin being covered.—*Arthur Roberts.*

ELIM: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

(Verse 9.)

Wells of the highest importance in Eastern countries. Heat, &c. Here, then, where there were twelve wells, and seventy palm trees, they encamped. Make some observations.

I. In the journey of human life the Lord affords us many kind accommodations.

These mercies are—

1. *Necessary.* What more so than water? So are His favours.

2. *Refreshing.* "Palm trees." Journey wearisome. Their shade delightful, &c. (a)

3. *Various.* Fountains and palm trees. God gives blessings not of some one kind only, but several. Their variety heightens them.

4. *Plentiful.* Twelve fountains and threescore and ten palm trees. They are plentiful if we compare them (1) with the enjoyments of others; (2) with our deserts.

II. Refreshing mercies after seasons of distress are peculiarly sweet.

Many seasons of afflictions, trials of mind, family, &c. Then these mercies sweet—why so?

1. *We have a higher relish for them.* So, spring after winter, health after sickness, &c.

2. *They give a proof that God has not forgotten us.* Apt to think so when He tries us, and we do not receive any peculiar marks of His favour. Then He returns, &c.

3. *They will increase our faith in future trials.* We shall expect in them fresh displays of power and goodness,—this will cause us to love Him more—serve Him better.

III. The blessings with which we are favoured should be used and enjoyed.

They encamped, not only drank, but, &c. All our mercies should be enjoyed.

1. *With humility.* We do not deserve any of them. Are entirely dependent on God for them. God designs by such dependence to keep us humble and obedient.

2. *With gratitude.* Ingratitude hateful to God and man. Gratitude pleasing, and ought naturally to flow to God, &c. Our mercies are great, and call loudly for it.

3. *With a firm resolution to devote the strength derived from them to God, &c.* Thus they will answer the end, &c. Then may we expect more. Devote yourselves therefore to His glory, &c.

IV. Amidst all our enjoyments we should not lose sight of our pilgrimage state.

They encamped, did not build a city, &c. Christians are travellers. World not our rest. We should—

1. *Cherish the idea that all earthly things are fading, withering.* Dew, flowers, &c. So human life. We know it; we should act accordingly. (b)

2. *Prepare for changes.* Changes of

condition, circumstances, feelings,—these are to be expected—will come. This generally acknowledged, and yet how few prepared.

3. *Wish to go forward.* Arguments for it deduced from what is said above. Heaven is at the end,—how worthy of

all our toil,—how refreshing, &c., will it be! (c)

Address,—1. *Such as are now on the march.*

2. *Such as are now encamped at Elim.*

Remarks arising from the subject —
Thos. Spencer.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In eastern countries, where the habit of hospitality is stronger than with us, the traveller is sometimes surprised and regaled by much needed but unexpected wayside comforts. Yonder husbandman, who is now afield at his work, was here in the early morning to leave by the wayside that pitcher of water that the passing traveller might drink. This clump of trees, which makes a thick and welcome "shadow from the heat," was planted by one who expected neither fame nor money for his toil, and who now lies in a nameless grave. Hands now mouldering in dust scooped out this cool seat in the rock. Some "Father Jacob gave us this well, after drinking thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle." Travellers from the west are much affected by such instances of pure humanity and unselfish kindness. And yet these are but feeble types, mere dim shadows of Divine thoughtfulness and care. The heavenly Benefactor comes down in preventing loving kindness upon the pathway of His people. He foreknows, forecasts, foreruns. We think of Jesus as forerunner of His people only "within the veil." In a sense not less true, He is their forerunner along the journey of every day. We cannot be up so early that He has not been waking before us. We cannot run so

fast that He has not far outstripped our speed. Our to-morrow is His yesterday. He is with us and yet before us. He has said at one place and another,—“They are to pass this way; I will leave these helps for them; I will smooth down the over-ruggedness of life, so that they shall get through; I will open rivers for them in high places, and streams in the midst of the desert; and for the ever-recurring weariness of life, for its toil and conflict, heat and trouble, they shall have ‘quiet resting places.’”—*Alex. Raleigh, D.D.*

(b) The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening a cloud, by the reflection of the sun, invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned with such a pleasant variety of colours, that in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it; but in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaunting appearance nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here.—*Bates.*

(c) Illustrations on this point appear on pp. 163 (b), 409 (g).

IN THE WILDERNESS OF SIN.

(Verses 10-13.)

All the places mentioned in these verses were probably situated in the desert of Sin (see *Explanatory Notes in loco*). The principal events in this portion of the journey were the murmuring of the people, and the giving of the manna; and these have been treated in *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*

xvi. Moreover, in our own work we have noticed the base murmuring of the people on other occasions (see pp. 181, 183, 244, 245, 247, 265-267); we have also written on the manna (see pp. 187-190; and *The Hom. Comm. on Exod.*, pp. 308, 309). For these reasons we proceed to the next verse.

REPHIDIM; OR, WATER FROM "THE ROCK IN HOREB."

(Verse 14.)

The history of Israel at Rephidim is remarkable by reason of (1) the want

of water, and its miraculous supply; and (2) the battle against Amalek

(Exod. xvii.). A similar want and supply of water we have already noticed (see pp. 366-371); and, having noticed these miracles also in our exposition of Psa. lxxviii. 15, 16 (see *The Hom. Comm. on Psalms*, vol. i. pp. 443-446); we will introduce here a sketch from *Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament*.

Notice.

I. That the place of the miracle was calculated to increase the faith of the man who was to be the instrument in performing it—"the rock in Horeb."

God appeared first to Moses in Horeb (Exod. iii. 1). The return to places which God has fixed indelibly upon our minds by some special manifestation of His providential favour, is very helpful to every man's faith. It was so to Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 10) when God said to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 1). He intended to use the place as a means of arousing him to increased faith and obedience by the remembrance of former mercies received there. So in the case of Moses. The return to Horeb would enable him to draw from the past some compensation for the trying circumstances of the present (Exod. xvii. 2-4). The very sight of the place in which God had given him promises (Exod. iii. 10-20), which had since been fulfilled, would give him hope for the future.

II. The temptation connected with the miracle.

The murmuring and chiding of Israel against Moses is said to be *tempting God*. The miracles already wrought by Moses had been an abundant confirmation of His Divine commission. God had in the past so

identified His servant with Himself, that to murmur against him was finding fault with his and their God.

III. The nature of the miracle.

1. *The water from the rock was a miracle, because it gushed forth at the moment when Moses smote the rock, as the Lord had said.* The people by their murmuring had fully admitted that no water could be obtained from natural sources. God never supplies our wants by supernatural means when they can be satisfied by the operation of the ordinary laws of nature.

2. *But though miraculous, it was connected with human agency.* Moses smote the rock, and God gave the water. The rod was in the hand of Moses, the power in the hand of God. Peter took the lame man by the hand, and God gave him the power to walk (Acts iii. 7).

Lesson.

God can bring good to His people from the most unlikely sources. Nothing seemed more unlikely to yield water than the barren rock of Horeb. So God often brings refreshing streams of comfort to His people out of hard circumstances. Paul and Silas could sing in the dungeon, and their imprisonment was made the means of adding to their converts in Philippi. The lot of John in Patmos seemed hard and dreary indeed; but, at the bidding of Christ, streams of living water gushed forth there, which refreshed the soul of the apostle at the time, and have followed the Church until the present. Out of the sufferings of the martyrs came joy to themselves and blessings to their descendants. Above all, out of the hard circumstances of the crucified Lord of glory, God has brought forth waters of everlasting life.

ILLUSTRATION.

At Rephidim they again wanted water, their murmurings were now more violent, and their conduct more outrageous than at Marah. We had then some sympathy for them, and were inclined to plead some extenuating circumstances in their behalf. But we have not a

word to say for them now. Their misbehaviour is most flagrant, and the harshest judgment cannot estimate their offence too severely. They had lately seen their wants relieved in a similar emergency; and at this very time they were receiving, every morning, from heaven

their daily bread. Yet so strangely unreasonable was their spirit, that they reproached Moses for having brought them out of Egypt, to kill them and their children and their cattle with thirst; and their violence of manner was such as led Moses to cry unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." Alas! it had come to this already. Already—in one little month—were the ransomed people prepared to deal thus with their deliverer, all whose toil and

thought were spent for their advantage. Thus soon did they justify the prescient reluctance with which he had abandoned for these responsibilities the safe and quiet life he loved so well. It seems to have been in order that Moses might not be plunged in deeper discouragement, that the Lord forbore to declare His own displeasure. He simply indicated the mode in which He meant to provide for their wants.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

REPHIDIM; OR, THE BATTLE BETWEEN AMALEK AND ISRAEL.

(Verse 14.)

We cannot well pass away from Rephidim without noticing the remarkable battle which was fought there between the Amalekites and the Israelites, and which is recorded in Exod. xvii. 8-16. Before mentioning what appear to us as its chief teachings, let us attend to some important preliminary considerations.

i. *On the part of the Israelites this battle was entirely defensive* (Exod. xvii. 8; Deut. xxv. 17, 18). It was for the preservation of their own lives, and the lives of their people, that the Israelites fought, and Moses prayed on this day.

ii. *The part which the Israelites took in this battle was approved by Jehovah.* It was commanded by Moses, who, as the minister of Jehovah, was specially authorised and attested; and Jehovah manifested His approval by giving them the victory to a great extent in answer to prayer, and by commanding Moses to write an account of the battle in a book, and thus transmit it to coming generations. This battle was a righteous one on the part of Israel, or it would not thus have received the Divine approval.

iii. *What was the cause of this battle?* This was probably twofold:—(1) The fertility of the valley. We accept the conclusion that Rephidim is Wady Feiran, of which Dr. Hayman speaks as, "the well-known valley, richer in water and vegetation than any other in the peninsula. . . . It is the finest valley in the whole peninsula." And Dean Stanley: "Rephidim,

'the resting places,' is the natural name for the paradise of the Bedouins in the adjacent palm-grove; . . . the Amalekites may thus have naturally fought for the oasis of the Desert."

(2) The recollection of an ancient injury. The Amalekites were to a great extent, if not entirely, descendants of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 12, 16); and is it not probable that the old enmity between Jacob and Esau had something to do with their attack upon Israel? Esau had forgiven Jacob the injury, and God had pardoned his sin, yet the memory of his base act was handed down from generation to generation of the posterity of Esau, arousing their hatred against the posterity of Jacob. Thus the memory of evil is perpetuated, and thus evil actions live and work for long ages after they who did them have passed away, and the sin of the father in its penalty falls upon the children of many following generations. Here is warning, &c.

Let us now view this brief chapter of ancient history in three aspects:—

I. As an illustration of the working of God in human history, or of the means and methods by which He effects His purposes.

Notice the steps that were taken and the means that were employed to vanquish the Amalekites. Joshua was appointed general; he selected the most suitable men to fight the battle; for their encouragement Moses ascended the hill, &c. How, then, did God give

them this victory, and in so doing accomplish His own design in the matter?

1. *By their own efforts.* After the way in which God had dealt with them, they might not very unreasonably have thought, when they were attacked, that without their effort He would deliver them. He led them forth out of Egypt without exertion on their part. When they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host, they had only to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." But had that treatment been continued, they would have remained a nation of slaves or children in spirit. If they are to become a nation of men, they must be roused to effort. So they have to fight the Amalekites.

2. *By the efforts of the most efficient.* Amongst the Israelites there were no trained soldiers; they must have been ill-armed, and had long been inured to servitude. In these circumstances, at the command of Moses, Joshua selected the fittest men to fight the battle.

3. *By the efforts of the most efficient under a most skilful and heroic general.* Joshua was a man of remarkable genius and skill as a leader of men. Considering his previous condition, his generalship is very extraordinary.

4. *By the efforts of the most efficient under an able general, with wise arrangements for arousing and maintaining courage.* At this time the Israelites were anything but heroes: they were sadly deficient of manliness. The rod in the hand of Moses would tend to awaken memory, confidence, and courage. What wonders had been wrought with that rod on former occasions! &c. (a)

5. *And in addition to all other things, the victory was obtained by prayer.* Moses on the hill was, doubtless, engaged in prayer to God. His prayer had power with God. To Him he ascribed the victory. "Moses built an altar and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi; i.e., Jehovah my banner." (b)

God works by means. He never uses supernatural means where natural ones will accomplish the end. He uses

means eminently adapted to secure the end. He uses men as His instruments; and never does for us that which we can do for ourselves. And in our works He would have us use our utmost skill and power. He does not need our wisdom, and He certainly does not need our ignorance or folly. The Israelites planned and fought as if all depended upon themselves; Moses prayed as if all depended upon God; and when victory was attained they ascribed it to Him. Let us "go, and do likewise." (c)

II. *As an illustration of the work and warfare of every good man.*

1. *The Christian life involves difficulty, toil, and conflict* (1 Cor. ix. 24-27; Eph. vi. 10-18; Heb. xii. 1-4; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9). We cannot live a Christian life and do Christian work without battling with enemies. We must fight against (1) "the world," or evil in society; (2) "the flesh," or evil in ourselves; and (3) "the devil," or malign spiritual influences. (d)

2. *In the work and warfare of the Christian life we need the help of others.* "We are members one of another." "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," &c. But we are chiefly dependent on Jesus Christ. He is our *General*, our Joshua. "The Captain of our salvation." He is our *Intercessor*, our Moses. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." His uplifted hands are never weary, &c. And as the uplifted rod encouraged the Israelites, so *the presence of Christ nerves the spirit for the fight*. "Looking unto Jesus" is the true attitude of every Christian both in work and in warfare.

3. *By earnest, believing effort, and the help of God, the work and warfare of the Christian life will be ultimately accomplished and crowned with victory.* Effort, or no effort; effort with God, or effort without God; upon the determination of these the issues of life's work and warfare depend. No effort, or effort without God, means failure: personal effort with God means success, victory.

III. As an illustration of the work and warfare of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The call of God to the Church is to take possession of the world in His name and for Him ; and to accomplish this its members must battle with the Amalekites of crime, vice, ignorance, superstition, religious indifference, &c. In the prosecution of this work and warfare—

1. *The Church needs leaders.* The Lord Jesus is our great Leader : He is "head over all to the Church." But we need subordinate leaders also. No leaders means no rule, no discipline, no order ; but anarchy, incompetence, confusion.

2. *The labours of all and every one are required.* In the battle Moses, Joshua, Aaron, Hur, and all the fighting men, were occupied, while the others were employed in guarding the women and children, the flocks and herds, and the baggage. In the Church there is work for every one, &c. This is a correction (1) to those who think they can do nothing ; (2) to those who think they can do anything and everything. Every one should work, and every one should do his own work.

3. *The Church succeeds in her efforts*

in proportion as she maintains her communication with Heaven. (Comp. Exod. xvii. 11.) Our great Intercessor ever prays. But much depends upon our own prayers. The praying church is the working church, and the conquering church.

4. *The greatest men in the Church are dependent upon the help of the smallest men.* Moses needed the aid of Hur. In these days ministers in some cases are left to pray alone, work alone, fight alone.

5. *Success or failure often depends upon comparatively small and feeble men.* If Hur had not been with Moses, Israel would probably have been defeated. Success in the enterprises of the Church depends upon every man doing his own work, however obscure and humble it may be.

6. *The ultimate victory of the Church is certain.* "Jehovah is my banner." The battle is not ours but God's. Battle of truth and right against error, &c. (e)

7. *The victory will be ascribed to God in Christ.* "Joshua discomfited Amalek." "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Unto Him be all the glory. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power," &c. (Rev. v. 12, 13).

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Joshua led forth his men to the field ; and Moses mounted the hill, accompanied by Aaron his brother, and by Hur, who is supposed to have been his brother-in-law. Here Moses stood, and held up his hand on high, with the wonder-working rod therein. It was no doubt held up, in the first instance, as a kind of banner or signal, to be seen by the warring host below, and designed to operate as a continual incentive to their valour and prowess while engaged in the contest ; and the sight of this symbol and instrument of the power which had worked so wondrously on their behalf, could not fail to nerve their arms with new vigour every time their eyes were turned towards it. Yet it needed but little reflection to assure them that, as is very manifest, there was no inherent virtue in the rod to produce this effect ; and that it derived all its efficacy from the Divine appointment, as a visible symbol of that unseen succour and strength which God was pleased to minister to

His militant servants fighting His battle, and maintaining the high glory of His name.—*John Kitto, D.D.*

(b) Moses was eminently an intercessor with God for the people committed to his charge ; and there can be no question that, in connection with these external and symbolical actions, fervent prayer for the Divine aid was offered ; the uplifting of the rod being thus merely an accompaniment of the earnest intercessions which breathed from the lips and hearts of the venerable men upon the mountain. And even if this were not the case, the circumstances and the result are strikingly analagous to those of intercessory prayer, and suggestive of them.—*Ibid.*

On the power of intercession, illustrations are given on pp. 183, 225.

(c) We notice here grouped together that hallowed combination of agencies which ought never to be separated—the dependence upon Heaven, with the use of appointed

means. The rod in the hand of Moses, and the sword in that of Joshua; the embattled host in the valley below, and the praying hand in the mount above—all were necessary in the Divine economy to the victory of Israel over his foes. So must it be in our own conflict with the Amalek that lies ambushed within, to hinder our progress to the mount of God. We may expect no manifestation of the Lord's power, no interference of His goodness, but as the result of a blessing upon our own zealous conflict with temptation. "Prayer without active duty is mockery of God. He who entreats deliverance from the onset and power of evil, yet never makes an effort in his own behalf, nor strives against the sin that wars within him, draws nigh to God with his lips, but is wholly estranged from the fervour of that supplication that issues from the depths of the heart." Yet it was intended to be taught, and was most effectually taught by this example, that the uplifted hand of Moses contributed more to the safety of the Israelites

than their own hands—his rod more than their weapons of war; and accordingly their success fluctuates as he raises up or lets down his hands. In like manner will the Christian warfare be attended with little success, unless it be waged in the practice of unceasing earnest prayer. It will never be known on this side the Lord's second coming, how much His cause, and the work of individual salvation, have been advanced by "the effectual fervent prayer" of righteous men. And it is surely a cheering reflection in the heat and burden of the day of battle, that while we are contending below, faithful servants of God have ascended the hill of spiritual prayer, and are imploring blessings upon our efforts.—*Ibid.*

Another illustration on the Divine use of suitable means in accomplishing His designs, appears on p. 539.

(d) For an illustration on this point, see p. 416. (b)

(e) Illustrations on the *Certainty of the Christian Victory* appear on pp. 416, 417.

ISRAEL AND AMALEK.

(Verse 14.)

The Israelites had been redeemed from Egypt, and were on their way to Canaan. This, therefore, is a picture of the Christian life, and is full of teaching to all believers. Taking it in this light, we see—

I. The Christian's example.

1. *To fight.* (1) An aggressive fight. "Go." (2) To be done wisely. "Choose you out men." (3) Earnestly. "Fight." Hard blows. No parley. (4) Continually. "War with Amalek from generation to generation."

2. *To pray.* (1) For those who fight. (2) Earnestly. Not growing weary. Hard blows and hard prayers. (3) Confidently. "The rod." Symbol of past mercies. (4) Unitedly. "Moses, Aaron, and Hur,"

&c. Promises given to two or three.

II. The Christian's encouragement,

1. *Christ, our Captain* (Joshua). (1) With us to cheer. Wellington's presence on battle-field. (2) With us to direct. (3) With us to defend.

2. *Christ, our Intercessor* (Moses). (1) He prays while we work. (2) He prays continually. Never grows weary. (3) He prays successfully.

III. The Christian's prospect.

1. *Of certain victory.* The result is sure. Every foe shall be overcome.

2. *Of certain glory.* While God's servants ascribe all the glory to Him (Exod. xvii. 15), He, nevertheless, delights to honour them (*Ibid.*, 13).—*D. Macmillan.*

"IN THE DESERT OF SINAI": THE MORAL LAW.

(Verse 15.)

The Israelites were encamped in the desert of Sinai for the space of nearly a year (Exod. xix. 1; chap. x. 11, 12). Although we cannot attempt to consider their history during that time, yet we

cannot pass over this encampment without a brief notice of two or three of its principal events. And here let us notice *the Moral Law* (Exod. xx. 1-17).

The moral law which was delivered

by Moses from Mount Sinai was distinguished by many peculiar and blessed characteristics.

I. It based its precepts upon the existence and authority of God.

To believe in God is not one of the ten commandments. This fact is presupposed in the preface to them, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt," &c. This is the foundation of all that follows. And as God is the Lord their God, and has proved His right to issue His commands by His wonderful deeds in their behalf, so it is fitting that the first four precepts in the code should concern His own relation to the people of His choice, referring (1) to the necessity of having no other God but Him; (2) to the spiritual mode in which He, a spirit, must be worshipped; (3) to the reverence in which His very Name should be regarded; and (4) to the duty of devoting one whole day of the seven to His worship. The large space given to God in the ten commandments is quite in consonance with the theocratic nature of the Jewish economy. God in it was the leading thought, man secondary; whereas in the Christian dispensation, through the union of the two natures in Christ, it is hard to say which is made more prominent. It is, verily, the economy of the *God-man*.

II. It was a strict and stern, but far from being an unjust or cruel system.

It denied no enjoyment that was natural, and it inculcated no duty that was harsh. None of the commandments were "grievous." All conduced at once to the happiness of man and to the glory of God. The first precept secured the Jews from the distraction of mind and heart connected with the worship of many gods. The second inculcated a form of worship less cumbrous and burdensome, as well as more spiritual, than idolatry. The third, in consecrating the name of God, taught His worshippers to reverence and love Him better. The fourth provided for them a day of grateful rest and refreshment

amid their toils, and held out, typically, the prospect of a future and serener existence. The fifth was expressly sealed by a promise, that to those who obeyed it, their days should be long upon the land. The sixth, in forbidding murder, tended to prevent the misery which springs from it to all concerned, either as actors or sufferers, and to cherish that spirit of love and mutual forbearance which is productive of so much true happiness. The seventh commanded men to shun those ill-regulated passions and practices which create such remorse, satiety, hardness of heart, and family disturbance. The eighth secured the rights of property. The ninth taught the value of truthfulness, and the duty of regarding our neighbour's good name as if it were our own. The tenth sought to crush, in the secret recesses of the heart, the seeds of all evil conduct, and thereby to cleanse and sweeten the inner nature.

III. It was singularly well suited to the age and to the people to whom it was promulgated.

That age was early, and that people was rude and child-like. The precepts of the law required, therefore, to be dogmatic, to be strict, to be free in their expression from all abstract terms and recondite reasonings, to be frequently repeated, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." All this we find characteristic of the law of Moses.

IV. Another evidence of the divinely-wise applicability of this law to the Jewish people we find in certain circumstances which tended at once to guard, to sanction, to enforce, recommend, and to illustrate it.

One of these was the grandeur and terror connected with its announcement from Sinai. . . . The tables of stone still remained, written by the very finger of God, and were cherished with the highest veneration. Moses, after he had finished the writings of the book of the law, deposited it with his people in the following remarkable words, "he commanded the Levites,

which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book," &c. (Deut. xxxi. 25, 26). . . . The splendid appurtenances of the Jewish worship were meant to illustrate the principles of the law, moral as well as ceremonial, to the imperfectly developed minds of the people. . . . Had the law gone forth naked, it would have had little effect upon such a people ; but it went forth in beautiful costume and in dazzling armour, and did a great, although a temporary, work.

V. The system itself is the best proof of its Divine origin.

Its very defects and limitations, as well as its glories, showed it to be no human contrivance ; its imperfections arose not from the miscalculations of weakness, but from the foresight of wisdom. . . . Life and immortality were reserved for the illumination of Christ. But how wonderful, that without these ideas of rewards and punishments in a future life being very prominently brought before the minds of men, a national polity was not only possible, but continued for a long time powerful and prosperous !—From "*Alpha and Omega*," by G. Gilfillan, M.A.

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI ; THE GOLDEN CALF.

(Verse 15.)

Let us see what instruction we can gather from this impressive portion (Exod. xxxii.) of sacred history.

I. The circumstances of the Israelites were analogous to the circumstances of a large portion of mankind at the present day.

1. *The Israelites had witnessed a terrific display of the Divine character.* The attributes of sovereignty, justice, holiness, and truth, had been set forth in the most impressive manner, so as to come in contact not only with the thoughts, the feelings, but the very senses. Now there is something analogous to this in the experience of most at some period or other, especially of those who live under the sound of the Gospel. The hearer of the true Gospel lives in the atmosphere of Sinai, as well as of Calvary ; he hears of the justice and truth of God, as well as of His mercy ; and if he do not stand in awe of the sterner attributes, as well as rejoice in the milder, then you may be assured that he is hearing the Gospel to no purpose : he has not even begun to comprehend its true import.

2. *The Israelites had just given their solemn affirmative response to God's covenant*, as it had been read to them by Moses ; and they were bound by every consideration of honour, of gratitude,

of duty, to obey it. In like manner, there are multitudes at this day, all over Christendom, who have professed not only a belief in the Divine testimony, but obedience to the Divine precepts.

II. The conduct of the Israelites in making and worshipping the calf, in those peculiar circumstances, was analogous to much that is passing in the world around us.

What rendered the conduct of the Israelites so exceedingly strange and criminal was, that it should have occurred amidst the awful scenes of Horeb. You have been sitting under the preaching of the Gospel from the time that you were able to understand it ; its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, have been set before you in every variety of form, while you have always had the written Word within your reach, with every facility for studying and understanding it. And what demonstrations have you made in these circumstances ? Why, you have been guilty of idolatry just as truly as the Israelites were ; you have worshipped gold just as truly as they did ; and the fact that they chose the form of a calf, and you choose some other form, makes no difference as to the actual guilt in the eye of Heaven.

Time has been when God's hand rested heavily upon you, and death, perhaps, came into your very chamber, and you saw some one carried to the grave for whom you felt that you could have given even your life. But this affliction found you a worshipper of the world, and it had no effect in rendering you permanently otherwise.

You have sometimes had your lot cast in the midst of the effusions of God's Holy Spirit; and go where you might, the anxious enquiry on the one side, and the song of thanksgiving on the other, was falling upon your ear. But neither the one nor the other was heard to escape *your* lips. You had your golden calf, and that was enough for *you*.

III. The guilt of the Israelites in making and worshipping the golden calf was not a little enhanced by the peculiar circumstances under which the sin was committed; and there is a corresponding aggravation from a similar cause attending many of those idolatrous attachments which are often witnessed in our day.

Everything around them told of the Divine presence; everything that they saw and heard was adapted to dissuade them from this impious outrage. And yet they heeded it not,—they became gross idolators within the sound of Jehovah's voice, within the very blaze of His glory.

Nor is the case dissimilar as it is often witnessed at the present day among ourselves. God speaks now by

His *Providence*, by His *Word*, by His *Spirit*. He has spoken through the voice of your own *conscience*. You, not less than the Israelites, have been sinning while God has been very near to you. You, as truly as they, have been idolators amid scenes which ought to overwhelm you with a sense of the Divine presence; and whether this circumstance must not materially aggravate your guilt and condemnation, judge ye.

IV. God did not suffer this sin of the Israelites to go unpunished; neither can those who are guilty of a similar sin at the present day expect to escape punishment.

The first part of their punishment consisted in the destruction of their idol. Does not this conduct of God towards the Israelites illustrate a general principle of His administration?

Moses instituted a terrible work of death in respect to the idolators. Sometimes God performs a mighty retributive work in the sinner's bosom through the power of conscience, and months and years of unmitigated inward torture seem to change life itself into a living death. Sometimes persons of this character are cut off in so sudden and striking a manner, that we can hardly suppress the conviction that there is something judicial in the circumstances of their death.

There are a thousand voices charging you to forsake your idols, and to make Jehovah your portion.—*W. B. Sprague, D.D.*

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: LESSONS FROM THE WORSHIP OF THE CALF.

(Verse 15, with *Exod. xxxii. 1-5.*)

Human nature being the same, history is in principle constantly repeating itself. The facts of Bible history are recorded that we may get at underlying truths, such truths being God's teaching to us. In the event to which reference is here made, we observe—

I. The difficulty to human nature of faith in the unseen.

"This Moses, we wot not what is become of him."

II. The impatience of man at God's method of working.

Moses delayed in the mount. The people would not wait for the man with God's Word.

III. That man will have a god.

"Up, make us gods." They are

often *manufactured* gods. The man who would be popular must make gods to go before the people. It is the ruin of a people when they worship false gods. It is the very height of folly, when men of science, art, or manufactures, say of *their own works*: "These be thy gods, O Israel."

IV. The effect of slavish adherence to old ideas.

In one sense, at least, they were not out of Egypt—the sacred ox. See the importance of keeping the young from early impressions of error. Let none expose themselves to false teaching; it may bring them into bondage.

V. Their extravagant expenditure for the gratification of a fancy (vers. 2, 3).

People often spend more in superstition than Christians for the truth. Christians spend far more for *luxury, pleasure, fancy*, than for *Christ*. Who amongst us is willing to do as much for Jesus as these people did to procure a golden calf?

VI. How art is desecrated to sinful purposes (ver. 4).

So in building at Babel; in worship at Babylon, and Ephesus, and Athens. Abundant proofs in our picture galleries and museums, and also in our modern theatres, gin palaces, &c.

VII. That if God is dishonoured, man is misled, humiliated, ruined.

"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—*W. Whale*.

IN THE DESERT OF SINAI: MOSES'S COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE MOUNT.

(Verse 15, with *Exod.* xxxiv. 29-35.)

There was a great deal of what was miraculous, no doubt, in this transaction, but there is much also that, properly improved, will tend to our spiritual edification.

I. The cause of that radiance which appeared in the face of Moses.

The converse which Moses held with God in the mount, was the cause of that glory which rested on his countenance. He ascended the mountain to hold intercourse with God, and while he talked with Him his face shone. In the account of this transaction, there are two particulars worthy of notice.

1. *Moses offered sacrifices before ascending to hold communion with God* (see *Exod.* xxiv.). This indicates a great principle connected with all true religion—that religion has always rested on sacrifice (*Gen.* iv. 4; *Heb.* xi. 4). The Jewish religion, in all its ritual and services, rested upon this great principle. The distinctive feature of Christianity embraces the same principle. One of our great Christian privileges is to ascend the mountain and hold communion with God. But to be thus brought together, there

must be something done on both sides: On the part of God there must be utterance given to the voice of mercy and love, there must be a way of access to His throne; on the part of man there must be faith. God in Christianity has made three great provisions to this end—a sacrifice, a mediation, and spiritual influences. (1) *The sacrifice of Christ is the standing medium of communication and fellowship between God and man.* The atonement has only been offered once, yet the effect is everlasting. In all His transactions with us, God has ever regard to the sacrifice of Christ; He never pardons a sinner, but through the atonement; He never adopts the prodigal, and invests him with the rights, privileges, and honours of a child, but through the atonement; He never confers spiritual joy, or any other blessing, upon the believer, but through the atonement. (2) *There is a provision of mediation.* Mediation does not merely embrace the office of intercessor, but it is a great sublime scheme of spiritual and providential administration. Christ sits upon the throne; to Him all power in heaven

and earth is given; it is exercised with reference to the great purposes of atonement. (3) *Spiritual influence also is a part of Christianity.* This is inseparably connected with the great work of our Lord and Saviour. We might as well talk of Christianity without a Saviour, as of Christianity without the Holy Ghost.

These are the provisions which Christianity makes for our ascending the mount to hold communion with God; let us avail ourselves of them, and go up confidently with the blood of atonement to hear His voice, to taste His love, and to receive the fulness of joy.

2. *Moses ascended the mountain alone.* This opens to us another principle of religion: it is this—that in all respects it is personal. Our devotional exercises are of this nature. It is true that we meet in public fellowship, but there is a sense in which the soul sits solitary in the midst of a mighty multitude. Our emotions are all personal. In His dealings with us God addresses us as individuals. Pardon, renewal, eternal life, are bestowed on individuals. These blessings are all personal. Duties are personal: one cannot discharge the duties of another. Enjoyments are personal. The closet is the place where we must test our religious character. There is something suspicious when our joy is only connected with public devotional exercises; but when we are alone and enjoy communion with God, then may we regard our feelings as genuine.

II. The nature of the light and glory which rested on the face of Moses.

There is a great mystery in this, but

it was intended to be symbolical of a better glory. We shall pass over the symbolical meaning, and make some remarks of a practical bearing.

1. *Intercourse with God will be productive of joy to the soul.* There will be rapturous joy. How can it be otherwise when the Saviour first reveals Himself to the sinner's heart? How can it be otherwise when a man finds himself adopted into the Divine family, a partaker of the love of God, and admitted to daily fellowship?

2. *Intercourse with God must have the effect of expanding the capacity and of enlarging the soul.* The religious man can enjoy every form of truth and knowledge in the world in common with the man who is solely devoted to its pursuits; but, unlike him, he has the infinite prospect of the glories of heaven and eternal life.

3. *Intercourse with God will produce beauty of character.* We cannot enjoy Divine grace, love, sanctification, and the privileges of the Christian state, but our internal purity will exhibit itself by a spotless life.

III. The conduct of Moses when he descended from the mount.

"He put a vail on his face." Religion in this life is often veiled under circumstances which obscure its grandeur. For instance, what a contrast there exists betwixt the employments of many Christians and their enjoyments; by the one they are almost assimilated to the beasts of the earth, by the other they are allied to heaven. Poverty, dark providences, and affliction, often veil the spiritual state of good men.—*D.*, in "*One Hundred Sketches of Sermons.*"

ILLUSTRATION.

The effect of the vision is so great that when Moses comes down from the mount, with the new tables of testimony in his hand, which God had inscribed with the commandments of the law, his face is seen to be shining. He has no need, in faint and feeble words, to tell with whom he had been conversing; his face becomes eloquent, and rays out the tidings. Even as the red cloud, which the

evening sun has coloured, continues red after he has set, so there is a relict radiance on the face of Moses from that of God. "The skin of his face shone," and it added to the effect, that he "wist not that it shone." Beauty is never so beautiful as when unconscious. Strength is never so strong as when leaning on its right arm. Terror is never so terrible as when it forgets itself. The

sun seems so glorious, and the moon so lovely, and the stars so pure, because we feel that they know not that they are. And thus the unconscious shining of the countenance of Moses struck awe into all beholders. They were afraid to come nigh unto him. He seemed insulated in the sea of glory still. It seemed God's own face that

they gazed at. Yet it was only from the terror of others that he learned his own glorious appearance. And after talking to the trembling Israelites for a time, he at last put on a veil, which shaded the splendours of his face, and which he only dropped when he entered into the tabernacle to meet with God.—*G. Gilfillan, M.A.*

KIBROTH-HATTAVAH.

(Verse 16.)

The history of the people at this encampment has already engaged our attention in chap. xi. See pp. 179-212.

HAZEROTH.

(Verse 17.)

This encampment is remarkable as the scene of the sedition of Miriam and Aaron against Moses, and its punishment (chap. xii.). See pp. 213-227.

RITHMAH:

(Verse 18.)

The history of the people at this encampment was both momentous and mournful in a very great degree. It is recorded in chaps. xiii. and xiv. See *Explanatory Note* on the verse, and pp. 228-269.

NOTHING BUT NAMES.

(Verses 19-36.)

We have here the names of the places at which the people encamped during the years of penal wanderings. What took place at any of these stations we know not; and the places themselves, with the exception of Ezion Geber, are unknown. The paragraph is little more than mere names, and suggests the following reflections.

I. The tendency of sin to deprive life of any worthy significance.

In the history of this people there was little worth recording for 38 years. Sin is prone to rob life of all true and noble elements, of inspiration and helpfulness to good, of brave and earnest enterprize; and to bring

people into such a state that they have no history to write, or no history worth writing.

II. The tendency of sin to retard progress

Here are a number of journeys, but no advance towards their destination. There was movement without progress. The unbelief, cowardice, and rebellion of the people against God caused this (chap. xiv.). Sin takes the wheels off the chariots of human progress, so that they drag slowly and heavily along. Nay, it even completely arrests progress. This is true of communities. For the space of almost 38 years the progress of this nation was held back

by their sins. It is true also of individuals.

III. The importance of remembering the losses which sin causes us.

For this reason there is some record of these seemingly fruitless years—these penal wanderings.

1. *Such remembrance should promote humility.* "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee," &c. (Deut. viii. 2).

2. *Such remembrance should restrain from sin.* The recollection of the loss and injury which sin has caused us is calculated to cause us to abhor and avoid sin. And when it involves loss and trouble to a whole generation of people, the recollection of it is fitted to lead the coming generations to shun the sins of their ancestors (comp. *Psa.* lxxviii. 3-8).

IV. The mutability of earthly and temporal things.

When this itinerary was written, these seventeen places were well known; but at the present time of only one of them is anything whatever known of a certainty. Places great and famous in days of yore, have vanished almost as completely.

"Cities numberless,
Tyre, Sidon, Carthage, Babylon, and Troy,
And rich Phœnicia—they are blotted out,
Half-raz'd from memory, and their very name
And being in dispute."—*H. K. White.*

Therefore, "love not the world, neither the things in the world," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17). "Seek those things which are above," &c. (*Col.* iii. 1, 2). (a)

V. The unsettled character of human life upon earth.

"They departed from Rithmah and pitched at Rimmon-parez. . . . And they journeyed from Rissah and pitched in Kehelathah. . . . And they removed from Mount Shapher and encamped in Haradah," &c. Such is the character of the record—a record of removals, &c. And such is human life in this world. "This is not your rest." "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (b)

The suggestions of this paragraph may be developed also with these two inquiries as the principal divisions.

I. Why have we here nothing but names?

II. Seeing that we have here nothing but names, why are these names recorded?

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) God has written it on every page of His creation that there is nothing here which lasts. Our affections change. The friendships of the man are not the friendships of the boy. Our very selves are altering. The basis of our being may remain, but our views, tastes, feelings, are no more our former self than the oak is the acorn. The very face of the visible world is altering around us: we have the gray mouldering ruins to tell of what was once. Our labourers strike their ploughshares against the foundations of buildings which once echoed to human mirth—skeletons of men, to whom life once was dear—urns and coins that remind the antiquarian of a magnificent empire. To-day the shot of the enemy defaces and blackens monuments and venerable temples, which remind the Christian that into the deep silence of eternity the Roman world has passed away. And so things are going. It is a work of weaving and unweaving. All passes. Names that the world heard once in

thunder are scarcely heard at the end of centuries—good or bad, they pass. A few years ago and *we* were not. A few centuries further, and we reach the age of beings of almost another race. Nimrod was the conqueror and scourge of his far-back age. Tubal Cain gave to the world the iron which was the foundation of every triumph of men over nature. We have their names now. But the philologist is uncertain whether the name of the first is real or mythical—and the traveller excavates the sand-mounds of Nineveh to wonder over the records which he cannot decipher. Tyrant and benefactor, both are gone. And so all things are moving on to the last fire which shall wrap the world in conflagration, and make all that has been the recollection of a dream. This is the history of the world, and all that is in it. It passes while we look at it. Like as when you watch the melting tints of the evening sky—purple-crimson, gorgeous gold, a few pulsa-

tions of quivering light, and it is all gone :—
 “we are such stuff as dreams are made of.”—
F. W. Robertson, M.A.

(b) For illustrations on this point, see pp. 163 (b), 409 (g).

“FROM KADESH UNTO ABEL-SHITTIM IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB.”

(Verses 37-49.)

The history of the people in these journeys and encampments has already engaged much of our attention in our progress through this book. In the

Explanatory Notes on the verses the chapters and verses are given for the history of each encampment.

THE EXPULSION OF THE CANAANITES.

(Verses 50-56.)

Consider—

I. The imperative command.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan,” &c. (verses 50-54).

1. *To utterly expel the inhabitants of Canaan.* “When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you; . . . and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein.” This command had been given to them previously in Exod. xxiii. 31-33; xxxiv. 11-17; and it was repeated in a more severe form in Deut. vii. 1-6. In this latter place they are commanded to “utterly destroy them,” and that without mercy. And both in Exodus and in Deut. one reason for this stern command is assigned, viz., that their presence in the land would be a source of peril to the Israelites, leading them to enter into social alliances with them and to conform to their idolatrous practices, and so awakening the anger of the Lord against them to their own destruction.

Learn: *The sin and peril of evil associations.* (a)

2. *To completely destroy all idolatrous objects and places.* “Destroy all their pictures”—idols of stone—“and de-

stroy all their molten images”—or idols cast from copper—“and quite pluck down all their high places” (comp. Exod. xxiii. 24; xxxiv. 13-15; Deut. vii. 5; xii. 2, 3). Nothing was to be preserved for the gratification of antiquarian tastes, or as curious relics of foreign customs. There must be an utter destruction of all and everything that had been associated with idolatry; because such things were offensive to God and perilous to man. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” &c. (Exod. xx. 3-5).

Learn: *The heinousness of the sin of idolatry in the sight of God.* (b)

3. *To equitably divide the land.* “And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families,” &c. (verse 54). We have already noticed this in chap. xxvi. 53-56 (see pp. 502, 503).

4. *The authority by which they were to do these things.* They had the authority of Jehovah their God. He gave them the command; and He assigned this reason for it: “for I have given you the land to possess it.” He is the great Proprietor of all things. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” He has a right to do what He will with His own. But in addition to this, “the iniquity of the Amorites” was now “full.” The filthiest abominations were practised amongst

them, they were sunk in the grossest immoralities. "For the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. ix. 4). So utterly depraved were the Canaanites that it is said that "the land itself vomited them out" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). (c)

II. The solemn warning.

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass," &c. (vers. 55, 56). They are here solemnly warned that, if they failed to obey the Divine commands now given to them,—

1. *Those whom they spared would become their tormentors.* "Those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye shall dwell." "Under these metaphors," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the continual mischief that should be done to them, both in soul and body, by these idolators, is set forth in a very expressive manner. What can be more vexations than a continual goading of each side, so that the attempt to avoid the one throws the body more forcibly on the other? And what can be more distressing than a continual pricking in the eye, harassing the mind, tormenting the body, and *extinguishing the sight*?" "That which we are willing should tempt us, we shall find will vex us."

2. *The God whom they disobeyed would disinherit them.* "Moreover it

shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them." This solemn warning was repeated by Joshua (Josh. xxiii. 13): but Israel disregarded it, and reaped the bitter result. "Subsequent history proves," as Scott remarks, "that these denunciations were real *prophecies*, which have been wonderfully accomplished, even to this day. During many ages, the remnant of the devoted nations were extremely troublesome to the Israelites, even as 'pricks in the eyes and thorns in the side,' which would be a constant and almost intolerable torture: and at length, as they persisted in imitating their idolatries and atrocious crimes, they were punished as the Lord proposed to punish the Canaanites; being expelled from their country with tremendous slaughter, first by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and at length more completely by the Romans."

Learn:—

The importance of zeal and thoroughness in waging war against those Canaanites of the heart, our indwelling sins.

"If we show any quarter to our sinful propensities, they will gather strength by indulgence, mar the comfort of our lives, and perhaps be 'pricks in our eyes and thorns in our sides' when we lie upon a death-bed." "If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out; if we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls." (d)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) This lesson is illustrated on pp. 308, 428.

(b) All sin is hateful to God, and none but the cleansed, perfect soul shall stand before Him in the presence of His glory; nor any in whom iniquity hath dominion shall stand accepted in the presence of His grace; but yet no particular sin is so hateful to Him as idolatry is. For this is not only a trespassing against His laws, but a disclaiming or rejecting His very sovereignty itself. To give a prince irreverent language, and to break his laws, is punishable; but to pull him out of his throne, and set up a scullion in it, and give him the honour and obedience of a king, this is another kind of matter, and much more in-

tolerable. The first commandment is not like the rest, which require only obedience to particular laws in a particular action; but it establisheth the very relations of sovereign and subject, and requires a constant acknowledgment of these relations, and makes it high treason against the God of heaven in any that shall violate that command. Every crime is not treason; it is one thing to miscarry in a particular case, and another thing to have other gods before and besides the Lord, the only God. Now, this is the sin of every worldling: he hath taken down God from the throne in his soul, and set up the flesh and the world in His stead; these he valueth, and magnifieth, and delighteth in;

these have his very heart, while God that made it and redeemed him is set light by.—*Richard Baxter.*

(c) While, on the one hand, the donation of this land to the Israelites was an act of the Lord's free favour, the denial of it to the Canaanites was no less an act of His retributive justice—of such justice as it behoved the moral Governor of the world to administer against a people laden with iniquity. Gen. xv. 13-16 is a passage which proves this clearly. Abraham is there informed that, before his posterity would receive that goodly heritage, a long period of four hundred years must elapse, great part of which would be spent by them under oppression in a land which was not theirs. Eventually they should be brought forth with great substance; and in the "fourth generation they shall come hither again." Why is this return so long deferred? Why not until the fourth generation? Hear the reason: "*For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*"

These last words are important for more than one reason. First, they exclude all human right of the Hebrews to Palestine; for if such a right had existed, why, for its being enforced, should the filling up of the iniquity of the Amorites be required? Secondly, if the cause why Abraham's descendants were not now, but after a long interval, to obtain possession of the Promised Land, was, that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full, it is thereby equally intimated that this filling up of their iniquity would justify, if not demand, the Divine judgment, which under existing circumstances would have been unjust—in the same way as God, before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by His immediate decree, first of all permitted the abandoned depravity of the inhabitants most notoriously to manifest itself.

When the time was fully come, the Canaanites became a doomed people—doomed to expulsion or extermination by the Israelites, to whom was committed the sword of judgment, and who were the destined inheritors of the land of which the Canaanites had by that time proved themselves unworthy. This solemn doom is expressed in the Hebrew by a peculiar word (*cherem*), which is always applied to such devotement to destruction in vindication of the Divine justice; and this is the term constantly applied to the Canaanites, as to a people who, by their enormities, had dishonoured the moral government of God, and were, therefore, to be constrained, by the judgment inflicted upon them, to glorify that government, and thereby to set forth the great truth, that there is a pure and holy Ruler of the nations.

Then, again, the Israelites, favoured as they were for their fathers' sake, were apprised that even they held the land by no other tenure than that which the Canaanites were to be destroyed for infringing. Over and over again were they warned, that if they fell

into the same dreadful transgressions for which the Canaanites had been cast out, they would subject themselves to the same doom—be like them destroyed—like them cast out of the good land which they had defiled. We are not left altogether in the dark as to the nature of the abominations which pervaded the land, and which cried to God to show Himself as one abhorring iniquity, and to prove that the world was not left fatherless of His care. In one place, the sacred text, after enumerating various cases of unchastity and impiety of the vilest kind, goes on to say, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these things the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled; therefore do I visit the iniquity of the land upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Lev. xviii. 24, 25). In another place, the Israelites are solemnly warned against imitating the conduct of their predecessors, lest they incur the same penalties: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord which He hateth have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods" (Deut. xii. 30, 31). What more emphatic testimony can be required than this?—*John Kitto, D.D.*

God is Sovereign of the universe. He has a right to dispose of any part of it as He will. God is also infinitely just. He governs His Kingdom in strictest accordance with justice. To punish the guilty is a just act. The Canaanites were guilty. By a long continued course of rebellion and abominable crime, they had become not only altogether corrupt, but absolutely hopeless. Their iniquity became full. Then God drove them out to make room for His own people.

A great truth is sometimes either forgotten or ignored by the sentimental school of philosophers, that "the punishment of the wicked is as indispensable a part of moral government as the reward of the good." The remarks of Kalisch on this subject are admirable: "If we survey the Biblical system with regard to this subject, we are surprised by its grandeur and comprehensiveness. The Canaanites themselves were not the original inhabitants of the land; they settled there after having destroyed most of the earlier tribes—the Rephaim, the Emim, the Anakim, and others. They had therefore had a personal experience of how God punished wantonness and impiety; but they were not warned by it: they gradually fell into the same vices and crimes; and they were doomed to suffer the same extreme judgment. But whilst the measure of their iniquity was filling, God reared in a foreign land the future occupants of their abode: the degeneracy of the Canaanites kept pace with the increase and development of the Israelites. However great and awful the former might have been, the God of mercy protracted and

delayed long the day of judgment ; and however glorious Abraham's merit was, on account of which his descendants were destined to possess Canaan, the God of justice did not accelerate their deliverance from the oppression in Egypt, which they had deserved by their faithlessness. The Israelites, regenerated by their trials in the desert, were the instruments of chastisement to the Canaanites ; as, later, the Assyrians and Babylonians, though unconscious of their office and mission, were used as the rod of destruction against the Israelites. This is the only view

in which the occupation of Palestine by the Hebrews can be regarded according to the Biblical allusions."—*J. L. Porter, D.D., LL.D.*

(d) Use sin as it will use you ; spare it not, for it will not spare you : it is your murderer, and the murderer of the world : use it, therefore, as a murderer should be used. Kill it before it kills you ; and though it kill your bodies, it shall not be able to kill your souls ; and though it bring you to the grave, as it did your Head, it shall not be able to keep you there.—*Richard Baxter.*

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter consists of two portions : (1) the boundaries of the Promised Land (vers. 1-15), and (2) the names of the persons who were appointed to distribute the land (vers. 16-29).

Verse 2. *Canaan with the coasts thereof.* Keil and Del. : "Canaan according to its boundaries."

Verses 3-5. "Render : 'Then your south quarter shall extend from the wilderness of Zin which resteth upon the side of Edom. And your south border shall start from the extremity of the salt sea on the east ; and your border shall turn on the south to Maaleh-akrabbim, and shall pass on toward Zin, and the extent of its reach on the south shall be to Kadesh-barnea ; and it shall reach forth thence to Hazar-addar, and shall pass on to Azmon, and from Azmon the border shall turn to the river of Egypt, and its reach shall be to the sea.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 3. In the former part of this verse we have a general description of the southern boundary, which is afterwards more particularly defined.

The wilderness of Zin. See on chap. xii. 16 ; xiii. 21.

The utmost coast of the Salt Sea, &c. ; i.e. from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea in a south-westerly direction.

Verse 4. *The ascent of Akkrabbim, or Maaleh-akrabbim, the ascent of scorpions, or "the scorpion pass."* Probably the pass of Sâfeh. So Stanley, Robinson,

Grove. Scorpions abound in the whole of this district.

Kadesh-barnea. See on chap. xiii. 26.

Hazar-addar=village of Addar. In Josh. xv. 3, it is mentioned as two places, "Hezron and Adar." The former was probably "the general name of a district of *Hazers*, or nomad hamlets, of which Addar was one." The site of neither of them has been discovered as yet. *Azmon* also has not yet been identified.

Verse 5. *The river of Egypt.* The brook of Egypt is the Wady el Arish, which is about seventy miles distant in a westerly direction from Kadesh.

Verse 6. *The great sea, i.e., the Mediterranean.*

For a border. Lit., "with its border," i.e., "with the border which it makes."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 7-9. "The northern boundary cannot be determined with certainty."—*Keil and Del.*

Verse 7. *Mount Hor.* This is quite distinct from the Mount Hor upon which Aaron died (see p. 363). "The northern boundary started from the sea. Since Sidon was subsequently allotted to the most northern tribe—Asher (Josh. xix. 28), and was, so far as we know, the most northern town so allotted, it would seem probable that the northern boundary would commence at about that point ; that is, opposite to where the great range of Lebanon breaks down to the sea. The next

landmark, the entrance to Hamath, seems to have been determined by Dr. Porter as the pass at *Kalat el-Husn*, close to *Hums*, the ancient Hamath—at the other end of the range of Lebanon. Surely Mount Hor, then, can be nothing else than the great chain of Lebanon itself.”—*Bibl. Dict.*

Verse 8. *The entrance of Hamath.* Hamath here is the kingdom of Hamath, which was named after its chief city. “By ‘the entrance of Hamath,’ is to be understood the southern approach to Hamath, from the plain of Cœle Syria, lying between those two ranges of Lebanon, called Libanus and Antilibanus. Robinson and Porter understand it of the western approach to Hamath, from the Mediterranean.”—*Speaker’s Comm.* See on chap. xiii. 21, p. 228.

“*Zedad*, now a large village, still bearing its ancient name (*Sadad*), about thirty miles east of the entrance of Hamath.”—*Ibid.*

Verse 9. “*Ziphron*, now *Zifrân*, has not been as yet visited by modern travellers, but is reported to lie about forty miles north-east of Damascus, near the road to Palmyra, and to contain extensive ruins.”—*Ibid.*

Hazar-enan, = “the fountain village.”

Probably “*Ayûn ed-Dara*, a fountain situate in the very heart of the great central chain of Antilibanus.”—*Ibid.* Most, if not all, of these conjectures or conclusions concerning the northern frontier are, however, disputed.

Verses 10-12. The eastern boundary.

Verse 10. *Shepham*. The site of this place has not been identified.

Verse 11. *Riblah*, on the east side of *Ain*. Not Riblah in the land of Hamath. Its exact site is unknown.

Sea of Chinnereth, i.e., Sea of Gennesaret, or of Galilee.

Verse 12. *Down to Jordan, &c.* From the sea of Gennesaret the boundary was the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

Verses 13-15. *Unto the nine tribes, &c.* Comp. chap. xxxii. 20-33.

Verses 16-29. Names of the men appointed to distribute the land. Of these, three only are known, viz., Eleazar, the high priest, head of the religious orders; Joshua, the general, head of the military order; and Caleb, the representative prince of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 18. *One prince of every tribe.* These princes were “the heads of the fathers of the tribes” (Josh. xiv. 1), not heads of tribes (see on chap. xiii. 2; p. 228).

THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 1-15.)

Let us consider the following facts which are here either suggested or stated concerning the Promised Land.

I. The boundaries of this land were determined by God.

He here directs His servant Moses in this matter. “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel,” &c. We have in this an illustration of His providential ordering of human life. “He hath determined the bounds of their habitation.” “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” This may be regarded as—

1. *A reason for contentment.* “He

shall choose our inheritance for us.” “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (a)

2. *A rebuke of selfish greed*, whether on the part of individuals or of nations. (b)

II. The extent of this land was small.

Authorities are not agreed as to its extent; but even if we take the largest estimate, it was a small land, and remarkably narrow. Mr. Grove thus speaks of its size, and briefly sets forth its boundaries: “The Holy Land is not in size or physical characteristics pro-

portioned to its moral and historical position, as the theatre of the most momentous events in the world's history. It is but a strip of country about the size of Wales, less than 140 miles in length, and barely 40 in average breadth, on the very frontier of the East, hemmed in between the Mediterranean Sea on the one hand, and the enormous trench of the Jordan valley on the other, by which it is effectually cut off from the mainland of Asia behind it. On the north it is shut in by the high ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, and by the chasm of the Litâny, which runs at their feet, and forms the main drain of their southern slope. On the south it is no less enclosed by the arid and inhospitable deserts of the upper part of the peninsula of Sinai, whose undulating wastes melt imperceptibly into the southern hills of Judea. The country thus roughly portrayed, and which, as before stated, is less than 140 miles in length, and not more than 40 in average breadth, is to all intents and purposes the whole Land of Israel. The northern portion is Galilee; the centre, Samaria; the south, Judea. This is the Land of Canaan which was bestowed on Abraham; the covenanted home of his descendants." (*Bibl. Dict.*) Dean Stanley, however, makes it to be larger than this. "The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea, is rarely more than 50 miles. Its length, from Dan to Beersheba, is about 180 miles." But, whatever may be its measurements, the glory of this land consists in its having been the theatre of the most marvellous and momentous events in the history of the world, and is in inverse ratio to its size. (*c*)

III. The position of this land was secure.

An examination of its boundaries as they are here laid down, shows that it was surrounded by natural fortifications. In one particular only was the position of this land perilous. "The only road by which the two great rivals of the ancient world could approach one another—by which alone Egypt could go to Assyria, and Assyria to

Egypt—lay along the broad flat strip of coast which formed the maritime portion of the Holy Land, and thence by the plain of the Lebanon to the Euphrates." This road was undoubtedly a dangerous one for the Israelites. And through this channel the destruction of the nation came at length. But, with this exception, this land was naturally surrounded by almost impregnable defences. (*d*)

IV. The soil of this land was fertile.

Its present condition is not to be regarded as a representation of its condition when it was inhabited and cultivated. At present the face of the country presents a rocky and barren aspect. For this there are two causes. "The first is the destruction of the timber in that long series of sieges and invasions which began with the invasion of Shishak (B.C. circa 970), and has not yet come to an end. This, by depriving the soil and the streams of shelter from the burning sun, at once made, as it invariably does, the climate more arid than before, and doubtless diminished the rainfall. The second is the decay of the terraces necessary to retain the soil on the steep slopes of the round hills. This decay is owing to the general unsettlement and insecurity which have been the lot of this poor little country almost ever since the Babylonian conquest. The terraces once gone, there was nothing to prevent the soil which they supported being washed away by the heavy rains of winter; and it is hopeless to look for a renewal of the wood, or for any real improvement in the general face of the country, until they have been first re-established." — *Grove*. Its condition in ancient times is thus portrayed by the inspired lawgiver: "A good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains," &c. (Deut. viii. 7-9). "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt," &c. (Deut. xi. 10-12). (*e*)

V. The Israelites failed to take possession of the whole of this land assigned to them by God.

The territory here marked out for them greatly exceeded that which they actually conquered. For example, it appears that the north-western boundary was to reach "unto great Zidon" (Josh. xix. 28), but neither that city nor even Tyre, which is about 20 English miles further south, was ever acquired by Israel. Accho was "the northernmost city of the Holy Land on the western coast." In order to discover the difference between the extent of the territory allotted and that actually taken, in this district of the land, contrast Josh. xix. 24-31, and Judg. i. 31, 32. Other instances of the failure of the Israelites to take possession of the territory given to them by God are recounted in Judg. i. 27-36. From this failure arose many of the

sins and sufferings of their subsequent history. In this we have an illustration of the failure of the people of God in this day to rise to the height of their Christian calling, or to realise the fullness and wealth of their Christian privileges. The treasures of the Divine blessing immeasurably exceed our aspiration and faith, and consequently, our realization of them. Comp. Psal. lxxxii. 13-16; Isa. xlviii. 17-19.

In conclusion, the subject presents an impressive illustration of the great goodness of God to His people. And His goodness is even more manifest in the spiritual privileges and possessions to which He calls us in Jesus Christ. Let us show our appreciation of His goodness by striving to attain unto our high calling.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) On this point we have given illustrations on pp. 43, 70.

(b) The ambition and insatiable greediness of great men hath put all out of order, and nothing is so holy which can stay them creeping and encroaching upon the bounds and borders of their neighbours. Thus they break the law of God and nature, in seeking to enlarge and increase their own dominions. These justly incur the curse of the prophet, "Woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" (Isa. v. 8; Hab. ii. 9-12; Jer. xxii. 23; Mic. ii. 2). For wherefore hath God separated nation from nation, and one kingdom from another people, but that all should live quietly and communicate one with another, and that there might be no confusion or divisions? And, therefore, ought all to be contented with their own bounds. God hath made them great, but they always seek to make themselves greater: He hath set them bounds, but they will know no bounds. So, then, from thence we may gather that the wars which are taken in hand upon ambition, and the enlarging of the bounds of their empire only, are a despising of God, a shedding of innocent blood, and a perverting of the order which He hath set in nature and nations. Every man, therefore, ought to abide in his own possession and inheritance, and not to trouble or molest one another. . .

This reproveth the greedy and covetous affections of private men that covet to be rich, they care not by what means. But as soon as the desire of getting gain is settled in them, they are inflamed to rake to them-

selves by hook or by crook. "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live." Covetousness is a corrupt affection of the mind, greedily desiring, and too much gaping after, the riches of this life. They dream of long life, forgetting that no man's life consisteth in the abundance of his riches (Luke xii. 15). They think they shall exceedingly profit them, but by the just judgment of God they turn to their hurt. They think they will be as a shield or buckler to defend them from the injuries of this life, but they are turned into swords whereby they are wounded or destroyed. They have conceived a strong opinion that they will be as a wall on every side to underprop the house, but they prove as a double cannon to cast it down to the ground. As then, he that eateth moderately is nourished by the meat, and it abideth in the stomach, but when it is taken immoderately the stomach is choked, and it is vomited up again; so he that greedily heapeth up riches shall be constrained to "vomit them up again" (Job xx. 15). Covetousness, therefore, is a sin, when a man is discontented with the estate wherein God hath set him, and with those things that God hath given for the sustenance of this present life; when he murmureth against God, and the more he hath, the more he desireth; when he heapeth them up and keepeth them, and bringeth them not forth to any godly or necessary uses; but he distrusteth the Providence of God, and putteth his trust and confidence in his riches, as if he could not live without abundance of them, neither be sustained by the hand of God.—*W. Attersoll*.

(c) In Palestine, as in Greece, every traveller

is struck with the smallness of the territory. He is surprised, even after all that he has heard, in passing, in one long day, from the capital of Judea to that of Samaria; or at seeing, within eight hours, three such spots as Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea is rarely more than fifty miles. Its length from Dan to Beersheba is about a hundred and fifty miles. The time is now gone by when the grandeur of a country is measured by its size, or the diminutive extent of an illustrious people can otherwise than enhance the magnitude of what they have done. The ancient taunt, however, and the facts which suggested it, may still illustrate the feeling which appears in their own records. The contrast between the littleness of Palestine, and the vast extent of the empires which hung upon its northern and southern skirts, is rarely absent from the mind of the Prophets and Psalmists. It helps them to exalt their sense of the favour of God towards their land, by magnifying their little hills and dry torrent beds into an equality with the giant hills of Lebanon and Hermon, and the sea-like rivers of Mesopotamia. It also fosters the consciousness that they were not always to be restrained within these earthly barriers, "The place is too strait for me; give me place where I may dwell" (Isa. xlix. 20). Nor is it only the smallness, but the narrowness, of the territory which is remarkable. From almost every high point in the country its whole breadth is visible, from the long wall of the Moab hills on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Whatever may be the poverty or insignificance of the landscape, it is at once relieved by a glimpse of either of these two boundaries.

"Two voices are there—one is of the sea,
One of the mountains,"—

and the close proximity of each—the deep purple shade of the one, and the glittering waters of the other—makes it always possible for one or other of those two voices to be heard now, as they were by the Psalmists of old—"The strength of the mountains is His also—The sea is His, and He made it."—*A. P. Stanley, D.D.*

(d) Look at its boundaries. The most important will be that on the east. For in that early time, when Palestine first fell to the lot of the chosen people, the East was still the world. The great empires which rose on the plains of Mesopotamia, the cities of the Euphrates and the Tigris, were literally then, what Babylon is metaphorically in the Apocalypse, the rulers and corrupters of all the kingdoms of the earth. Between these great empires and the people of Israel, two obstacles were interposed. The first was the eastern Desert, which formed a barrier in front even of the outposts of Israel—the nomadic tribes on the east of the Jordan; the second, the vast

fissure of the Jordan valley, which must always have acted as a deep trench within the exterior rampart of the Desert and the eastern hills of the Trans-Jordanic tribes.

Next to the Assyrian empire in strength and power, superior to it in arts and civilization, was Egypt. What was there on the southern boundary of Palestine, to secure that "the Egyptians whom they saw on the shores of the Red Sea, they should see no more again"? Up to the very frontier of their own land stretched that "great and terrible wilderness," which rolled like a sea between the valley of the Nile and the valley of the Jordan. This wilderness itself—the platform of the Tih—could be only reached on its eastern side by the tremendous pass of 'Akaba at the southern, of Sâfeh at the northern end of the 'Arabah, or of the no less formidable ascents from the shores of the Dead Sea.

On these, the two most important frontiers, the separation was most complete. The two accessible sides were the west and the north. But the west was only accessible by sea, and when Israel first settled in Palestine, the Mediterranean was not yet the thoroughfare—it was rather the boundary and the terror of the eastern nations. From the north-western coast, indeed, of Syria, the Phœnician cities sent forth their fleets. But they were the exception of the world, the discoverers, the first explorers of the unknown depths; and in their enterprises Israel never joined. In strong contrast, too, with the coast of Europe, and especially of Greece, Palestine has no indentations, no winding creeks, no deep havens, such as in ancient, even more than in modern times, were necessary for the invitation and protection of commercial enterprise. One long line, broken only by the bay of Acre, containing only three bad harbours, Joppa, Acre, and Caïpha—the last unknown in ancient times—is the inhospitable front that Palestine opposed to the western world. On the northern frontier the ranges of Lebanon formed two not insignificant ramparts. But the gate between them was open, and through the long valley of Coele-Syria, the hosts of Syrian and Assyrian conquerors accordingly poured. These were the natural fortifications of that vineyard which was "hedged round about" with tower and trench, sea and desert, against the "boars of the wood," and "the beasts of the field."—*Ibid.*

(e) There is this peculiarity which distinguishes Palestine from the only countries with which it could then be brought into comparison. Chaldea and Egypt—the latter of course in an eminent degree—depend on the course of single rivers. Without the Nile, and the utmost use of the waters of the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. But Palestine is well distinguished, not merely as "a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, of oil-olive and honey," but emphatically as "a good land, a land of brooks

of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of plains and mountains,"—"not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but a land of mountains and plains which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." This mountainous character; this abundance of water both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in contradistinction to the one uniform supply of the great river; this abundance of "milk" from its "cattle on a thousand hills," of "honey" from its forests and its thymy shrubs, was absolutely peculiar to Palestine amongst the civilized nations of the East. Feeble as its brooks might be—though, doubtless, they were then more frequently filled than now—yet still it was the only country where an Eastern could have been familiar with the image of the Psalmist: "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the mountains." Those springs, too, however short-lived, are remarkable for their copiousness and beauty. Not only in the East, but hardly in the West, can any fountains and sources of streams be seen so clear, so full-grown even at their birth, as those of the Kishon, the Jordan, and the whole of the Jordan valley. Wales or Westmoreland are, doubtless, not regarded as fertile regions; and the green fields of England to those who have

come fresh from Palestine, seem, by way of contrast, to be indeed "a land of promise." But transplant Wales or Westmoreland into the heart of the Desert, and they would be far more to the inhabitants of the Desert than to their inhabitants are the richest spots of England. Far more: both because the contrast is in itself greater, and because the phenomena of a mountain country, with wells and springs, are of a kind almost unknown to the dwellers in the deserts or river plains of the East.

Palestine therefore, not merely by its situation, but by its comparative fertility, might well be considered the prize of the Eastern world, the possession of which was the mark of God's peculiar favour; the spot for which the nations would contend: as on a smaller scale the Bedouin tribes for some "diamond of the desert," some "palm-grove islanded amid the waste." And a land of which the blessings were so evidently the gift of God, not as in Egypt of man's labour; which also, by reason of its narrow extent, was so constantly within reach and sight of the neighbouring Desert, was eminently calculated to raise the thoughts of the nation to the Supreme Giver of all these blessings, and to bind it by the dearest ties to the land which He had so manifestly favoured.—*Ibid.*

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND.

(Verses 16-29.)

The two chief rules for the Distribution of the Land have already been noticed by us (see p. 502). We have here the names of the persons to whom this distribution was committed. Notice,—

I. The co-working of the Divine and the human in the distribution of the land.

1. *Here is the Divine agency.* "This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot" (verse 13); *i.e.*, the situation of the territory of each tribe, and probably of each family, was to be determined by lot. The use of the lot was regarded by most ancient peoples as an appeal to God, and the result was viewed as determined by Him. There are numerous instances of this in Jewish history (Lev. xvi. 8-10; Josh. vii. 14-18; Judg. i. 1-3; xx. 8-10; 1 Sam. x. 20, 21; xiv. 41, 42; 1 Chron. xxiv. 3-31). There is a striking and important example of its use in the very early

Christian Church (Acts i. 24-26). The estimate of it may be gathered from Prov. xvi. 33; xviii. 18. By its use on this occasion, the families of Israel would regard their respective inheritances as allotted to them by Jehovah.

2. *Here is human agency.* "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you." The situation of the inheritances having been determined by lot, the extent of the inheritance of each tribe was to be determined according to their respective numbers and needs, by the persons whose names are here recorded. In this, as in many other things, God calls man to work, and to work in harmony with Himself. This is the case in the cultivation of the earth, in working out our own salvation, in the conversion of sinners, &c. We are "workers together with him" (2 Cor. vi. 1). (a)

II. The wise arrangements for the

performance of man's duties in the division of the land.

It is worthy of notice that in the persons appointed to this work—

1. *Each class was represented.* On the commission were "Eleazar the priest," the head of the religious orders; "Joshua the son of Nun," the head of the military order; and "one prince of every tribe," representing the civilian order.

2. *Each tribe was represented,* with the exception of Reuben and Gad, which had received their inheritance on the east of the Jordan. This arrangement, by which each class and each tribe was represented on the commission, was calculated to inspire the confidence of the people as to the equitable division of the land, and to prevent dissatisfaction on the part of any tribe or class of the nation.

3. *Faithful services already rendered*

were recognised. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, had already served the nation well and bravely. Their employment on this commission may be viewed—(1) as an acknowledgment of the value of their former services; and (2) as a judicious use of persons of approved fidelity.

4. *Distinguished abilities were called into use.* Joshua and Caleb were not only faithful but remarkably able men. For wisdom and courage they would have been eminent amongst any people. Their abilities would be very valuable in the distribution of the land.

Learn; that in the arrangements for the services of God the highest wisdom should be embodied, and in carrying out those arrangements the most approved fidelity and the most conspicuous ability should be employed. The work of God demands our best efforts both of head and of heart. (b)

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) If men say, "You do not believe in conversion," I do. If they say, "You do not believe in conversion by Divine influences," I do. If they say, "But you act as though you were to produce it yourself," I reply, "Not any more than I produce flowers myself." I believe that God made the earth, I believe that he made the seed, I believe that He made the germ in the seed, I believe that He made the sun and the atmospheric conditions needful to the development of that germ, but I believe that I shall have no flowers without my interposition and skilful agency. I prepare the soil, I plant the seed, I remove the weeds from them and nourish them; and yet, after I have done that, I shall not have flowers by any power that is in me. Thou, O Sun! hast alone that secret alchemy, thou alone hast that involving power, by which blossoming can come after my skill ceases, and by which the flower shall reward my toil. And Thou, O Sun of Righteousness! hast alone the power to cause the seed to blossom out. For though man may plant the seed, and till the soil, the final form of development comes from the influence of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul. We work together. Man carries on his work, and God adds His influence; and the two are not in antagonism, but are coincident and co-operative. They are not in conflict, but concurrent. Some men are shocked when we say, "Such a man was converted by the minister." You may say that in an irreverent way, but you may say it so

as to be conformable to truth. I say, "I raised a harvest." A person listening to me says, "No, you did not; God raised it." I say, by way of explanation, "I went out and planted my fields, and brought my orchard into the right condition, and all this wealth of grain and fruit is the result of my painstaking;" and in a proper sense that does not imply conceit or pride, and that does not exclude the agency of nature or the Divine constitution of things. I did raise that harvest. We are accustomed to talk so, and without irreverence; and there is a sense in which I am instrumental in implanting correct views in a soul, and impressing right influences upon it, and it is not irreverent for me to say that I have converted men from the error of their ways.—H. W. Beecher.

(b) Men have naturally such slight thoughts of the majesty and law of God, that they think any service is good enough for Him, and conformable to His law. The dullest and dearest time we think fittest to pay God a service in; when sleep is ready to close our eyes, and we are unfit to serve ourselves, we think it a fit time to open our heart to God. How few morning sacrifices hath God from many persons and families! Men leap out of their beds to their carnal pleasures or worldly employments without any thought of their Creator and Preserver, or any reflection upon His will as the rule of our daily obedience. And as many reserve the dregs of their lives—their old age—to offer up their souls to God, so

they reserve the dregs of the days—their sleeping time—for the offering up their service to Him. How many grudge to spend their best time in serving the will of God, and reserve for Him the sickly and rheumatic part of their lives,—the remainder of that which the devil and their own lusts have fed upon! Would

not any prince or governor judge a present, half eaten up by wild beasts, or that which died in a ditch, a contempt of his royalty? A corrupt thing is too base and vile for so great a King as God is, whose name is dreadful. Alas! God calls for our *best*, and we give Him our *worst*!—*Charnock*.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

This chapter contains directions for the appointment of (1) cities for the Levites to dwell in; and (2) cities of refuge for the manslayer; and laws concerning wilful murder and unintentional homicide.

Verse 2. *Suburbs*. *Keil and Del.* "Pasturage or fields."

Verse 3. *For their cattle, &c.* "More strictly, 'for their large cattle, for their sheep and goats, and for all their beasts whatsoever they be.'"—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verses 4, 5. The directions given in these verses as to the extent of the "suburbs" have much perplexed expositors. They seem to us to mean that the suburbs should extend 1,000 cubits, or nearly one-third of a mile, from the city wall in every direction (ver. 4), and that at their outward extremity they should present on every side a frontage of not less than 2,000 cubits in length (ver. 5).

Verse 6. *And to them ye shall add.* Margin: "And above them ye shall give." Or, "and in addition to them," &c.

Verse 8. *From them that have many ye shall give many.* From the large inheritance of Judah and Simeon, the Levites received nine cities; from that of Naphtali three, and four from each of the other tribes. On the east of Jordan they had ten, and in Canaan proper, thirty-eight.

Verse 11. *At unawares.* Margin: "Heb., by error." Or, by accident.

Verse 12. *The avenger.* Heb. *Goël*, redeemer, kinsman, &c. *Stand before the congregation, &c.* Or, "before the assembly," which consisted of the

elders of the city. Comp. verses 24, 25.

Verse 15. *Unawares.* By accident, or, unintentionally.

Verse 16. *Instrument of iron, i.e., a tool, e.g., hatchet, hammer, &c.*

Verse 17. *With throwing a stone.* Margin: "Heb., with a stone of the hand," i.e., a large stone, which filled the hand.

Verse 18. *A hand weapon of wood.* Or, "a wooden instrument of the hand," e.g., a club. "The suspicion would rest upon anyone who had used an instrument that endangered life, and therefore was not generally used in striking, that he had intended to take life away."—*Knobel*.

Verses 22, 23. Comp. Deut. xix. 4, 5.

Verse 25. *He shall abide in it.* He was safe only within the walls of the city.

Unto the death of the high priest. "The atoning death of the Saviour casts its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The High Priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the Holy of Holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, pre-eminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high-priest pre-signified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease."—*Speaker's Comm.*

Verse 30. *The murderer shall be put to*

death. The cities of refuge were not instituted to screen the guilty from deserved punishment ; but to secure a just sentence.

By the mouth of witnesses, &c. Comp. Deut. xvii. 6 ; xix. 15.

Verse 31. *Satisfaction.* Rather, redemption money, or ransom.

THE APPOINTMENT OF CITIES FOR THE RESIDENCE OF THE LEVITES.

(Verses 1-8.)

The Divine provision for the maintenance of the priests and Levites has already engaged our attention twice (see pp. 84-86, and 339-342) ; and, in-

asmuch as most of the homiletical suggestions of this paragraph were noticed there, it is needless to point them out in this place.

REFUGE.

(Verse 6.)

“Among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites, there shall be six cities for refuge.”

Some types of Christ appeared for a brief season, and then vanished. The guiding cloud, the manna, ended on Jordan's banks. But here is a sign which lived through Canaan's history. It never failed until the Cross was reared.

The story of the ordinance is brief.

.

Sinner, this type displays your case. The slayer is your counterpart. There may be carnage of duties—talents—time—souls. No day passes in which this guilt is not incurred. As the man-slayer did not plot his deed, so sinners blindly commit these murders through ignorance and unwatched thought.

Take now the sinner awakened to a sense of this guilt. He is, as the slayer, rushing in terror from the kinsman's wrath. He knows himself to be pursued.

One kinsman only hunted the slayer. But many adversaries threaten the guilty soul. God's justice takes the lead. It has strong claims. Its wrongs are many. Its wrath is righteous. The law is in pursuit winged with vengeance. It demands pure, unblemished love, from the cradle to the grave, in every child of man. All who trans-

gress become its prey. And who transgresses not? This law must have its dues. It follows sternly. The truth of God, too, points an inexorable sword. It has decreed that every sinner must die. Can it be false? Satan moreover follows with huge strides. He claims the sinning soul as his. His hate is bitter.

These adversaries rush on apace. Who, undismayed, can hear their nearing footsteps? Do any cry, Whither shall we flee? Is there a Refuge? Yes. The sheltering cities represent our Refuge. A Refuge is prepared, full—complete—secure. It is Christ the Lord. Flee to Him. All in Him are everlastingly secure. “There is therefore now no condemnation,” &c. (Rom. viii. 1).

Let faith now calmly gaze on this city, and mark its towers. Christ's person is the grand pillar of security. While Jesus lives, and lives the mighty God, this safety is complete. His finished work builds up the Refuge. The walls—the bulwarks of this city—are red with blood. There is inscribed above each gate, “Christ died.” Justice draws near. It sees this mark ; and asks no more. The law's stern curse falls harmless here. Christ receives its weight. Satan pursues up to these gates. But here he pauses. All within

these walls are purified and beautified. He must confess that they are no more his. Blessed be God for this sure Refuge!

Mark, too, this Refuge is at hand. In Israel the slayer had to flee oft-times along a tedious road. Our city stands beside us. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise," &c. (Rom. x. 6-8). The gates are close. Enter this hour.

Believer, you are within this Refuge. Set not one foot beyond the holy precincts. Abide in Christ. Would you be safe through life—in death—for

ever? Then cleave to Christ, as ivy to the tree, as limpet to the rock.

And when you realize your mercies and your safe retreat, can your heart fail to love—your lips to praise—your life to serve? Can you now see such multitudes exposed to wrath, and not allure them to your loved Refuge? Strive by every means to call them in. Above all, agonize in prayer, that God's all-conquering Spirit may fly speedily throughout earth's bounds, opening blind eyes to see their danger, exciting anxious hearts to rush to this only Refuge.—*H. Law, D.D.*

THE DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP OF HUMAN LIFE.

(Verses 9-34.)

"Human life," to use the words of Dean Milman, "in all rude and barbarous tribes, is of cheap account; blood is shed on the least provocation; open or secret assassination is a common occurrence. The Hebrew penal law enforced the highest respect for the life of man. Murder ranked with high treason (*i.e.*, idolatry, blasphemy), striking a father, adultery, and unnatural lust, as a capital crime: the law demanded blood for blood (Exodus xxi. 12; Lev. xxiv. 17, 21, 22). But it transferred the exaction of the penalty from private revenge, and committed it to the judicial authority. To effect this, it had to struggle with an inveterate though barbarous usage, which still prevails among the Arabian tribes. By a point of honour, as rigorous as that of modern duelling, the nearest of kin is bound to revenge the death of his relation: he is his Goël or blood avenger. He makes no enquiry; he allows no pause; whether the deceased has been slain on provocation, by accident, or of deliberate malice, death can only be atoned by the blood of the homicide. To mitigate the evils of an usage too firmly established to be rooted out, Moses appointed certain cities of refuge, conveniently situated. If the homicide could escape to one of these,

he was safe till a judicial investigation took place. If the crime was deliberate murder, he was surrendered to the Goël; if justifiable or accidental homicide, he was bound to reside within the sanctuary for a certain period; should he leave it and expose himself to the revenge of his pursuers, he did so at his own peril, and might be put to death."

The various provisions of this law afford an impressive illustration of the Divine regard for human life.

I. In the institution of the cities of refuge as a provision that the life of an innocent person should not be taken away.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel," &c. (Verses 9-15, 22-25).

The adaptation of these cities for this purpose appears in—

1. *Their accessibility from all places.* "Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge." "And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7, 8). A reference to the map of Canaan will show that these cities were so situated that one of them could be reached in a few hours from any part of the country.

2. *Their accessibility to all persons.*

"These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither." God's regard is not simply for the life of the Israelite, but for the life of man as man.

II. In the laws by which the trial of the manslayer was to be conducted.

The Divine guardianship of human life is manifested in these laws at least in two respects:

1. *In the clear discrimination between intentional and unintentional manslaughter.* "If he smite him with an instrument," &c. (vers. 16-24).

2. *In the absolute necessity for the evidence of at least two witnesses before a man could be adjudged guilty of murder.* "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die" (ver. 30; comp. Deut. xvii. 6; xix. 15). One witness might be mistaken in his view of the case, or might be prejudiced against the homicide; hence the importance of the testimony of at least two witnesses in the trial of such cases.

III. In the punishment of the intentional manslayer.

"The murderer shall surely be put to death" (vers. 16, 17, 18, 21, 30). As an evidence of the regard of God for human life, this punishment has additional weight from two facts:—

1. *It could not be averted by any ransom.* "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death." The crime was too heinous to be expiated by anything less than life itself.

2. *It was insisted upon for the most solemn reason.* "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it

defileth the land," &c. (vers. 33, 34). The argument seems to be this: that the shedding of human blood defiled the land, that such defilement could be cleansed only by the blood of the murderer; that the Lord Himself dwelt in that land, and therefore it must be kept free from defilement; if murder were committed, the murderer must be put to death. To spare the life of the murderer was to insult Jehovah by defiling the land wherein He dwelt.

IV. In the punishment of the unintentional manslayer.

"The congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood," &c. (vers. 25-28). When it was proved on the trial that the manslayer was perfectly free from guilty designs, that he had slain another entirely by accident, even then he had to bear no light punishment. He must leave his estate and his worldly interests, his home and his family, and dwell in the city of refuge. His dwelling there closely resembled imprisonment; for if he left the city, and its divinely appointed suburbs, the Goël, if he should come upon him, was at liberty to put him to death. He must remain there throughout his life, or until the death of the high priest should bring him release.

What striking witness does all this bear to the sacredness of human life in the sight of God! (a)

Conclusion.

i. *Respect human life*—that of others, and your own also. (b)

ii. *Guard against anger*; for it leads to murder, and in the estimation of Heaven it is murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15).

iii. *Cultivate brotherly kindness and Christian charity.* Where these are, anger cannot come.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) In the precepts delivered to the sons of Noah, and, therefore, through them, to all their descendants, that is, to all mankind, that against murder is thus delivered: "Whoso

sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). There is in this reason a manifest reference to the dignity put upon

human nature, by its being endowed with a rational and immortal spirit. The crime of murder is made to lie, therefore, not merely in the putting to death the animal part of man's nature, for this is merged in a higher consideration, which seems to be, the indignity done to the noblest of the works of God; and, particularly, the value of life to an immortal being, accountable in another state for the actions done in this, and which ought, for this very reason, to be specially guarded, since death introduces him into changeless and eternal relations, which were not to lie at the mercy of human passions. Such moralists as the writer above quoted (Dr. Whately), would restr. in the essential characteristics of an act of murder to the "hurt done to a neighbour in depriving him of life," and the "insecurity" inflicted upon society; but in this ancient and universal law, it is made eminently to consist in contempt of the image of God in man, and its interference with man's immortal interests and relations as a deathless spirit; and, if so, then suicide bars upon it these deep and awful characteristics of murder. It is much more wisely said by Bishop Kidder, in his remarks upon this passage, that the reason given—"for in the image of God made He man"—is a further aggravation of the sin of murder. It is a great trespass upon God, as it destroys His likeness; and self-murder, upon this account, is forbidden as well as the killing of others.—*Richard Watson*.

But more than this. Man, the immortal, is man, the sinful, the guilty; and for this immortal, sinful, guilty creature, a Saviour has been provided; and it depends on his having, or not having, an interest in this Saviour, whether his never-ending existence is to be one of happiness or woe. And it is now, and here—in the present life and the present world, that this interest in the Saviour must be effected, this connection with Him formed. And it is here, and now, too, that a certain change of heart and character must be wrought, a change such as alone can fit for the only description of happiness that is at all to be found in the world, and the eternity beyond. How precarious, then, is life! Short, vain, passing as it is, a vapour, a shadow, a handbreadth, a dream! Yet, viewed in this, its relation to eternity, it acquires a worth which it is far beyond all the powers of human arithmetic to compute. And it becomes, in this view of it, the more solemnly important that, though brief even when most protracted, its limit, in each case, is every moment uncertain. For when the time is precarious on which any great event materially affecting our interests depends, and every moment may be that which is to determine for us the evil or the good, the preciousness of every moment is mightily, oppressively felt. With the sarcastic coolness of a scoffing scepticism, Mr. Hume asks: "Where is the crime of diverting

a few ounces of blood from their channel?" The question is based on the assumption of there being no hereafter; no deathless spirit lodged in the frame through which that blood circulates; no moral accountableness; no judgment to come. It is the language of a narrow-minded, heartless materialism. It is the language of an ethereal spirit endowed with divine capacities, and prostituting its Heaven-bestowed powers to disprove its own immortality; to rob itself of the highest elements of its dignity; to disfranchise itself of the noblest of its chartered privileges; to debase itself to a level with the "beasts that perish."—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) On suicide, our modern moralists have added little to what is advanced by the ethical writers of Greece and Rome to prove its unlawfulness; for, though suicide was much practised in those ancient states, and sometimes commended, especially by the Stoics, it was occasionally condemned. "We men," says Plato, "are all by the appointment of God in a certain prison or custody, which we ought not to break out of or run away." So likewise Cicero: "God, the Supreme Governor of all things, forbids us to depart hence without His order. All pious men ought to have patience to continue in the body, as long as God shall please who sent us hither; and not force themselves out of the world before He calls for them, lest they be found deserters of the station appointed them by God." . . .

Whatever weight may be due to the considerations urged by moralists against this crime—and every motive which may deter men from listening to the first temptation to so direful an act, is important—yet the guards of Christianity must be acknowledged to be of a more powerful kind. For the principles of our religion cannot be understood without our perceiving, that, of almost all other crimes, wilful suicide ought most to be dreaded. It is a sin against God's authority. He is "the God of our life"; in "His hand our breath is"; and we usurp His authority when we presume to dispose of it. As resulting from the pressure of mortifications of spirit, or the troubles of life, it becomes a sin, as arraigning His providential wisdom and goodness. It implies either an atheistic denial of God's government, or a rebellious opposition to His permissive acts or direct appointments; it cannot be committed, therefore, when the mind is sound, but in the absence of all the Christian virtues, of humility, self-denial, patience, and the fear and love of God, and only under the influence of pride, worldliness, forgetfulness of God, and contempt of Him. It hides from the mind the realities of a future judgment, or it defies them; and it is consummated by the character of unpardonableness, because it places the criminal at once beyond the reach of mercy.—*Richard Watson*.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Verses 9-34.)

There are certain respects in which the analogy between the cities of refuge and the salvation offered to man in the Gospel does not hold good; *e.g.*—

i. *The cities of refuge afforded no lasting protection to the guilty.* By their means a fair trial was secured for the manslayer; but if he was found guilty of murder, he was given up to the Goël to be put to death. They were an abiding refuge for those only who had accidentally slain a fellow creature. But Christianity is a refuge for the guilty. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom," saith St. Paul, "I am chief." "This man receiveth sinners." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." The guiltiest soul that flies to Jesus Christ is inviolably secure.

ii. *The cities of refuge did not exempt even the unintentional manslayer from death, but simply postponed it.* They rescued him from the vengeance of the Goël; but they could not screen him from that death which "is appointed unto all men." But the spiritual death, which is the penalty of sin, Christianity abolishes for the believer by bestowing upon him a life which is immortal and blessed. In the city of refuge the unintentional manslayer obtained bodily security for a time; in Christ the guilty sinner obtains spiritual security and joy for ever.

There are other respects in which the analogy is not quite complete; but in three most conspicuous features it is both clear and striking.

I. A great peril.

Under this head there are three points of resemblance.

1. *A broken law.* The manslayer had broken the law which guards human life. "Thou shalt not kill." Every man has transgressed the holy law of God in some respects. "All have sinned," &c. (Rom. iii. 23). "If we say

that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," &c. (1 John i. 8, 10).

2. *The penalty of death.* "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." "The murderer shall surely be put to death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (a)

3. *The peril of the exaction of the penalty.* The Goël of the slain person allowed no time to elapse before setting forth to avenge the death on the manslayer; and if he overtook him before he gained the city of refuge, he put him to death. The manslayer was fleeing for his very life. And the dire penalties of sin follow hard upon the heels of the sinner. Conscience pursues him with its condemnations, and will not be silenced. Divine Justice follows him closely, crying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And the wrath of God, which burns with unquenchable fire against sin, speeds swiftly on the track of the guilty sinner. (b)

II. A gracious provision.

By Divine command six cities were appointed cities of refuge; to either of these the manslayer might flee, &c.

1. *The provision was of Divine appointment.* "Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan," &c. It was this fact, that they were appointed by God's command, that made these cities a secure refuge for the homicide;—not the strength of their gates or walls, not the authority of their governors, but the authority of Him who had instituted them for this purpose. Jesus Christ is the Refuge appointed by God for the sinner. "The redemption that

is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation," &c. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, a Prince and a Saviour," &c. Hence, they who flee to Him are perfectly secure. (c)

2. *The provision was adequate to the need.* Six cities were appointed ; and were quite sufficient for the entire country. In each there was ample room, &c. The provisions of Christianity for the salvation of the sinner are enough for all the needs of all men in all ages and all lands. "A great multitude which no man could number" have found a secure and blessed refuge in Jesus Christ ; "and yet there is room."

3. *The provision was accessible from all places.* Three measures were adopted to secure this :—(1) The cities were suitably situated, "They appointed Kedesh in Galilee," &c. (Josh. xx. 7-9). Our Saviour is everywhere present. He is a Refuge always near. (2) The roads leading to these cities were kept in good condition. Moses "took care," says Dr. Jahn, "that roads leading to them in straight lines should be laid out in every direction, which were to be distinguished from other streets." (Comp. Deut. xix. 3.) And, according to the Talmudists, (3) where two or more roads met, posts were put up with the word מִלְּקָחֵי, REFUGE, clearly marked on them for the direction of the fugitive. All this may be viewed as illustrating the accessibility of Jesus Christ to the sinner. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?" &c. (Rom. x. 6-9).

4. *The provision was accessible to all persons.* "These six cities shall be a refuge for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them;" &c. They were accessible to every person in the land. Jesus Christ "is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. iv. 10). "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish," &c. (John iii. 15-17). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference," &c. (Rom. x. 11-13). (d)

5. *The provision was exclusive.* No

other city, except the six appointed ones, had authority to shelter and protect the manslayer. For the sinner there is no refuge but Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. (Acts iv. 12).

III. The urgent obligation.

The cities of refuge were of no advantage to the manslayer unless he gained an entrance into one of them before the Goël overtook him. It was his highest interest and imperative duty to make his way to the nearest city of refuge. It is yet more the duty and interest of the sinner to hasten to the Lord Jesus as his refuge. This obligation is—

1. *Personal.* No one could escape to the city of refuge for the homicide ; he must go himself, or be put to death. Salvation is a personal concern and duty. Repentance, faith, self-consecration, are things which no one can do for another. "Work out your own salvation," &c.

2. *Prompt.* The manslayer had to escape at once or to perish. To linger was to be lost. Salvation must be sought at once. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow," &c.

3. *Pressing.* The manslayer may not loiter on the way, or slacken his pace until he was safe within the city. The words which were addressed to Lot were applicable to him : "Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee," &c. (Gen. xix. 17). And the sinner must put forth earnest effort. Christ must be sought zealously and with all the heart. (Comp. Jer. xxix. 12, 13.) Salvation must be pursued diligently. "So run, that ye may obtain," &c. (1 Cor. ix. 24-27). "Fight the good fight of faith," &c. "Let us lay aside every weight," &c. "Give diligence to make your calling," &c.

4. *Persevering.* The homicide must press eagerly on until he entered the city. There was no safety for him if he stopped short of the end. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Hasten, then, O sinner! to the Refuge, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If then you have come short of the glory of God, you must be lost; it cannot be denied, nor disputed. *I tell to every man now present, that he is guilty of sinning against the Almighty*—that if there be no intervention of mercy so mighty and so majestic as to satisfy the demands of justice, to quench her fire, and sheathe her sword—if there be not mercy, free, boundless, omnipotent, and eternal, every human being will stand before the judgment bar of God to receive the sentence of his condemnation. He must be banished for ever from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; and he must go down to those abodes of torment where there are agonies unspeakable and inconceivable; where the smoke of torment ascendeth up for ever and for ever. Go, my hearers, to the brink of eternity, contemplate in imagination the scenes of that horrible pit which the word of revelation has presented to your view—contemplate the worm that dieth not—contemplate the fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels—contemplate the blackness of darkness—contemplate the smoke of torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever! What was it that gave to that worm its fang but *sin*? What was it that gave to that fire its intensity but *sin*? What was it that gave to that blackness its shadows but *sin*? What was it that gave to that torment its woe but *sin*? The voice is from the abyss uttering one wild cry, "It was sin; *it was sin*; IT WAS SIN!" Man *would* sin, and therefore man *must* suffer. There is a rigid equity between the one and the other. "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—*James Parsons.*

(b) No closer doth the shadow follow the body than the revenge of self-accusation follows sin. Walk eastward in the morning, the shadow starts behind thee; soon after it is upon thy left side; at noon it is under thy feet; lie down, it crouches under thee; towards even it leaps before thee. Thou canst not be rid of it while thou hast a body and the sunlight. No more can thy soul quit the conscience of evil. This is to thee instead of a hell of fiends, that shall ever be shaking firebrands at thee; ever torturing thee with affrights of more pains than thy nature can comprehend.—*Hall.*

(c) In Samoa, 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 only remains there. In such instances, the chief delights in the opportunity of showing his importance. In Samoa, a chief's house is literally his fortification, except in times of open rebellion and actual war.—*G. Turner, LL.D.*

(d) Our Lord is the Saviour of all men, for that He hath rendered all men *salvabiles*, capable of salvation; and *salvandos*, designed to salvation, for that He hath removed all obstacles peremptorily barring men from access to salvation, and hath procured competent furtherances to their attainment of it. He hath performed whatever on His part is necessary or fit in order to salvation, antecedently to the acceptance and compliance with those reasonable conditions, which by God's wisdom are required toward the instating men into a full and immediate right to salvation, or to a complete and actual fruition thereof. He made the way to happiness plain and passable; levelling the insuperable cliffs, and filling up the chasms, and rectifying the obliquities, and smoothing the asperities thereof, as the prophet foretold; so that all men, who would, might conveniently walk therein. He set the doors of paradise wide open, so that who pleased might enter therein; all the bonds and restraints under which men lay, He so far loosed, that any man might be free, who would concur to his own liberty and enlargement. All the protection and encouragement which were needful toward obtaining salvation, He afforded and exhibited to every one that would embrace and make use of them. In respect to which performances He might be truly called a *Saviour*, although all men do not in effect become saved. For the estimation and denomination of performances are to be grounded upon their own nature and design, not upon events depending upon the contingent and arbitrary behaviour of men. As he that freely offers a rich boon is no less to be accounted a benefactor, and liberal, although his gift be refused, than if it were accepted; as he that opens the prison is to be styled a deliverer, although the captive will not go forth; as he that ministers an effectual remedy, although the patient will not use it, deserves the honour and thanks due to a physician; so is our Lord in regard to what He hath performed for men, and offered to them (being sufficient to prevent their misery and promote their happiness), to be thankfully acknowledged their Saviour, although not all men, yea although not one man, should receive the designed benefit.—*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*

**THE CITIES OF REFUGE, AS LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENTS, AND AS
RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.**

(Verses 9-15.)

The system of redemption as revealed in the Gospel is often exhibited to our notice as bearing decisive marks of Divine wisdom. It is styled "the wisdom of God"—"the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom . . . which none of the princes of this world knew." The Apostle thus intimates to us that the Gospel would bear the closest inspection in all its parts; that it was worthy of our admiration, as well as of our love; that our redemption was not to be effected either by blind *force*, or by blind *affection*; that it should be accomplished in such a manner as that no rights were to be compromised, no perfections outraged, no interests overlooked, but, on the contrary, that a perfect harmony and balance should be maintained between the apparently rival attributes of the Divine character, and the apparently rival interests of earth and Heaven. Thus God was to be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; Mercy and Truth were to meet together; Christ crucified in humility and weakness was to present a most eminent illustration both of the wisdom and of the power of God; and thus the countless multitudes saved by grace should have reason to exclaim in time and eternity—Herein "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence!"

But while these remarks are readily admitted respecting the Christian dispensation, they might be extended with equal propriety to the Jewish dispensation also. While the Gospel claims our homage on account of the wisdom it displays, we are prepared to make a similar demand on behalf of the Law. Both are the product of the same Author; both are the offspring of the same covenant of mercy; both conduce to the same happy result; and, though the Gospel confessedly has "the glory that excelleth," yet the same authority

assures us that "that which is done away was glorious" also. There are two points of view expressly in which wisdom shines in the departed economy:—

First: *As its leading institutions were particularly adapted to the state of the Jews in the infancy of the Church.* Their ceremonial rites and observances were particularly suited to the climate in which they lived, to the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the evils to which they were exposed. Ignorant and uncultivated as they were during their four hundred years' bondage, they required a religion addressed to the senses, as well as to the intellect; and hence they have a visible glory, "a worldly sanctuary," animal sacrifices, symbolical institutions. Having recently been brought out of the midst of an idolatrous people, many of their regulations were intended to preserve them from a relapse into idolatry, and to keep constantly before them the worship of one God, and faith in a promised Messiah. And having to wander for forty years in the wilderness without fixed habitations, without regular communities, and without the arts and ornaments of life, some laws were enacted suited to their unsettled condition, and some preparatory to their establishment in the Promised Land. In many instances Moses adapted himself to the customs and usages which had prevailed among them from patriarchal times; in some, his institutions were altogether new; in all, there was a perpetual reference to their moral and religious interests—to encourage virtue, to diminish crime, to induce them to walk humbly with God.

Secondly: *As it was expressly calculated to point to the coming of Christ, and introduce the Gospel dispensation.* The Law was a shadow—a figure for the time then present—a schoolmaster

to bring them to Christ. Unto them was the Gospel preached, as well as unto us. Their history in the wilderness and their worship in the Temple alike prefigured the times of the Messiah. Their sacrifices pointed to Him; the "Rock that followed them" was a type of Him; the scapegoat, the brazen serpent, the cities of refuge, and the manna in the wilderness, prefigured the nature of His offices, the design of His death, or the spiritual blessings of His kingdom.

These observations apply with peculiar force to our present subject—the *Cities of Refuge*. As civil appointments, they were calculated to prevent much mischief and misery; as religious ordinances, they serve to illustrate Gospel blessings. We shall consider them—

I. As legislative enactments adapted to the habits and customs of an Eastern people in an early age of the world.

Two things require notice—

1. *The office of the avenger of blood and the evils consequent upon it.* This office probably had a very early origin: it may be a relic of the earliest state of civil society, for where there was no magistrate or public tribunal, murders would have been frequently perpetrated had there been no process of this kind among surviving relatives. Cain evidently was in dread of summary vengeance for his murder of Abel. (Comp. Gen. iv. 14.) Rebecca probably dreaded a similar retaliation in case Esau had murdered Jacob; for "why," says she, "should I be deprived also of you both in one day?" It has been common among the wandering Arabs from Ishmael's time to the present hour. It probably arose out of the original law,—“At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man,” &c. (Gen. ix. 5, 6).

It is evident that such a practice must give rise to many very serious evils. Besides that it fostered a spirit of relentless hatred and revenge, it was often accompanied with flagrant injustice and wrong. The Goël is governed only by his passions; and it may be

that the person he suspects is not the murderer; thus an innocent person suffers, and instead of avenging one murder he commits a second. One such deed never fails to give birth to another; and so ten murders have not unfrequently their origin in one. The families on both sides take part in the quarrel, and thus under the pious pretext of avenging innocent blood, two families may be in a state of constant warfare, and transmit feuds and enmities from father to son, even to the tenth generation. Thus the office of the avenger of blood, though proper in some states of society, was subject to many abuses, and required to be placed under strong restrictions. Moses could not have abolished it altogether, at least on a sudden, he therefore adopted regulations which neutralised the evil.

2. *The appointment of the cities of refuge, in order to secure the ends, both of mercy and of justice.* Six cities of refuge were appointed—three on the one side of Jordan, three on the other—to which the manslayer might immediately repair, and in which the individual might be safe, &c. . . . Thus provision was made both for justice and mercy—for justice if the fugitive were guilty, for mercy if he were innocent. And in order to give the innocent person every reasonable hope of escaping, the cities were placed at easy distances, to which persons might have access from any part of the land, the roads were straight and plain, &c. . . .

But even in the mercy that was shown an accidental manslayer, we see how sacred life was in God's esteem; for the fugitive must be a prisoner and an exile, apart from all his friends, till the death of the High Priest, perhaps for many years. This was intended to punish that imprudence which had cost another man his life, and could not fail to make the people cautious against the recurrence of such accidents; for as no compensation could be taken for the life of a murderer, so no sum could rescue an innocent manslayer from the city (vers. 31, 32).

II. As a religious ordinance designedly employed by the apostle to illustrate the wisdom and goodness of God in the methods of our salvation.

Here we see clearly depicted the character and office of our great Redeemer. This Redeemer is our near Kinsman; for "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." To this the apostle alludes: "God sent forth His Son made of a woman," &c. (Gal. iv. 4, 5). This illustrates the sublime passage in the book of Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. He is here compared to the Goël, &c. (Comp. Hos. xiii. 14; Zech. ix. 12.) The apostle says: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him," for which, like the manslayer, he would count all things loss. And he describes Christians as having "fled for refuge." "There is

therefore now no condemnation," &c.

1. *A state of exposure is implied.* Every man who reflects upon his past life, upon the holiness of God's law, upon the inflexibility of His government, and upon the sentence He has pronounced against sin, must be aware that he is in a state of jeopardy. The sentence has been promulgated from age to age with awful solemnity, "Cursed is every one," &c. If we carry the thought to its extent, it is Jehovah Himself who is the Avenger. His law we have broken, &c.

2. *A method of rescue has been provided.* Christ has undertaken our desperate cause. We are to flee for refuge. It is the only one. It is open to the Gentile as well as the Jew.

.
Samuel Thodey.

THE SECURITY OF THOSE WHO FLEE TO THE CITY OF REFUGE.

(Verses 24-28.)

That the Mosaic law had a spiritual meaning, is placed beyond all doubt from the clear allusions of Scripture (Zech. ix. 12; Heb. vi. 18). Observe—

I. Our natural state is one of imminent danger.

We are all criminals, having, ignorantly and in unbelief, rebelled against the Almighty Sovereign. As criminals, we are justly exposed to the infliction of the threatened penalty of death (Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. vi. 23; Rev. xxi. 8). Truly, then, we may observe in the situation of the manslayer a great resemblance to that of our own, as pursued by the inexorable Justice of One whose wrath we have so much provoked (Rom. i. 18; John iii. 36).

II. Nothing can deliver us from this danger but a zealous and timely flight.

We may sit at ease, bless ourselves in our heart, and feel secure; but if death overtakes us loitering in our sins, we must perish in them; and it will be vain to trust to anything as our covenant and hope, so long as we re-

main under that indifference to our spiritual interests, which demonstrates us to be still unchanged (James ii. 10).

III. There is a place of safety to which we can flee.

Christ is our refuge:—

1. *A Refuge Divinely appointed.* God so pitied, so deeply and intensely compassionated our state, as to plan and provide a way of deliverance for us by His only begotten Son (John iii. 16).

2. *A Refuge free and open to all.* None are shut out from it, but those who, by their impenitence and obstinacy, shut out themselves. No stage, no state of guilt, can make any difference; but sinners of every rank and description, without limitation or reserve, have a place prepared in which they may find security (1 Cor. vi. 11).

3. *A Refuge everywhere near to resort to.* Christ is set before us in the Gospel, and to find Him we need neither climb up into heaven, nor descend into the bottom of the sea (Rom. x. 8).

4. *A Refuge easily accessible.* Every obstacle is effectually removed, God

being reconciled, His justice satisfied, and His law magnified; so that nothing need hinder our trusting in Christ, the great God, and our Saviour.

5. *A Refuge containing an ample supply for our wants and necessities.* For here are to be found wisdom, grace, life, liberty, peace, and joy.

IV. Having once entered this place we must abide there.

It was not enough that the man-slayer fled to the city of refuge. Having gained this place, he must remain

in it till the death of the high priest. Nor is it sufficient to have once believed in Christ. We must abide in Him, renouncing for ever all thoughts of going into any forbidden region (Isa. xxx. 15). And woe be unto us, if we dare to be found without (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Let us hence seek after a sight of our danger, abandon all means of relief not warranted in the Scripture, and resign ourselves up to Christ.—*William Sleigh.*

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAW FOR THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSES.

(Verses 1-12.)

Let us notice—

I. The case stated.

“And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir,” &c. (vers. 1-4). The daughters of Zelophehad were heiresses, according to the law stated in chapter xxvii. 1-11 (see pp. 509, 510). There was a probability of their marriage, and it might have been to persons of some of the other tribes. (a) And, as Matthew Henry points out, it is probable that the heads of the tribe of Manasseh knew, that “at this time, great court was made to them by some young gentlemen of other tribes, because they were heiresses, that they might get footing in this tribe, and so enlarge their own inheritance. This truly is often aimed at more than it should be in making marriages, not the meetness of the person, but the convenience of the estate, to ‘lay house to house and field to field.’ ‘Wisdom indeed is good with an inheritance;’ but what is an inheritance good for in that relation without wisdom? But here, we may presume, the personal merit of these daughters recommended them as well as their fortunes.” But if they married to persons of another tribe, their inheritance would pass away

from the tribe of Manasseh to the tribe or tribes to which their husbands belonged. It was in order to guard against this that the heads of the fathers’ houses of the family of Gilead the Manassite appealed unto Moses. In so doing they were actuated, not by selfish concern for their personal interests. Their respective inheritances would not be diminished by the marriage of these heiresses. But they urged that, if they married to persons of any of the other tribes,—(1) The Divine allotment of the land would be invaded. “They said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel,” &c. (2) The territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh would be diminished. “If they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes,” &c. (vers. 3, 4). In this way the wealth and importance and power of the half-tribe would be lessened.

These proceedings of the heads of this family were orderly, respectful, reasonable, and commendable.

II. The case adjudicated.

“And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord,” &c. (vers. 5-9).

1. *The righteousness of the case was*

acknowledged. "The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well." The conduct of the elders was commended, &c.

2. *The difficulty of the case was removed.*

The law by which the difficulty was removed comprised two simple clauses:—

(1) That the daughters of Zelophehad were not to be coerced in marriage.

"This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best." "Now if God left them to their liking," asks Bishop Babington, "should men force their children against all love and liking?

No, no, it is a sin, and not a small one, bitter to the child all the days of life, and not very sweet to the parents after they see the fruits of their violence. Let children dutifully regard parents, and parents charitably and religiously regard their children, who will beg with better will where they like than live without love in world's abundance. We have known too often the child

cry, the father cry, and the mother die for this fault, when it was too late." (b)

(2) That the daughters of Zelophehad were to marry persons of their own tribe. "Only to the family of the tribe of their fathers shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance," &c. Thus, while the former provision secured to them freedom in their marriages, this provision, by restricting the extent of their

choice, secured their inheritance to the tribe of Manasseh.

3. *The decision in this case was made the law for all similar cases* "And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe," &c. (vers. 8, 9).

4. *The decision of this case was of Divine authority.* "Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, . . . This is the thing which the Lord doth command," &c. Hence the decision was binding both in the case which gave rise to it, and in all similar cases in subsequent times.

III. *The adjudication acted upon.*

"Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad," &c. (vers. 10-12). "They married their fathers' brothers' sons. By this it appears," says Matthew Henry,—

"1. *That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful*, nor within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But,

"2. *That ordinarily it is not advisable*; for, if there had not been a particular reason for it (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven), they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly will endeavour to walk surely."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) Marriage has in it less of beauty, but more of safety, than the single life; it hath not more ease, but less danger; it is more merry and more sad; it is fuller of sorrows and fuller of joys; it lies under more burdens, but is supported by all the strengths of love and charity; and these burdens are delightful. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities and churches, and heaven itself. Celibacy, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined, and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and

promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

(b) The marriage life is always an *insipid*, a *veratious*, or a *happy* condition. The first is, when two people of no genius or taste for themselves meet together, upon such a settlement as has been thought reasonable by parents and conveyancers, from an exact valuation of the land and cash of both parties. In this case, the young lady's person is no more regarded than the house and improvements in purchase of an estate; but she goes with her fortune, rather than her fortune with her. These make up the crowd or vulgar of the rich, and fill up the lumber of the human race, without beneficence towards those below them, or respect towards those above them.

The *veracious* life arises from a conjunction of two people of quick taste and resentment put together for reasons well known to their friends, in which especial care is taken to avoid (what they think the chief of evils) poverty, and insure to them riches, with every evil besides. These good people live in a constant constraint before company, and too great familiarity alone. When they are within observation, they fret at each other's carriage and behaviour; when alone, they revile each

other's person and conduct. In company, they are in purgatory; when only together, in a hell.

The *happy* marriage is where two persons meet and voluntarily make choice of each other, without principally regarding or neglecting the circumstances of fortune or beauty. These may still love in spite of adversity or sickness: the former we may, in some measure, defend ourselves from; the other is the portion of our very make.—*Sir R. Steele.*

MARRIAGE.

(Verse 6.)

We may notice briefly, by way of introduction,—

i. *That marriage is a Divine institution.* It was ordained by God (Gen. i. 26-28; ii. 18-24; 1 Cor. xi. 9). It was solemnly confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xix. 3-12), and by His Apostles (1 Cor. vii. 2; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

ii. *That the obligations involved in marriage are binding and sacred.* Marriage itself is not obligatory. There are circumstances in which celibacy is undoubtedly commendable (Matt. xix. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 8). But when the marriage relation has been entered into, obligations of the most tender and sacred character have been incurred. These obligations are not simply those imposed by the civil authority, but those which pertain to it as an ordinance of God: Divine in its origin, it is Divine also in its obligations (Gen. ii. 18, 24; Mal. ii. 14-16; Matt. xix. 4-6; Eph. v. 22-33; 1 Pet. iii. 1-7).

But, to confine ourselves to the text, two observations are here warranted on marriage in general:—

I. *That persons should not be coerced in marriage.*

“This is the thing which the Lord doth command. . . . saying, Let them marry to whom they think best.” Here we have—

1. *Personal choice as opposed to compulsion.* Parents “who force their daughters into marriage,” said Lord Rochester, “are worse than the Ammonites, who sacrificed their children

to Moloch—the latter undergoing a speedy death; the former suffering years of torture, but too frequently leading to the same result.”

“For marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship;
For what is wedlock forced but a hell,
An age of discord and continual strife?
Whereas the contrary bringeth forth
happiness,
And is a pattern of celestial bliss.”
—*Shakespeare.*

Moreover, such coercion is a sad degradation of marriage; a grievous wrong to the persons coerced; and a heinous sin against God. But further, it seems to us that the text suggests that marriage should be entered into from—

2. *Personal affection as opposed to mere convenience.* In the clause now under consideration, it is the person, not the property, which is spoken of. “Let them marry to whom they think best.” Marriage is far too sacred a thing to be treated as a matter of mere convenience and arrangement. “I regard a man and a woman that come together in the marriage state as coming together in the most sacred of all possible conjunctions before God.” And to enter into this union without pure and strong affection, is an injury to the person married, and, as we said of marriage by coercion, a degradation of marriage itself, and a sin against God. (a)

II. *That there are important considerations which should regulate the choice in respect to marriage.*

One such consideration is mentioned

in the text. The daughters of Zelophehad must marry whom they liked best; but they were not to marry any one of another tribe; for if they did so they would injure their own tribe by diminishing its Divinely allotted territory. "Only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry." The inference is a just one, that while persons are to be free in their marriage, they are not to be rash or thoughtless; they should not overlook either their own true interests or the interests of others. (b) In the marriage choice, due weight should be given to considerations—

1. *As to property.* By this we do not mean that in marriage, money or other possessions should be a primary consideration, or that persons should not marry until they are in "well to-do" or easy circumstances. (c) But in marriage persons should pay due attention to the temporal interests of themselves and their families. No one is at liberty to injure by his marriage the interests of his family or of others. On this point the teaching of our text is indisputable.

2. *As to consanguinity.* In the Bible marriage is prohibited between "any that are near of kin" (Lev. xviii. 1-18), with the exception of first cousins; and marriage between them as a rule is not desirable. (d)

3. *As to health.* Persons having within them the seeds of hereditary disease, should think long and deeply and unselfishly before they determine to enter the marriage state. It is an

awful thing for any one to transmit disease to the next generation in his own children.

4. *As to suitability.* This applies to age, to tastes, to tempers, to station, to pursuits. In innumerable instances where there has been no open disagreement, no bitterness or strife, lives have been impoverished, disappointed, and beclouded by unsuitable marriages. (e)

5. *As to character.* The rule for Christians is expressly laid down by St. Paul: "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39). And expositors, both ancient and modern, are almost universally agreed that the expression "only in the Lord," means, "within the limits of Christian connexion. . . . let her marry a Christian" (*Alford*) And Barnes: "That is, only to one who is a Christian; with a proper sense of her obligations to Christ, and so as to promote His glory." Many and weighty reasons may be adduced to enforce this. We mention only two—(1) In marriages in which this rule is violated, the deepest and holiest aspects of the relationship are unrealised; because in such unions there can be no mutual sympathy on those subjects which are most important and most precious to the heart of the Christian. (2) Such unions involve the most serious peril to the Christian character. (f)

Consider well the ancient inquiry, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And let Christians "marry to whom they will; only in the Lord."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) How thoroughly unprincipled are frequently the inducements to this connexion. I denounce every marriage as unprincipled that is not based on mutual esteem and love—every marriage that is not a *bona fide* union of hearts. When such a connection is entered into for the sake of external symmetry and beauty merely, the selection being made solely by the eye, which sees no more, and looks for no more, than the well-proportioned form or "the blooming tincture of the skin," without regard to the qualities of the mind and heart,

"the spirit of the union" is, in such cases, a false fire, without the hallowed purity and warmth of genuine heart love; and it is many a chance to one that it speedily cools down even to extinction, leaving only the cold, heartless, lifeless form, without a spark of the living and glowing fire—the spirit, the soul, of connubial love and joy. What, indeed, could be left remaining of that which never had any real existence? And money! money! money! what shall I say of that vilest of degradations and abuses, by which the most sacred, inti-

mate, tender, and indissoluble of earth's relations, one which ought to be cemented and secured by the very finest and most delicate sensibilities and most inviolably honourable sentiments and feelings of the heart, is reduced to a base and sordid summing up of cash columns and bank interest, or a problem in land measuring and farm stock. "The love of money" (not money, observe, but the love of money) is said, by the highest authority, to be "the root of all evil"; and of the many evils that have sprung from this productive root, the one I am now noticing is assuredly none of the least. A money marriage is a marriage in form only; recognised indeed in human courts, but hardly owned as legitimate in the court of heaven. It is a mere mercantile bargain, a trading co-partnery, a union of purses (and hardly even that, for purses are kept with great jealousy where money is the object, and that object is to get a purse rather than to give one—the eager and covetous aspirant having often none to give), and not at all a union of affections. Now, if men and women will be thus unprincipled, as well as foolish, in forming the connection, is it wonderful that they should find but little happiness in it? Would not the greater wonder be that they found any at all?—*Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.*

(b) With what hasty, light, foolish consideration do men and women jump at random into a connection that is to last for life, and of necessity most intimately and most unceasingly to affect the happiness of all their future days. How often is this done as if it were a mere holiday frolic, which could be broken off at will, as soon as they get tired of it! They hope they are to be happy. They have no doubt of it. But the reason of their having no doubt is their never having bestowed a single reflection on the grounds that exist for the hope. Had they done so, they might have found them much more scanty than those for fear. But it is a wedding, and that is enough. They have got married. The charm is in the word. As to congeniality of sentiment, and feeling, and desires, and habits, and pursuits, with all else that comes amongst the likelihoods of social harmony and happiness, such things have never entered into the calculation. Indeed there has been nothing of calculation or forethought in the matter. And is it to be wondered at, then, that they who thus wed in haste should repent at leisure?—*Ibid.*

(c) I do not believe any man was ever happier than when, having married early (and early marriages are usually virtuous marriages), and married for love, he and his companion went down into life together, and every day was a day of engineering to fit their means to their necessities, in their single slenderly furnished room, where they conferred together how to put scrap with scrap, and eke out pittance with pittance, and everything was calculated by pennies. How often, in later life, when people become rich, do the husband

and wife look at each other and say, "After all, my dear, we never shall be happier than when we first started out together." Thank God, a man does not need to be very rich to be very happy, only so that he has a treasure in himself. A loving heart, a genuine sympathy, a pure, unadulterated taste, a life that is not scorched by dissipation or wasted by untimely hours, a good sound body, and a clear conscience—these things ought to make a man happy.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(d) The use of such expressions (as, "near of kin," Heb. "flesh of his flesh," Lev. xviii. 6), undoubtedly contains an appeal to the *horror naturalis*, or that repugnance with which man instinctively shrinks from matrimonial union with one with whom he is connected by the closest ties both of blood and of family affection. On this subject we need say no more than that there is a difference in kind between the affection that binds the members of a family together, and that which lies at the bottom of the matrimonial bond, and that the amalgamation of these affections cannot take place without a serious shock to one or the other of the two; hence the desirability of drawing a distinct line between the provinces of each, by stating definitely where the matrimonial affection may legitimately take root.—*W. L. Bevan, M.A., in Bibl. Dict.*

(e) In this great whirligig of the world, there is nothing stranger than the mating and mismating of men and women. There is no question that is more insoluble, and more often asked, than this, "What on earth ever tempted that woman to marry that man?" You cannot answer it, I cannot, and she cannot. There is but one other question like it, and that is, "What on earth tempted that man to marry such a woman?" He cannot tell, and she cannot, and nobody can. So it is, and so it will be, all the time, here and there, and everywhere. And, while there are some who, disappointed, rebound and break away into immoralities, or into an indifference which is an immorality in the realm of love, there are others of a greater soul, who give their whole life to fidelities in their relation. They know that they do not love. They know that there is that in them which is capable of development, but which they have never known. There are prophecies in themselves, which they do not want to awaken, of what their soul is capable of. If they read a book where the heroism of love is described, they shut the book, and tears flow from their eyes, and they say, "Oh! what might have been." But that is not safe, and they banish it, and go on in the usual way. Early and late they are faithful.—*H. W. Beecher.*

(f) I need not say that much of the happiness of human life depends upon the marriage unions which are formed. It is one thing to view the subject of marriage in the light of passion or convenience, and another to regard it as an institution by which human life may be developed and trained to the highest uses

and enjoyments. I do not hesitate to lay down the broad principle that where there is incongruity of religious conviction between man and woman, happiness of the deepest and purest kind is entirely out of the question. This principle is impartial in its application, having equal reference to the woman as to the man, and to the man as to the woman. Take the case of a young woman who has deep religious convictions and sympathies: she has been trained under religious influences, her habits have been identified with the sanctuary from very early life: she has taught in the school, she has served in connection with many agencies of the Church, and altogether her name has become honourably associated with benevolent operations; she is sought in marriage by a young man who has no religious convictions or sympathies, who, in fact, is worldly-minded, grovelling, earthly; he may, indeed, be a man of education, literary refinement, of good social position, of captivating address; nay, more—I will go further, and say, he may be a man against whom society is unable justly to point the finger of reproach. Wherever he is known he is respected for many social excellencies. Viewed in a worldly sense, the young man may be pronounced an eligible candidate for the lady's hand, yet, in the presence of such conditions, I have dis-

tinctly to give it as my opinion that happiness of the highest kind is impossible in such a connection. There must, on the woman's part, be more or less of sacrifice of the convictions and sympathies which have distinguished her whole life. Her religious emphasis will be modified; more or less of a chill will subdue her Christian zeal; her works of benevolence will be in some degree impaired; there may not be any great outward difference in her manner, but her soul must have felt the desolation of an impoverishing influence.

We know the ordinary excuse that is made when the Christian marries one who has no devotional sympathies: the generous, hopeful, self-sacrificing woman openly avows her belief that in a very little time she will be able to bring her intended husband to a right decision; she knows (poor creature!) that there is something good in him; she has heard (O mocking ear!) him say words which she construed into a noble intention on his part; she is sure all will be right by and by; a little patience, a little humouring, and a little instruction—then all will be right! This is the dream of her love, the inspiration of her ill-directed hope. Don't account me cruel when I denounce it as an imposition—a deceit—a lie.—*Joseph Parker, D.D.*

MAN'S NEED OF MORAL DIRECTIONS, AND GOD'S COMMUNICATIONS TO MAN.

(Verse 13.)

This verse refers to all the laws which were given in the plains of Moab (chap. xxv.—xxxvi.), and concludes the record of that legislation in the same way as the record of the legislation at Sinai was concluded (Lev. xxvi. 46; xxvii. 34). The text suggests—

I. Man's need of moral direction.

It is here implied that man requires "commandments and judgments" from the Lord. He needs moral guidance.

1. *Conscience is not a reliable guide.* Conscience has been deteriorated by sin. It sometimes slumbers, as in the case of David after his great crimes (2 Sam. xii. 1-6). It sometimes leads astray, as in the case of Saul the persecutor (Acts xxvi. 9). "It is a safe guide only when it is directed by the commandment of the Lord." (a)

2. *The light of nature is not an adequate and reliable guide.* It seems to us that many persons ascribe to the

light of nature what unassisted human reason would never have discovered, had it not been previously revealed in the Scriptures. (b)

But taking "natural religion to signify that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties, without higher assistance," we pronounce it an inadequate moral and spiritual guide for man. There are great obligations which the light of nature does not reveal; e.g., that of worship to God, and that of universal benevolence to man. Human nature has deep cravings to which natural religion offers no response. We cry out for forgiveness of sin; but natural religion can afford no satisfaction to our anxious hearts. Over the graves of our beloved dead we ask earnestly and importunately, "If a man die shall he live again?" but nature is silent as those graves. The

state of religious knowledge amongst even the most distinguished minds, who had not been blessed with a spiritual and Divine revelation, affords conclusive evidence of the inadequacy of natural religion for man's moral and spiritual guidance. (c)

II. Man's need of special direction when entering upon new enterprises and experiences.

The commandments and judgments referred to in the text were given to "the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho." They were about to set forward to take possession of the Promised Land; and these commandments and judgments were for their guidance and control in the novel scenes and engagements to which they were advancing. And as we go forward into untrodden ways and new undertakings, we need directions from Heaven. We may obtain such directions by studying the revealed will of God; by seeking for them at the throne of grace; and by carefully

observing the indications of Divine providence. (d)

III. God's communications to man.

The Lord met Israel's need of guidance and control by His gracious communications.

Notice—

1. *Their nature.* "Commandments and judgments." This implies His supreme authority. He has a right to command men. This right rests upon,—(1) His relations to man. He is our creator, &c. (e) (2) His personal character. He is infinitely righteous and wise and kind. He is supreme in authority because He is supreme in excellence.

2. *Their method.* "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses." He makes known His will to man through man. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since God has graciously revealed His will for our guidance, it is both our obligation and advantage to follow it fully and at all times.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) *Conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible.* What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the Fall, and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old desolate ruin, thrown from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and covered by tall rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blaspheme; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God! and as if fiends had taken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes, as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the "Book of Martyrs," read the sufferings of our own forefathers, and under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake.

With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest; and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one only sure and safe directory.—*Thos. Guthrie, D.D.*

(b) *When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see we see with our own eyes,*

we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others who showed it to us, and first made us see it, as if we were not at all beholden to them for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into. For knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favourable enough to our own faculties to conclude that they, of their own strength, would have attained those discoveries without any foreign assistance; and that we know those truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom we received them by theirs; only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one as his private possession as soon as he, profiting by others's discoveries, has got it into his own mind; and so it is; but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered; but their pains were of another sort who first brought those truths to light which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far in such a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour, little considering how much he owes to their pains who cleared the wood, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable, without which he might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles, and are now grown familiar and, as it were, natural to us, under the Gospel, we take for unquestionable, obvious truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them had Revelation been silent. And many others are beholden to Revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to Revelation that reason gives its suffrage, too, to the truths Revelation has discovered; but it is our mistake to think that, because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them.—*John Locke*.

(c) They who speak of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of morals and religion, owe all their best views to that fountain of inspiration from which they so criminally turn aside. For how otherwise is it, that those fundamental principles in morals and religion which modern philosophers have exhibited as

demonstrable by the unassisted powers of the human mind, were either held doubtfully, or connected with some manifest absurdity, or utterly denied, by the wisest moral teachers among the Gentiles, who lived before the Christian revelation was given? They had the same works of God to behold, and the same course of providence to reason from; to neither of which were they inattentive. They had intellectual endowments, which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages; and their reason was rendered acute and discriminative by the discipline of mathematical and dialectic science. They had everything which the moderns have, except the Bible; and yet on points which have been generally settled, among the moral philosophers of our own age, as fundamental to natural religion, they have no just views, and no settled conviction. "The various apprehensions of wise men," says Cicero, "will justify the doubtings and demurs of sceptics; and it will then be sufficient to blame them when others agree, or any one has found out the truth. We say not, that nothing is true; but that some false things are annexed to all that is true, and that with so much likeness, that there is no certain note of judging what is true, or assenting to it. We deny not that something may be true; but we deny that it can be perceived so to be; for what have we certain concerning good and evil? Nor for this are we to be blamed, but nature, which has hidden the truth in the deep."

On this subject Dr. Samuel Clark, though so great an advocate of natural religion, concedes that, "of the philosophers, some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of a God; some by ascribing all things to chance, others to absolute fatality, equally subverted all true notions of religion, and made the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, needless and impossible. Some professed open immorality; others, by subtle distinction, patronised particular vices. The better sort of them, who were most celebrated, discoursed with the greatest reason, yet with much uncertainty and doubtfulness, concerning things of the highest importance,—the providence of God in governing the world; the immortality of the soul; and a future judgment."—*Richard Watson*.

(d) For notes and illustrations on this point, see pp. 152-154, 164.

(e) This point is illustrated on pp. 38, 39.

LIST OF SUBJECTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
AARON and his sons: Parents and children	45	iii. the heinousness of the rebellion in which they engaged	294
i. An incidental illustration of the exalted personal character and Divine mission of Moses	45	Answer of God to the appeals of men, the	196
ii. An intimation that the duties of the ministers of religion demand for their faithful discharge their entire consecration thereto	45	i. His answer to the appeal of His much-tried servant	196
iii. An example of wicked sons descending from a godly parent	45	ii. His answer to the appeal of His perverse people	197
iv. An example of the widest difference of character and destiny in children of the same parents	46	1. Recognises the sinful character of their appeal	197
Aaron's rod, an illustration of the true Christian ministry (See MINISTRY)	327	2. Demands preparation for the granting of their appeal	19
Aaron staying the plague	323	3. Promises the abundant bestowment of that which they had so sinfully desired	197
i. The willingness of Aaron to intercede	323	Answer of the Lord to the intercession of Moses, the	257
ii. The nature of Aaron's intercession	323	i. Pardon in answer to prayer	257
iii. The success of Aaron's intercession	323	ii. Punishment for aggravated sins	257
Aaron, the death of (See DEATH)	378	iii. Reward for eminent service	258
Aaron, the Divine plan for vindicating the high priesthood of, and its moral teaching (See VINDICATING)	325	iv. Judgment for cowardice	258
Access to God, man's, and God's word to man	124	Antidote, a deadly plague and a Divine (See PLAGUE)	394
Acknowledgment of an extraordinary favour, a noble (See FAVOUR)	545	Antidote, the unbelief of good men and its Divine (See UNBELIEF)	199
Affliction: its trials and consolations	503	Apology, Balak's anger and Balaam's (See BALAK)	473
Aggravated rebellion of the people, the, &c (See REBELLION)	316	Apostasy	434
Aims at perfection	274	i. Balaam apostatized through worldliness	435
Alarm, needless	421	ii. progressively	435
i. this alarm was great	421	iii. despite the greatest obstacles	435
ii. seemed to be justified	421	iv. His apostasy was not only sad but fatal	435
iii. led to the formation of an alliance against Israel	421	Appeals of men, the answer of God to the (See ANSWER)	196
iv. was needless	422	Application of an ancient incident, the modern	217
Altar, the covering of the, and its teachings (See COVERING)	314	i. The possession of the greatest gifts does not exempt men from the liability to meanness and sin	217
Altar, the offerings for dedicating the, and their moral suggestions (See OFFERINGS)	114	ii. The most eminent servants of God are not exempt from the reproaches of men	217
Amalek, Israel and	588	iii. Our greatest trials sometimes arise from most unlikely quarters	218
i. the Christian's example	588	iv. The Lord takes cognisance of the reproaches which are cast upon His servants	218
ii. the Christian's encouragement	588	v. The servants of the Lord do well in bearing patiently the reproaches which are cast upon them	218
iii. the Christian's prospect	588		
Ambition faithfully rebuked, wicked	293		
i. the greatness of the privileges conferred upon the Levites	293		
ii. the unrighteousness of the ambition cherished by them	294		

	PAGE		PAGE
Army of Israel, the first, an illustration of the Church militant	17	ii. The needless fear of the Moabites.....	429
i. The necessity of this army	17	iii. A word or two about Balaam	429
ii. The authority for organising it	17	Balaam and his prophecies, history of—	
iii. The composition of it	18	No. II	430
iv. The conquering spirit of it	18	i. The first false step Balaam took	431
Arrangements for carrying out the proposal of the Reubenites and Gadites	560	ii. The warning Balaam received	431
i. The arrangements of Moses for carrying out the agreement into which he had entered with the Reubenites and Gadites	560	iii. The refusal God gave to him	431
ii. The renewal of their promise	561	Balaam, history of, No. III.	443
iii. The inheritance of the half-tribe of Manasseh	561	Balaam, the counsel of	543
iv. The alteration of the names of places	561	Balaam, the sacrifice of Balak and (See SACRIFICE)	446
Aspects of honour (See HONOUR)	30	Balaam's ass	440
Aspects of human pilgrimage (See PILGRIMAGE)	164	i. The historic character of the miracle	440
Aspects of the Christian Ministry (See MINISTRY)	63	ii. The miracle itself	440
Atonement, the great day of; its moral suggestions (See DAY)	526	iii. The object of the miracle	440
Audacity in wickedness	297	Balaam's declaration of Israel's security (See SECURITY)	465
i. Defiance of the authority of the ruler appointed by God	297	Balaam's final parables : national revolutions (See REVOLUTIONS)	480
ii. Reviling the ruler appointed by God	297	Balaam's first parable : the blessedness of the people of God (See BLESSEDNESS)	448
iii. The solemn appeal to God which this conduct called forth from the ruler which He had appointed	298	Balaam's fourth parable : the Star and Sceptre of Israel (See STAR)	476
BALAAM and Balak, the meeting of (See MEETING)	441	Balaam's second parable : the constituents and the irreversibleness of the blessedness of Israel (See CONSTITUENTS)	458
Balaam and Balak, the parting of (See PARTING)	484	Balaam's third parable : the glory of the people of God (See GLORY)	469
Balaam and his ass; Divine checks on man's downward course (See CHECKS)	436	Balak's anger and Balaam's apology	473
Balaam and his ass; a lesson on obstructive providences	439	i. The anger of Balak	473
i. The lessons it taught Balaam	439	ii. The apology of Balaam	473
ii. Lessons to us	440	iii. The lessons to be deduced.....	474
Balaam, Balak's first application to: man and the supernatural.....	423	Battle between Amalek and Israel, the	585
i. Men seeking supernatural help	423	An illustration —	
ii. Man conscious of supernatural powers and of subjection to Divine authority in the use of them	424	i. of the means and methods by which God effects His purposes	585
iii. Man receiving a supernatural visitation	424	ii. of the work and warfare of the good man;	586
iv. Man dealing unfaithfully with a Divine communication	425	iii. of the work and warfare of the Church	587
v. Men dealing unfaithfully as messengers	425	Battle of Edrei, the, an illustration of the Christian conflict (See CONFLICT)	415
Balaam, Balak's second application to: the decrease of resistance to evil	432	Benefit of reverses, the (See REVERSES)	392
i. The repetition of the request of Balak to Balaam	432	Bereavement, the sorrows of	385
ii. The repetition of guilty delay by Balaam	432	i. A great and good man had been removed;	385
iii. The repetition of the Divine visit to Balaam	433	ii. while toiling for their welfare;	385
iv. The setting out of Balaam.....	433	iii. when apparently his services could hardly be spared.	385
Balaam and his prophecies, history of—		iv. In his removal many had parted from a true friend	386
No. I.	429	Blessedness of the people of God, the; Balaam's first parable	448
i. How the career and fortunes of the Israelites were made known in those days	429	i. is beyond the power of their enemies	449
		ii. consists in separation from the ungodly	449
		iii. consists in their vast numbers	449
		iv. consists of righteousness of character	450
		v. is desired by the ungodly	450
		Blessedness of the people of God, the	472
		In proof of this appeal to—	
		i. the testimony of men of this world;	473
		ii. the nature of the blessings of religion;	473

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. the experience of good men ;	473	ii. confession of man's sin to God	522
iv. the design of Divine dispensations	473	iii. the thanksgiving of man to God ;	522
Blessing of God, the, and the acknowledgment which it demands	466	iv. the consecration of man to God ;	522
i. the Source of effectual blessing	466	v. goodness from man to his fellow-man	523
ii. the time from which His interposition is remarked	466	Census and its teachings, the	16
iii. the acknowledgment it demands	466	i. God's personal interest in each	16
Blessing, the preacher's ; or the happy new year	106	ii. His faithfulness to His word	16
Blessing, the priestly	103	iii. His power to keep His word	17
i. The Divine direction	103	Certainty that sin will find us out, the	556
ii. The Divine benediction	103	i. In what manner we have sinned against the Lord	556
1. its significant form	103	ii. What assurance we have that our sin will find us out	556
2. its Divine fulness	104	Checks on man's downward course, Divine ; Balaam and his ass	436
iii. The Divine ratification	105	These checks are—	
Bud'ded rod, a type of Christ, the	331	i. sometimes in operation when unperceived by man ;	436
Budding of Aaron's rod, the	330	ii. numerous ;	436
Burdens of leadership, the (See LEADERSHIP)	191	iii. of various kinds ;	436
Burdens of life, the	68	iv. graduated in force ;	437
i. distributed to all men	68	v. limited in their effects	437
ii. distributed variously	69	Cherubim and the mercy-seat, the	125
iii. distributed Divinely	69	i. The relation betwixt law and grace	125
iv. patiently borne	69	ii. The relation betwixt the dispensation of grace to man, and the heavenly world	126
CALAMITY and an earnest prayer, a terrible	399	iii. The presence of God crowning the whole	126
i. A terrible calamity ; the just consequence of sin	400	Christ, the brazen serpent a type of Jesus (See SERPENT)	401
ii. An earnest prayer ; the result of sanctified affliction	400	Christ, the red heifer an analogue of the (See HEIFER)	354
iii. A mysterious appointment ; the result of Divine grace	400	Christ, the rock at Kadesh an emblem of (See ROCK)	370
Caleb : A call to inquiry and courage	249	Christ the star spoken of by Balaam	479
i. The kingdom of heaven challenges the inquiry of all men	249	i. The introduction to the prophecy	479
ii. Different reports will be brought by the inquirers	249	ii. The prophecy itself	479
Caleb : the man for the times	260	Christ's death a proof of His Divinity	308
i. His faithful following of his God	260	Church and its enemies, the	178
ii. His favoured portion	261	i. The Church has had enemies in every age	178
iii. His secret character	262	ii. The enemies of the Church are considered the enemies of God	178
Calf, the golden	590	iii. When God rises up to judgment the destruction of His enemies is easy, terrible, and complete	178
Calf, lessons from the worship of the	591	iv. The constant abode of God with His Church is an object of their supreme desire	179
Camp, the	29	Church militant, the first army of Israel an illustration of the (See ARMY)	17
i. The tents	29	Church of God, the golden candlestick, an emblem of the	128
ii. The order	29	i. Its preciousness and sacredness	128
iii. The position	30	ii. Its light	129
iv. The standard	30	iii. Its ministers and their function	129
Camp of Dan, the : aspects of Divine service (See SERVICE)	40	iv. Its function	129
Camp of Ephraim, the, and its suggestions	37	Church, the stability of the, and the security of believers	463
An illustration of—		Church work and workers—the dedication of the Levites	48
i. the Divine sovereignty ;	37	i. The offices of the Church are instituted by God	48
ii. the sacredness of family ties	38	ii. There are different ranks in these offices	48
iii. the Divine regard for the weak	38		
Canaan, the ancient, a type of heaven	239		
Canaanites, the expulsion of the (See EXPULSION)	596		
Candlestick, the golden, an emblem of the Church of God (See CHURCH)	128		
Celebration of the goodness of God in harvest, man's	522		
The goodness of God to man calls for—			
i. religious celebration from man ;	522		

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. The lowliest labour in the service of God is sacred and blessed	48	Communion with God in the mount, Moses's	592
iv. God appoints the persons to the various offices in His Church	49	i. The cause of the radiance on the face of Moses	592
v. Intrusion into sacred places and duties awakens the displeasure of the Lord	49	ii. The nature of the radiance	593
Cities for the residence of the Levites, the appointment of	607	iii. The conduct of Moses when he descended from the mount	593
Cities of refuge, the, an illustration of the salvation of Jesus Christ	611	Companionships, God's interest in man's (See INTEREST)	427
i. A great peril	611	Completeness of God's claims, the, and the dignity of His service (see CLAIMS)	59
ii. A gracious provision	612	Condescension of God, the, and the privileges of man	120
iii. An urgent obligation	612	i. The condescension of God	120
Cities of refuge, the, as legislative enactments and as religious institutions	614	1. The place in which He speaks	120
City of refuge, the, security of those who have fled to the	616	2. The medium through which He speaks	120
i. Our natural state is one of eminent danger	616	3. The purpose for which He speaks	121
ii. Nothing can deliver us from this danger but a zealous and timely flight	616	ii. The privileges of man	121
iii. There is a place of safety to which we can flee	616	1. We may speak unto God, and	121
iv. Having once entered this place we must abide there	617	2. receive communications from Him	121
Claims of God, the supreme	342	iii. The consequent duty of man	122
i. illustrated;	342	Conflict, an illustration of the Christian, the battle of Edrei	415
ii. enforced	343	i. The Christian has to contend against a formidable adversary;	415
Claims, the completeness of God's, and the dignity of His service	59	ii. is inspired with the most encouraging assurance	415
i. The completeness of His claims	60	iii. shall obtain a complete victory	416
ii. The dignity of His service	61	Conflict the condition of attainment, and suffering the consequence of sin	554
Claims upon man's service, God's	50	i. A truth to be confirmed	554
i. Are incontestable	50	ii. A warning to be applied	555
ii. There is a correspondence between His gifts and claims	51	iii. An application to be made	555
iii. His arrangements are ever marked by infinite wisdom and kindness	51	Consecrated, sin in the, the involuntary defilement of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	95
Cloud tarrying, the, ...	155	Consecrated, the sacrifice of the, the offering of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	98
i. A word of description	155	Consecration of the Levites, the, aspects of acceptable consecration to God	131
ii. A word of exhortation	155	i. A practical recognition of the necessity of moral purity;	131
iii. A word of caution	156	ii. and of atonement for sin	132
"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good"	171	iii. Must be unreserved	132
i. God's privileges and gifts are never intended to be exclusive	172	iv. Must be open	132
ii. The invitation, "Come with us"	173	v. Is followed by religious service	133
1. To the house of God	173	Consecration to God, acceptable, the vow of the Nazarite (See NAZARITE)	90
2. To the word of truth	173	Consequences of sin, the mercy of God in relation to the	33
3. To the living Saviour	173	An example of—	
4. To our Father's home	173	i. the continuance of the consequences of sin;	34
Common-place, the distinguished rising out of the (See DISTINGUISHED)	499	ii. the exercise of the Divine mercy in mitigating the consequences of sin	34
Common-place, the interesting hidden in the	497	Constituents and the irreversibility of the blessedness of Israel, the, Balaam's second parable	458
i. The common-place	497	i. The constituents of this blessedness	458
ii. The interesting in the common-place	497	1. Their covenant relation with God	458
iii. The importance of the common-place	498	2. His presence with them	458
Communications to man, man's need of moral directions, and God's	622	3. His doings for them	458
i. Man's need of moral directions	622	4. The revelation of His will to them	458
ii. Man's need of special directions when entering upon new enterprises and experiences	623	5. The power He bestows upon them	458
iii. God's communications to man	623		

	PAGE		PAGE
ii. The irreversibleness of this blessedness	559	iii. The mourning because of Aaron's death	380
1. It rests upon the unchangeableness of God	459	1. The worth of faithful ministers	380
2. It is beyond the power of their enemies	459	2. The appreciation of blessings when they are withdrawn	380
Contentment and obedience	42	Death of Miriam, the	363
i. Contentment with the Divine appointment	42	i. Death terminates the most protracted life	363
ii. Obedience to the Divine commands	43	ii. Death terminates the most eventful life	364
Co-operation of all in the service of God, the responsibility of each and the	58	iii. Death terminates the most distinguished life	364
i. God has a work for everyone to do, and He expects each one to do it	58	iv. Death, by reason of sin, sometimes terminates life earlier than it otherwise would have done	364
ii. He expects all to co-operate in His service	59	v. Death sometimes terminates life with suggestions of a life beyond	364
Counsel of Balaam, the	543	Death of the righteous, the	454
Covering of the Altar, the, and its teachings	314	i. A character that we must define	454
i. How futile it is to oppose God	314	ii. An event that we must illustrate	455
ii. God wishes one age to learn from another	315	iii. A desire that must be regulated	455
iii. Sacred things must be treated reverently	315	Death, the crown of life	482
iv. The sinner ever injures himself	315	Declaration of judgment because of the rebellion of Israel, the Divine	250
Cry of the subdued rebels, the	331	i. The Divine view of Israel's sin	250
i. Sinners are prone to pass from one extreme of evil to the opposite one	331	ii. The Divine judgment for Israel's sin	251
ii. Divine judgments may produce outward submission while the heart remains rebellious;	332	iii. The Divine regard for His covenant	251
iii. and while the mind entertains most erroneous moral opinions	332	Decrease of resistance, the : Balak's second application to Balaam (See BALAAM)	432
iv. The most stout-hearted rebels against God must submit to Him	332	Dedicating the altar, the offerings for (See OFFERINGS)	114
Curiosity, Divine secrets and human (See SECRETS)	66	Dedication of the Levites, the—Church work and workers (See CHURCH)	48
DAN, the camp of : aspects of Divine service (See SERVICE)	40	Defeat of the people that delight in war, the overthrow of the Amorites, or the (See OVERTHROW)	411
Day of Atonement, the great ; its moral suggestions	526	Defilement of the Nazarite; the involuntary, or sin in the consecrated (See NAZARITE)	95
i. It is our duty to set apart some time for serious reflection upon our sins	526	Departure from the house of bondage, the	568
ii. Reflection upon our sins should lead to humiliation because of them	526	i. succeeded the observance of a significant and sacred memorial ;	568
iii. Such humiliation should lead to the mortification of our carnal appetites	526	ii. was public and triumphant ;	568
iv. True penitence leads to gratitude and personal consecration to God	527	iii. took place when their oppressors were engaged in a mournful occupation ;	568
v. Our penitence, at best, is imperfect, and needs the merits of the Saviour's sacrifice	527	iv. had been brought about by the most awful displays of Divine judgments	569
vi. The sacrifices of the ceremonial law were unable to take away sin	527	Desert, in the : an illustration of the life of the good in this world	7
Death, a proof of His Divinity, Christ's	308	i. The natural trials of the desert	7
Death of Aaron, the	378	ii. The Divine Presence in the desert	8
i. The death of Aaron	378	iii. The Divine uses of the desert	8
1. As a consequence of sin	378	Determination of the route, the	569
2. By the appointment of God	378	i. The circumstances of the Israelites	570
3. His introduction to life and to congenial society	379	ii. The dealing of God towards them	570
ii. The appointment of Aaron's successor	379	Diary of travels and its teachings, Moses's	567
1. A kindness to Aaron	379	i. God's continued presence and interest in human life	567
2. A guarantee of the continuance of the Church	380	ii. God is the one true guide through life	567
		iii. A picture of human life	567
		iv. The greatest evils of life come from sin	567
		v. Trusting in God and following Him we are sure to possess the promised inheritance	568
		Die well, how to	466

	PAGE		PAGE
Discouragements of pious men, on the	397	Eshcol	235
i. The discouragements of the way	397	Every man by his own standard (See STANDARD)	24
ii. Considerations to remove the discouragements	398	Exclusion from religious ordinances, unwilling	143
Distinguished rising out of the common-place, the	499	i. The need of personal fitness for an acceptable observance of religious ordinances	143
i. Distinguished rebels;	459	ii. The unwilling exclusion of men from religious ordinances	144
ii. profaners of sacred ordinances;	499	iii. Enquiry concerning the reason of such exclusion	144
iii. leaders and rulers;	499	iv. Exemplary conduct of religious teachers in answering enquiries	144
iv. heroes	500	v. Divine arrangement for the compensation of those who are unwillingly excluded from religious ordinances	145
Distribution of the Promised Land, rules for the	502	Exclusion of the unclean, the	75
These illustrate—		i. a sanitary measure;	75
i. The sovereignty of God in bestowing His gifts	502	ii. a spiritual parable of sin	76
ii. The truth that in the arrangements of God provision is made for all His creatures	502	1. As a defiling thing	77
Distribution of the Promised Land, the arrangements for the	604	2. As a deadly thing	77
i. The co-working of the Divine and the human in the distribution	604	3. As a separating thing	77
ii. The wise arrangements for the performance of man's duties	605	Execution of judgment, the	311
Distribution of the spoils of war, the	543	i. God vindicates the character of His servants	311
In this distribution—		ii. Divine threatenings are certain of fulfilment	311
i. the claims of all classes were recognised;	544	iii. Everything in the universe may be employed by God as the instrument of His judgments	311
ii. the claims of each class were equitably dealt with;	544	iv. The wicked often involve the innocent in the consequences of their sins	311
iii. the claims of the Lord were practically acknowledged	544	v. Hardened rebels are prone to cry out when the judgment of God falls upon them	311
Dividing of the Red Sea, the	577	vi. The judgments of God occasion alarm amongst men	311
i. was miraculous;	577	Exemplary invitation, an (See INVITATION)	166
ii. the fact of the miracle is proved by the present existence of the nation which was that day born	578	Exploration of the Promised Land by the spies, the, an illustration of human inquiries into Divine realms	233
Doom of the double-hearted, the	539	i. The exploration was thorough;	233
Balaam wanted—		ii. led to the discovery of difficulties;	233
i. to serve two masters;	540	iii. led to the discovery of rich treasures	234
ii. to earn two kinds of wages;	540	Expulsion of the Canaanites, the	596
iii. to do two opposite things at the same time;	540	i. The imperative command	596
iv. two kinds of friendship;	540	ii. The solemn warning	597
v. to have two religions.	540	FAITHFULNESS of God, the	507
Dough, the offering of the first of the (See OFFERING)	274	i. to His threatenings;	507
Duties, allotted	57	ii. to His purposes;	507
Dwelling with His people, God	80	iii. to His promises	507
i. God is present with His people	80	Favour, a noble acknowledgment of an extraordinary	545
ii. God is present "in the midst" of His people	80	i. An extraordinary favour received	545
iii. God's presence in the midst of His people should exert a great and blessed influence upon them	80	ii. " " " " acknowledged	545
EARTH filled with the glory of the Lord, the (See GLORY)	259	iii. The acknowledgment accepted	546
Elim: the Christian Life (See LIFE)	582	Feast of Passover, the, a memorial and a type (See PASSOVER)	139
Enterprise and its disastrous termination, a presumptuous	267	Feast of Tabernacles, the; its meaning and lessons	528
Envy	206	i. A memorial of their emancipation from Egypt	529
i. is sadly common;	206	ii. A memorial of their life in the wilderness	529
ii. extremely foolish;	206		
iii. heinously sinful	207		
Ephraim, the camp of, and its suggestions (See CAMP)	37		

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. A thanksgiving for rest and settled abode in the Promised Land	529	ii. Man is now, as much as ever he has been, the object of God's compassion	256
iv. A thanksgiving for the completed harvest	530	iii. God's purpose with regard to man is now what it ever has been	257
Fidelity of one, the safety of many, the	339	God's word to man, man's access to God, and	124
First sacrament of the year, the (See SACRAMENT)	520	God, the faithfulness of (See FAITHFULNESS)	507
Forgiveness, fraud and (See FRAUD)	81	God, the supreme claims of (See CLAIMS)	342
Forward in the face of difficulties, going	575	God, the veracity of	462
In the Christian life—		God will bless His own ordinances	108
i. advancement is demanded, ...	575	Good, the resting and the rising of the (See RESTING)	162
ii. with a full recognition of the obstacles in the way of it;	575	Good in the path of duty, the sufferings of the (See SUFFERINGS)	193
iii. obstacles to progress, manfully encountered, may be surmounted;	576	Graves of lust, the	212
iv. and contribute to our advancement;	576	i. The tendency of lust to bring men to untimely graves	212
v. we are incited onward by many encouragements	576	ii. Our feelings as we contemplate these graves	212
Fraud and forgiveness	81	Guardianship of human life, the Divine	608
i. The sin of fraud;	81	i. in the institution of the cities of refuge as a provision that the life of the innocent should not be taken away;	608
1. assuming many forms;	81	ii. in the laws by which the trial of the man-slayer was to be conducted;	609
2. a wrong done to God	81	iii. in the punishment of the intentional man-slayer	609
ii. The conditions of its forgiveness	81	iv. in the punishment of the unintentional man-slayer	609
1. Consciousness of guilt	81		
2. Confession	82	HAND of the Lord, the glorious right	200
3. Restitution	82	Hand, the question concerning the Lord's (See QUESTION)	208
4. Sacrifice	82	Healing of the waters of Marah, the (See MARAH)	581
Fringes, the ordinance of the : gracious reminders of Divine commands	287	Heaven, the ancient Canaan a type of	239
i. The proneness of man to forget the commandments of the Lord	287	Heifer an analogue of the Christ, the red	354
ii. The arrangements which God has made to remind man of His commandments	287	i. In its characteristics	354
iii. The grounds upon which God requires recollection of and obedience to His commands	288	ii. In the treatment to which it was subjected	254
		iii. In the purpose for which it was designed	354
GLIMPSES of the better land	232	Heifer applied, the law of the red	352
Glory of the Lord, the earth filled with the	259	i. Liability for social evil	353
i. The import of the promise	259	ii. The ignominy of death	353
ii. The reasons we have for believing it will be realized	259	iii. Freedom from the consequences of sin is by application of a prepared remedy	353
iii. Our present duty in relation to it	260	iv. To be without fitness for standing before God acceptably is inexcusable and irretrievable	354
Glory of the people of God, the: Balaam's third parable	469	Heifer, the ordinance of the red; a parable of the pollution of sin, and the Divine method of cleansing therefrom	349
i. The preparation of the prophet to declare the Divine will	469	i. The defiling nature of sin	349
ii. His declaration of Israel's glory	470	ii. The necessity of cleansing from sin	350
1. Their beautiful appearance	470	iii. The provision for cleansing from sin	350
2. Their prosperous condition	470	iv. The application of this provision	351
3. Their exalted position	470	Heifer, the red	356
4. Their conquering power	471	i. Even the true Israelite is the subject of daily defilement	356
God dwelling with His people (See DWELLING)	80	ii. A purification has been provided	357
God of the spirits of all flesh, the	513	iii. The red heifer sets forth the daily purification for daily sin	357
God's blessing irreversible	462		
God's knowledge of His people (See KNOWLEDGE)	14		
God's pardoning grace in the past an encouragement to seek for the same in the present	256		
i. God is as able and willing to forgive now as ever He has been	256		

	PAGE		PAGE
Heiresses, the law of the marriage of (See MARRIAGE)	617	Itinerary of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land; the.....	565
High priest standing between the dead and the living, the	321	i. An incentive to gratitude to God	565
i. Aaron as the lover of the people	321	ii. An encouragement to obey and trust Him	563
ii. " " great propitiator	322	iii. A monitor against sin	566
iii. " " interposer	322	JEALOUSIES, hints on the law of	90
iv. " " saviour	322	Jehovah, the unchangeableness of (See UNCHANGEABLENESS)	460
v. " " divider	322	Joshua and Caleb: a noble effort to arrest a nation's rebellion	247
Hints on the law of jealousies	90	Joshua and Caleb—	
Holy singularity divinely honoured	262	i. were deeply grieved by reason of the rebellion;	247
i. The relation Caleb bore	262	ii. nobly endeavoured to arrest the rebellion;	247
ii. The disposition he possessed	262	iii. were in danger by reason of their effort to arrest the rebellion;	248
iii. The course he pursued	262	iv. rescued from danger by the interposition of God	248
iv. The recompense he obtained	262	Joshua and Caleb's encouraging declaration	249
Home, pilgrims nearing (See PILGRIMS).....	419	i. A supposition	249
Honour, aspects of	30	ii. An inference	250
i. Honour wisely conferred;	31	Journey of Life, Marah, or aspects of the	579
ii. in relation with duty and responsibility;	32	i. The privations of the journey	579
iii. as connected with parental influence;	32	ii. The disappointments of the journey	579
iv. as related to future greatness	32	iii. The sins of the journey	580
Honour to Moses, greater honour to Christ	221	iv. The all-sufficient Resource of the journey	580
IMPORTANCE of little things, the (See LITTLE)	71	Judgment, a memorial of (See MEMORIAL)	313
Inquest of the Lord into the sin of Miriam and Aaron, the	219	Judgment of Korah, the	312
i. The solemn convocation	219	Judgment, the execution of (See EXECUTION)	311
ii. The splendid vindication	219	Judgment, the preparation for (See PREPARATION)	305
iii. The unanswerable interrogation	220	KADESH . . . unto Abel-shittim, from	596
iv. The Divine anger	220	Kibroth-Hattaavah: striking illustrations of solemn truths	208
Inquiry and courage, Caleb—a call to (See CALEB)	240	i. The sovereignty of God	208
Institutions, the support of religious (See SUPPORT)	118	ii. The eagerness with which men toil in the pursuit of temporal and material good	208
Intercession of Moses for the doomed nation, the	253	iii. The gratification of the desires of men resulting in their ruin	208
i. The petition which he presented	253	iv. A sin, which in its first commission was mercifully passed over, if repeated may call forth the judgment of God.....	209
ii. The pleas by which he urged his petition	253	v. The sins and punishments of one generation should be remembered as a warning to future generations	209
1. The honour of the Divine name	253	Kibroth-Hattaavah: the graves of lust	209
2. The Divine character as revealed to him	253	i. There are perpetual resurrections of easily-besetting sins	210
3. The truth of the Divine word	254	ii. There comes a point in the history of the indulgence of besetting sins, when God ceases to strive with us and for us against them, and lets them have their way.....	210
4. The forgiveness already bestowed	254	iii. The end of that way is a grave	211
Intercession of Moses, the answer of the Lord to the (See ANSWER)	257	Knowledge of His people, God's	14
Interest in man's companionships, God's..	427	i. The great truth implied	14
An indication of—		ii. The practical bearings of this truth	14
i. the Divine solicitude for the well-being of man;	427		
ii. the importance of our companionships;	427		
iii. our responsibility to God for them;	428		
iv. the danger of dallying with temptation	428		
Interesting hidden in the commonplace, the (See COMMONPLACE)	497		
Invitation, an exemplary	166		
i. The journey	166		
ii. The invitation	167		
iii. The inducements	167		
Irreversible, God's blessing	462		
Israel and Amalek (See AMALEK)	588		

	PAGE		PAGE
Korah and his company, the base rebellion of (See REBELLION)	291	4. accountability ; and	496
Korah, the judgment of	312	5. is an object of deep interest to God	496
LAND, glimpses of the better	232	Life, the burdens of (See BURDENS)	68
Land, the arrangements for the distribution of the Promised (See DISTRIBUTION)	604	Life, the Christian : Elim	582
Land by the spies, the exploration of the Promised (See EXPLORATION)	233	i. In the journey of human life the Lord affords us many kind accommodations	582
Land, the Promised	600	ii. Refreshing mercies after seasons of distress are peculiarly sweet.....	582
i. Its boundaries were determined by God	600	iii. The blessings with which we are favoured should be enjoyed.....	582
ii. Its extent was small	600	iv. Amidst all our enjoyments we should not lose sight of our pilgrimage state	582
iii. Its position was secure	601	Life, the Divine guardianship of human (See GUARDIANSHIP)	608
iv. Its soil was fertile	601	Little things, the importance	71
v. The Israelites failed to take possession of the whole of it assigned them by God	601	i. The perfection of great things is impossible apart from due attention to little things	71
Law of the red heifer applied, the (See HEIFER)	352	ii. The most important issues sometimes depend upon slight circumstances	71
Law, the moral	588	iii. Life is composed almost entirely of little things	72
i. based its precepts upon the existence and authority of God ;	589	iv. Character is formed almost entirely of littles	72
ii. was a strict and stern, but far from an unjust or cruel system ;	589	Lust, the graves of (See KIBROTH-HATAAVAH)	209
iii. was suited to the age and people to whom it was promulgated ;	589	" " (See GRAVES)	212
iv. certain circumstances which tended to guard, to sanction, to enforce, recommend, and to illustrate it.	589	MAINTENANCE of the Christian ministry, the Divine provision for the priests and Levites, an illustration of the	339
Leadership, the burdens of	190	i. The maintenance of the Christian ministry devolves upon the Christian Church	340
i. The position of leader of men is a trying one	191	ii. Ministers of every grade have a right to support from the Church.....	340
ii. The true leader of men must often be conscious of his insufficiency	191	iii. The ministry should be supported liberally	340
iii. The ablest leaders of men sometimes fail under the burdens of their position	191	iv. All the members of the Church should contribute to the maintenance of the ministry	340
Lessons from an ancient war song	413	v. All should contribute proportionally	341
i. The triumphs of warriors	413	Maintenance of the ministry, the We rest this obligation on—	84
ii. The vanity of idols	413	i. The ground of honesty	85
iii. The discomfiture of conquerors	413	ii. The ground of interest	85
iv. The insecurity of earthly possessions	414	Man and the supernatural : Balak's first application to Baalam (See BAALAM)	423
Levites and their service, an illustration of the Christian ministry (See MINISTRY)	21	Man, in relation to order, home, and God (See ORDER)	28
Levites, the appointment of cities for the residence of the	607	Man, the spirit and the Sovereign of	302
Levites, the consecration of the, or aspects of acceptable consecration to God (See CONSECRATION)	131	i. The grand distinction of human nature	302
Levites, the numbering of the : command and obedience (See NUMBERING)	53	ii. The supreme Sovereign of human nature	303
Life, death the crown of	482	iii. The inspiring hope of human nature	303
Life of the good in this world, an illustration of the : in the desert (See DESERT)	7	Man, the supreme portion of (See PORTION)	344
Life, the apparent insignificance and real importance of human	495	Manifestation of the Divine Presence, the	148
i. Its apparent insignificance	495	i. Its sphere	148
ii. Its real importance	495	ii. Its aspects	148
Every man has his own—		iii. Its permanence	149
1. individuality of being and circumstances ;	495	Manna, an illustration of the Divine provision for the spiritual needs of man	187
2. possibilities ;	495		
3. influence ;	495		

	PAGE		PAGE
i. Both are of Divine origin	188	Memorial of judgment, a.....	313
ii. " " unmerited gifts	188	i. Things appropriated to religious uses	
iii. " " wholesome	188	should be reverently regarded	313
iv. " " pleasant	188	ii. The designs and doings of wicked	
v. " " abundant	189	men are overruled by God for the	
vi. " " free	189	accomplishment of His purposes	313
vii. " " require personal appropriation	189	iii. He who sins against God injures	
Marah ; aspects of the journey of life (See		himself	313
JOURNEY)	579	iv. The judgments of God should be	
Marah, the healing of the waters of	581	remembered and heeded	313
i. An illustration of four bitter things	581	Memories, partial	187
ii. " " " the Gospel	582	Mercy of God in relation to the conse-	
March, on the	174	quences of sin, the (See CONSE-	
i. The immense number on the march	174	QUENCES)	33
ii. The bitter opposers of the march	174	Mercy-seat the cherubim and the (See	
iii. The victorious Leader of the march	174	CHERUBIM)	125
iv. The abiding presence of God on the		Midian the vengeance of Jehovah on	
march	175	(See VENGEANCE)	536
March, the	177	Ministry, Aaron's rod an illustration of	
Marriage	619	the true Christian	327
1. is a Divine institution;	619	i. The characteristics of this ministry	327
2. the obligations involved in it are		ii. The origin of this ministry	328
binding and sacred	619	iii. The influence of this ministry	328
i. Persons should not be coerced in		Ministry, aspects of the Christian	63
marriage	619	i. An arduous service	63
ii. There are important considerations		ii. A holy warfare	63
which should regulate the choice in		iii. A sacred charge	64
marriage	619	iv. Demands the exercise of the high-	
1. As to property	620	est faculties	64
2. As to consanguinity	620	Ministry, the Levites and their service,	
3. As to health	620	an illustration of the Christian min-	
4. As to suitability	620	istry	21
5. As to character	620	i. The true Christian minister should	
Marriage of Heiresses, the law for the	617	manifest some fitness for the work	
i. The case stated	617	before he is designated thereto	21
ii. The case adjudicated	617	ii. He is called of God to his work	21
iii. The adjudication acted upon	618	iii. His work demands his entire de-	
Marshalling of the people, the	25	votion thereto.....	22
i. Order	25	iv. A faithful discharge of his duties is	
ii. Variety	26	essential to the well-being of society..	22
iii. Unity	26	v. Personal holiness is essential to a	
iv. Security	27	faithful discharge of his duties	22
Master and His human servants, the		Ministry, the maintenance of the (See	
Divine.....	135	MAINTENANCE)	84
i. The necessity of fitness for the		Miriam and Aaron, the punishment of	
Divine service	135	(See PUNISHMENT)	222
ii. The variety of employment in the		Miriam and Aaron, the sin of (See SIN)..	215
Divine service	136	Miriam smitten with leprosy: transfigura-	
iii. The care of the Great Master for		tion through transgression	226
His servants	136	Miriam, the death of (See DEATH)	363
Measure of the Divine demands upon		Miriam, the prayer of Moses for (See	
man, the	52	PRAYER)	227
Meeting of Balaam and Balak	441	Model ordination service, a (See ORDINA-	
i. The king receives the prophet with		TION)	513
great honour	441	Modern application of an ancient incident,	
ii. The king expresses his surprise at		the (See APPLICATION)	217
the delay of the prophet in coming		Moral directions, man's need of, and God's	
to him	441	communications to man	622
iii. The prophet endeavours to mode-		Morning and evening sacrifices, the	517
rate the expectations of the king	442	Suggest our daily need of—	
iv. The king endeavours by sacrificial		i. consecration to God;	517
offerings to induce Jehovah to favour		ii. atonement with God;	517
his design	442	iii. prayer to God	517
v. The king and prophet ascend a		Moses's diary of travels, and its teachings	
height and obtain a view of the camp		(See DIARY)	567
of Israel	442	Moses for the doomed nation, the inter-	
		cession of (See INTERCESSION)	253

	PAGE		PAGE
Moses, the sin of	369	Nothing but names (See NAMES)	594
Murmuring, base	265	Number and service, proportion between (See PROPORTION)	73
i. Murmuring without any cause;	265	Numbered people the	10
ii. against the Best Being;	266	Numbering of the Levites, the	53
iii. of long continuance;	266	i. The interest of God in childhood	53
iv. known to God;	266	ii. The generosity of God's dealings with man	54
v. punished by God	266	iii. The obedience of God's servant	54
NAMES, nothing but	594	Numbering of the Levites, the	503
i. The tendency of sin to deprive life of any worthy significance	594	Numbering of the people, the	3
ii. The tendency of sin to retard progress	594	i. The authority for this numbering	3
iii. The importance of remembering the losses which sin causes us	595	ii. The place of " "	4
iv. The mutability of earthly things	595	iii. The time of " "	4
v. The unsettled character of human life upon earth	595	iv. The manner of " "	5
Nazarite, the	102	v. The design of " "	5
i. No juice of grape or produce of the vine may touch his lips	102	Numbering the people, the Divine command and directions for	495
ii. No razor approaches his hair	102	i. The place in which the census was taken	495
iii. He must avoid all contact with death	102	ii. The time at " " "	495
Nazarite, the involuntary defilement of the, or sin in the consecrated	95	iii. The design with " " "	495
The involuntary sins of good men—			
i. defile and dishonour them;	95	Obedience, contentment and (See CONTENTMENT)	42
ii. require atonement from them;	96	Obligation of religious vows, the solemn (See Vows)	531
iii. involve loss to them;	96	Offering and its modern lessons, an ancient	111
iv. will be followed by new efforts by them	96	i. They who hold the most honourable positions should be most liberal in contributions to worthy objects	111
Nazarite, the offering of the, or the sacrifice of the consecrated	98	ii. They who are not entirely engaged in religious ministries should seek to help those who are so engaged	111
i. The lives of the best of men in the present state are imperfect	98	iii. God is graciously pleased to accept of man's offerings	112
ii. Our services are acceptable to God only as we give ourselves to Him	98	iv. Gifts for religious purposes should be used in accordance with the will of God	112
iii. All that is good both in ourselves and in our services is attributable to God	99	v. In the Divine arrangements help is granted unto men according to their respective needs	113
iv. The good man will seek for opportunities of expressing his devotion to God	99	Offering of the first of the dough, the	274
v. The good man through the sacrifices by which he approaches God has communion with Him	99	i. An expression of gratitude	275
Nazarite, the vow of the, or acceptable consecration to God	90	ii. An acknowledgment of dependence	275
Such consecration is characterised by—		iii. A consecration of common things	275
i. voluntariness;	92	iv. A provision for the maintenance of the ministry and of the worship of God	275
ii. completeness;	92	Offering of the Nazarite, the, or the sacrifice of the consecrated (See NAZARITE)	98
iii. subordination of sensual enjoyments;	92	Offerings for dedicating the altar, the, and their moral suggestions	114
iv. separation from moral evil	93	i. The significance of these offerings	115
Needless alarm (See ALARM)	421	1. They express the sense of equality of obligation;	115
Neglect of religious ordinances, the wilful	146	2. the Divine calling of the nation to be holy;	115
i. is common;	146	3. the great truths taught by the different sacrifices	115
ii. is sinful;	147	ii. The significance of the record of these offerings	116
iii. will be punished	147	1. The pleasure of God in the gifts of His people	116
Neglect, ruinous	358	2. The permanence of good works	116
i. Man is polluted by sin	358	Offerings of the feast of Passover, the	521
ii. God has provided a cleansing element for man's sin	358		
iii. To be efficacious this cleansing element must be applied by man	358		
iv. Man may neglect to avail himself of this cleansing element	359		
v. By such neglect man excludes himself from the highest privileges	359		

	PAGE		PAGE
Offerings of the Sabbath and of the new moons, the; or seasons of special religious observance (See SABBATH)	518	iv. the flesh which was eaten	143
Omission and ignorance, sins of (See SINS)	277	Passover, the feast of, a memorial and a type	139
Order, home, and God, man in relation to	28	i. A memorial of a great deliverance	139
i. The importance of order	28	ii. A type of a greater deliverance	140
ii. The sacredness of family life	28	Pentecost, the feast of; or man's celebration of the goodness of God in harvest (See CELEBRATION)	522
iii. The right way to feel and act towards God	28	Perfection, aims at	274
Ordinance of the fringes, the: gracious reminders of Divine commands (See FRINGES)	287	Peril and a gracious precaution, a grave	336
Ordinance of the passover (See PASSOVER)	142	Persistence in the pursuit of a sinful purpose	456
Ordinance of the red heifer, the; a parable of the pollution of sin and the Divine method of cleansing therefrom (See HEIFER)	349	i. Persistence in the pursuit of an evil purpose	456
Ordinances, God will bless His own	108	ii. Error as to man's power to curse his fellowman	456
Ordinances, the wilful neglect of religious (See WILFUL)	146	iii. Error as to the nature of the Divine Being	456
Ordinances, unwilling exclusion from religious (See EXCLUSION)	143	iv. The communication of the message of God to an ungodly man	456
Ordination service, a model	513	v. The attention with which Divine communications should be received	456
i. The person ordained should be chosen of God for his work	513	Phinehas, the circumstances which moved the zeal of	492
ii. The ordination is to the most important work;	513	Phinehas, the flagrant wickedness of Zimri and the fervent zeal of	489
iii. should be conducted by tried men;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, a long separation (See SEPARATION)	574
iv. should be accompanied with the imposition of hands;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, going forward in the face of difficulties (See FORWARD)	575
v. should include a charge to the ordained;	514	Pi-hahiroth; or, standing still in the midst of danger (See STANDING)	571
vi. should be conducted in the presence of the people;	514	Pilgrimage, aspects of human	164
vii. should confer honour upon the ordained	514	i. Human pilgrimage should be prosecuted according to Divine directions	164
viii. A person so chosen should seek special direction from God, and seeking, shall obtain it	514	ii. In human pilgrimage the arrangements and provisions for Divine worship should be matters of primary concern;	165
Overthrow of the Amorites, the; or the defeat of the people that delight in war	411	iii. the most reverent care should be exercised in relation to sacred things;	165
i. A reasonable request preferred	411	iv. the weak and the wandering should be tenderly cared for	165
ii. A hostile refusal returned	411	Pilgrimage, a song of the	407
iii. An unprovoked assault ending in unmitigated defeat	412	i. The needs of human pilgrimage	407
iv. A great victory obtained by those who had in vain asked for a small favour	412	ii. The Divine provision for these needs	408
v. A territory which had been obtained by conquest lost by defeat	412	iii. The continuousness of human pilgrimage	408
PARENTS and children: Aaron and his sons (See AARON)	45	Pilgrimage of life, uneventful stages in the (See UNEVENTFUL)	404
Parting of Balaam and Balak, the	484	Pilgrimage of the good, the	152
They parted—		i. the infallible Guide in	152
i. having utterly failed in their designs;	484	ii. the perfect Protector in	153
ii. with characters considerably modified by their association with each other;	484	iii. the true spirit in	153
iii. but not for ever	485	Pilgrims nearing home	419
Passover, ordinance of the	142	i. are cheered by delightful prospects;	419
illustrates the method of salvation through Christ with regard to—		ii. need preparation for the state into which they are about to enter;	419
i. the victim which was chosen;	142	iii. are still subjected to trials and difficulties	419
ii. the oblation which was made;	142	Pillar of cloud and fire, the	150
iii. the blood which was sprinkled;	143	i. The advantages of its possession	150
		ii. The perpetuity of its enjoyment	151
		Pillar, the cloudy	152
		Plague, Aaron staying the (See AARON)	323

	PAGE		PAGE
Plague and a Divine antidote, a deadly.....	394	ii. The duty of the church to invite	
i. The sin of the people	394	suitable persons to join with it	170
ii. The punishment of their sin	395	iii. The argument we can use is that	
iii. The penitence of the people	395	association with the Church will do	
iv. The Divine antidote for the plague	395	those who enter into it good	171
Plague and a surprising remedy, an awful	319	iv. Let all who belong to the Church	
i. An awful spectacle exhibited	320	take care to make this argument true	171
ii. The surprising remedy found	320	Proposal of the Reubenites and Gadites,	
iii. A practical application demanded	321	the amended	552
Plague stayed, the.....	323	i. made ;	552
i. The evil	323	ii. accepted ;	553
ii. The punishment	324	iii. confirmed	553
iii. The remedy	324	Propriety in worship (See WORSHIP)	271
Portion of man, the supreme	344	Provision for the priests and Levites, the	
i. is all-sufficient;	345	Divine, an illustration of the main-	
ii. is joy-inspiring;	345	tenance of the Christian ministry	
iii. is inalienable	346	(See MAINTENANCE)	339
Prayer of Moses for Miriam, the.....	227	Provision for the spiritual needs of man,	
i. The prayer	227	the manna, an illustration of the	
ii. The answer	227	Divine (See MANNA)	187
Precaution, a grave peril and a gracious	336	Punishment of Miriam and Aaron, the	222
Preparation for judgment, the	305	i. The Divine judgment because of their	
i. The separation of the people from		sin	222
the rebels	305	ii. This judgment leading to their	
ii. The final statement concerning the		humiliation	223
decision of the question which the		iii. Aaron's acknowledgment of the	
rebels had raised	305	eminence of Moses	223
iii. The final opportunity afforded to		iv. The magnanimity of Moses	224
the rebels of turning from their evil		v. The power of his intercession	224
course	306	vi. The justice and mercy of God in	
iv. The persistent audacity of the rebels	306	His treatment of Miriam	224
Presence of God, rebellion maintained in		vii. The sin of one person checking the	
the very (See REBELLION)	300	progress of an entire nation.....	224
Presence, the manifestation of the Divine		Punishment of presumptuous sins, the	
(See MANIFESTATION)	148	nature and	279
Presumption	283	Punishment of the tempters, the	493
i. What it includes	283	i. Sin, whether in the people of God or	
ii. Its chief causes	283	in His enemies, cannot go unpunished	493
iii. Its terrible results	283	ii. Whatever tends to lead into sin	
Presumptuous enterprise and its disas-		should be viewed by the godly as an	
trous termination, a	267	enemy to be contended against	493
Presumptuous sins, the nature and pun-		iii. Under certain circumstances war is	
ishment of	279	justifiable	493
Priesthood, the sin of usurping the office		Punishment, the sins of holy men and	
of the	296	their (See SINS)	372
Priestly blessing, the (See BLESSING)	106	Purity, where God dwells there must be	78
Privations of man and the resources of		i. God Himself is pure, and cannot asso-	
God, the	366	ciate with the impure	79
i. There are privations in human life.....	366	ii. God cannot do any good to the im-	
ii. These sometimes develop the evil		pure	79
tendencies of human nature.....	366	Pursuit of a sinful purpose, persistence	
iii. These privations and the evils which		in the (See PERSISTENCE)	456
are occasioned by them, impel the		QUESTION concerning the Lord's hand,	
good to seek help of God	367	the	203
iv. These privations are sometimes re-		Apply this question to—	
moved in answer to the prayer of the		i. the subject of creative manifesta-	
good	367	tions ;	203
Privileges of man, the condescension of		ii. Divine providences for His Church ;	203
God and the (See CONDESCENSION)	120	iii. the salvation of the most guilty	
Promised land, the (See LAND)	600	sinners ;	203
Proportion between number and service	73	iv. the fulfilment of Divine prophecies	
i. The wisdom of God	73	and promises	203
ii. The reasonableness of His require-		RANK and service	11
ments	74	i. Co-operation in Divine service	11
iii. The obedience of His servants	74	ii. Society's need of leaders	12
Proposal, a generous	169		
i. The characteristics of a true church	169		

	PAGE		PAGE
iii. The grand characteristic of true leaders	12	Removal of a devoted servant of God, the	384
Rebellion, a noble effort to arrest a nation's: Joshua and Caleb (See JOSHUA)	247	Rephidim; or, water from the rock in Horeb (See WATER)	583
Rebellion maintained in the very presence of God, the	300	Rephidim; or, the Battle between Amalek and Israel (See BATTLE)	585
i. The test proposed to the rebels	300	Report of the spies, the rebellion of Israel upon receiving the (See REBELLION)	244
ii. The test accepted by the rebels	300	Reports of the spies, the, and their lessons for us	236
iii. The interposition of the Lord God	300	i. Examine the reports of the spies	236
iv. The intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation	301	1. The report of the majority	236
Rebellion of Israel, the Divine declaration of judgment because of the (See DECLARATION)	250	2. The report of the minority	237
Rebellion of Israel upon receiving the report of the spies, the	244	ii. Deduce the lessons arising from these reports	238
i. Grievous mental distress	244	Request and an ungenerous refusal, a reasonable	376
ii. Unreasonable and unjust murmuring	244	i. A reasonable request	376
iii. Shocking blasphemy	245	1. Reasonable in itself	376
iv. Foolish and wicked rebellion	245	2. Urged by forcible reasons	376
v. The noble conduct of Moses and Aaron in these circumstances	245	ii. An ungenerous refusal	376
Rebellion of Korah and his company	291	This probably arose from—	
i. The rebellion	291	1. fear of injury from Israel;	376
1. Its leaders	291	2. envy at the growing power of Israel;	377
2. Its nature	291	3. remembrance of an ancient injury	377
3. Its cause	291	Request of the daughters of Zelophehad, the: the rights of women	509
ii. The noble conduct of Moses in the rebellion	292	i. The request of the daughters of Zelophehad	509
1. His resource in trouble	292	1. was presented in an orderly manner;	509
2. His confidence in God	292	2. was reasonable;	509
3. His rebuke of the rebels	292	3. indicated respect for their father;	509
Rebellion of the people, the aggravated, the effectual intercession of the good, and the justice and mercy of God	316	4. implied faith in the promise of God, ...	509
i. The aggravated rebellion of the people	316	5. and an earnest desire for a portion in the Promised Land	509
ii. The speedy interposition of Jehovah	316	ii. The Divine answer to their request	509
iii. The effectual intercession of Moses and Aaron	316	Request of the Reubenites and Gadites, the selfish	548
iv. The exercise of the justice and mercy of God	317	This request exhibits—	
Rebels, the cry of the subdued (See CRY)	331	i. mean selfishness;	548
Rebuke of Moses to the Reubenites and Gadites, the faithful	551	ii. predominant worldliness;	549
i. The injustice of their proposal	551	iii. disregard of the interests and rights of their brethren;	549
ii. Its tendency to dishearten their brethren	551	iv. disparagement of their Divine calling;	549
iii. Its wickedness	551	v. want of faith in the Divine promise	549
iv. Its tendency to call down the wrath of God	551	Resources of God, the privations of man and the (See PRIVATIONS)	366
v. The solemn example by which Moses enforced his rebuke	552	Responsibility of each and the co-operation of all in the service of God, the (See CO-OPERATION)	58
Refuge	607	Resting and the rising of the good, the	162
Refuge, the cities of, an illustration of the salvation of Jesus Christ (See CITIES)	611	i. The people of God are sometimes called to remain, as it were, stationary for a time in this life;	162
Refuge, the cities of, as legislative enactments and as religious institutions	614	ii. yet there is no permanent settlement in this world;	162
Refuge, the security of those who have fled to the city of (See CITY)	616	iii. both their restings and risings are ordered by God;	163
Relation of the Gospel ministry to the seasons and services of the Christian life, the silver trumpets, or the (See TRUMPETS)	158	iv. whether resting or marching they are protected by Him	163
		Return of the victorious army, the	541
		i. The reception of the returning warriors	541
		ii. The remonstrance with them	541
		iii. The retribution to the Midianitish women	542

	PAGE		PAGE
iv. The purification of the warriors, captives, and spoils	42	i. Divine directions for insuring order	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the amended proposal of the (See PROPOSAL)	552	ii. Divine distribution of duty	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the arrangements for carrying out the proposal of the (See ARRANGEMENT)	560	iii. Divine recognition of the sacredness of things associated with religious worship	56
Reubenites and Gadites, the faithful rebuke of Moses to the (See REBUKE)	551	Sacrifice of Balak and Balaam, the	446
Reubenites and Gadites, the selfish request of the (See REQUEST)	548	i. objectively was as perfect as they could make it ;	446
Reverses, the benefit of	392	ii. subjectively was very imperfect and even sinful	446
i. Reverses are sometimes encountered in the path of duty ;	392	Sacrifices, the morning and evening (See MORNING)	517
ii. arouse the true-hearted to more vigorous effort ;	392	Sea, the dividing of the Red (See DIVIDING)	577
iii. and thus contribute to their triumph	393	Secrets and human curiosity, Divine	66
Revolutions, national: Balaam's final parables	480	i. Certain things in the universe are hidden from man	66
National revolutions—		ii. Men are prone to curiously pry into hidden things....	66
i. exhibit the instability of earthly greatness and temporal power ;	480	iii. Irreverent prying into hidden things may lead to terrible results	67
ii. manifest the principles of Divine retribution ;	480	Security, Balaam's declaration of Israel's	465
iii. are ordered by God	481	i. The important truth affirmed	465
Rock at Kadesh, the, an emblem of Christ	370	ii. The triumphant exclamation uttered	465
i. in its characteristics ;	370	Self-retributive nature of sin, the	567
ii. in the water which flowed from it....	370	Confirmed by—	
Ruin and the remedy, the	333	i. the germinal character of human actions ;	557
i. The devastations of death	333	ii. the exercise of memory ;	557
ii. The cause of these widespread desolations	333	iii. the operations of conscience ;	557
iii. The remedy for them	334	iv. the power of habit	557
Ruinous neglect (See NEGLECT)	358	Sending forth of the spies, the	230
Rules for the distribution of the Promised Land (See DISTRIBUTION)	502	i. The origin of this expedition	230
		ii. The agents in this expedition	230
		iii. The aims of this expedition	231
		iv. The spirit appropriate to this expedition	231
SABBATH and of the new moons, the offerings of the, or seasons of special religious observance	518	Senses over the soul, the supremacy of the (See SUPREMACY)	183
i. The tendency of material and temporal things to engross our attention and regard	519	Sentence of God upon the sinful people, the	263
ii. The supreme importance of spiritual things	519	i. was conspicuously just ;	263
iii. Man's need of spiritual engagements and exercises	519	ii. was utterly irreversible ;	264
Sabbath-breaker and his doom, the	286	iii. caused great sorrow....	264
i. The sin	286	Separation, a long : Pi-hahiroth....	574
ii. The arrest	286	i. The triumphant faith of Moses	574
iii. The consultation	286	ii. The suicidal hardihood of the wicked	574
iv. The sentence	286	iii. The working of God in history	574
v. The execution	286	iv. Separations which take place amongst men in the present....	574
Sabbath-breaker, the sin and punishment of the	283	v. The great separation which will take place amongst men in the future	575
i. The sin committed	283	Separation from the wicked, the duty of	307
ii. The punishment inflicted	284	By friendly association with them—	
Sacrament of the year, the first	520	i. we countenance them in their sins ;	307
i. Approach to God through sacrifice the privilege of His people	520	ii. we are in peril of being drawn into their sins ;	308
ii. In some seasons the mind is aroused to a special contemplation of the great atonement	521	iii. we are in peril of the judgment which will fall upon them for their sins	308
iii. In all our religious engagements we must have respect to the presence and glory of God	521	Serpent a type of Jesus Christ, the brazen	401
Sacred things and duties	55	i. The malady	401
		ii. The remedy	401
		iii. The appropriation	401
		iv. The result	402
		Serpent, the brazen ; or, the terrors of existence faced in faith ...	403

	PAGE		PAGE
Servant of God summoned home, the (See SUMMONED)	511	iii. The lessons	487
Servant, the good and faithful	383	Sin of man and the salvation of God, the	318
i. The common destiny of man	383	i. There is an awful controversy be- tween a holy God and a rebellious world	318
ii. The rigorousness of moral law	383	ii. There is at hand a prescribed and Divinely approved remedy	319
iii. The termination of life in the midst of labour	383	Sin of Miriam and Aaron, the	215
iv. God's agency in man's dissolution	383	i. Their sin	215
v. The promptitude with which Provi- dence supplies the places of the dead	383	ii. The Divine cognizance of their sin	215
vi. The trial of human friendships	384	iii. The commendable conduct of Moses under the provocation of their sin	216
vii. The painful recognition by society of its greatest losses	384	Sin of Miriam and Aaron, the inquest of the Lord into the (See INQUEST)	219
Servants, helpful thoughts for the Lord's	203	Sin of Moses, the	369
i. The obedience of Moses, an example for them	203	i. Its nature	369
ii. The bestowment of the Spirit upon the elders, encouragement for them	203	ii. Its lessons	370
iii. The error of Joshua, admonition to them	204	Sin, the self-retributive nature of (See SELF-RETRIBUTIVE)	557
iv. The magnanimity of Moses, an ex- ample for them	204	Sin will come to light	559
Servants, the Divine Master and His human. (See MASTER)	135	It finds men out— i. in the woe which comes on some sin- ners here ;	559
Service	138	ii. in the judgments which God some- times sends :	559
i. The service God demands of all Levites	138	iii. in the fears, clamours, and remorse of conscience ;	560
ii. God demands the service in our prime ;	138	iv. and in the next world, if the sinner die unpardoned	560
iii. and when it can be most easily rendered	138	Sin will find us out, the certainty that (See CERTAINTY)	556
Service, aspects of Divine	40	Sins dangerous and sins deadly	281
i. Persons of every kind and degree of faculty may find employment in the Divine service	40	i. There are degrees in sin	281
ii. Even the lowest position in this ser- vice should be faithfully filled	40	ii. While all sins are dangerous, some are deadly	282
iii. Even the lowest position in this service is one of privilege and honour	40	Sins of holy men and their punishment, the	372
iv. Seemingly obscure positions in this service are, in many instances, of great importance	41	i. The liability of the good to sin	372
Service, God's claims upon man's (See CLAIMS)	50	ii. The danger of their failing in those excellences which most distinguish them	373
Service, Rank and (See RANK)	11	iii. The impartiality of the Divine go- vernment	373
Shittim, the sin of Israel at, and the judgment of God (See SIN)	487	iv. The great guilt of those who occa- sion sin in the good	373
Sinai, in the desert of : Lessons from the worship of the calf	591	v. The means which God uses to deter men from sin	373
Sinai, in the desert of : Moses's commu- nion with God in the mount (See COMMUNION)	592	Sins of omission and ignorance	277
Sinai, in the desert of : the golden calf	590	i. Omissions of duty are accounted sin- ful by God ;	277
Sinai, in the desert of : the moral law (See LAW)	588	ii. even when arising from ignorance ...	277
Sin and punishment of the Sabbath- breaker, the (See SABBATH-BREAKER)	283	iii. A whole nation may be guilty of such sins	277
Sin in the child of God	375	iv. Such sins may be forgiven	278
i. is very painful to God ;	375	Sins, the nature and punishment of pre- sumptuous	279
ii. most inexcusable ;	375	Song at the well head, a	410
iii. most disastrous in its results ;	375	i. A promise of supply	410
iv. very certain of punishment	375	ii. The song	410
Sin of Israel at Shittim and the judg- ment of God, the	487	iii. The song was a prayer	410
i. The sin	487	iv. Then they went to work	411
ii. The judgment	487	Song of the Pilgrimage, a (See PIL- GRIMAGE)	407
		Sorrows of bereavement, the (See BE- REAVEMENT)	335
		Spies, the	241

	PAGE		PAGE
i. The ungodly world are not to be excused for that instead of investigating religion for themselves, they usually trust to the representation of others	241	Supremacy of the senses over the soul, the characterized by—	183
ii. Bring forth the bad spies	242	i. unsatisfied cravings;.....	184
iii. Now we have some good spies	242	ii. humiliating effeminacy;	184
iv. The necessity of bringing out a uniformly good testimony concerning religion	242	iii. daring unbelief;	185
Spies, the reports of the, and the lessons these reports teach us (See REPORTS).....	236	iv. deplorable degradation;	185
Spies, the sending forth of the (See SENDING)	230	v. decided contempt of Divine blessings	185
Spirit and the Sovereign of man, the (See MAN)	302	TABERAH and its teachings	181
Spoils of the War, the distribution of the (See DISTRIBUTION)	543	i. Man sinning against the goodness of God	181
Stability of the Church, the, and the security of believers	463	ii. God recognising the sin of man	181
Standard, every man by his own.....	24	iii. Suffering men seeking the intercession of the good	182
i. The one Israel	24	iv. The intercession of the good resulting in blessing to men	182
ii. The various tribes	24	v. The employment of a transient judgment as a permanent warning	182
iii. The special directions to the different tribes	24	Tabernacle in the midst of the host, the.....	36
iv. The spiritual lessons the subject presents to us.....	24	i. The reasons for placing the Tabernacle thus	36
Standing still in the midst of danger	571	ii. The uses of so doing	36
i. The deplorable effect of slavery	571	Tabernacles, the feast of; its meaning and lessons (See FEAST)	528
ii. The distinguished heroism of Moses	572	Tempers, the punishment of the (See PUNISHMENT)	493
iii. The remarkable exhortation of Moses—	572	Terrors of existence faced in faith, the brazen serpent, or the	403
Applicable to—		Testimony of the irreligious to the value of religion, the	453
1. Our personal salvation	572	i. The exclamation of Balaam.....	453
2. The exigencies of life	572	ii. The instruction to the people of God	454
Star and the Sceptre of Israel, the	476	Testimony of the ungodly to the preciousness and power of piety, the undesigned	398
i. The glory of the Messiah as a King..	476	i. By showing that the want of it is weakness	398
ii. The extent of His conquests	476	ii. By seeking help from him whom they knew to be a man of God	399
iii. The prosperity of His subjects	477	iii. By confessing that Moses had nothing to fear from God, while they had everything to fear	399
Star spoken of by Balaam, Christ the (See CHRIST)	479	iv. By acknowledging that Moses could get from God what they could not.....	399
Succoth and Etham; the determination of the route (See DETERMINATION).....	569	Thoughts for the Lord's servants, helpful (See SERVANTS)	203
Suffering the consequence of sin, conflict the condition of attainment, and (See CONFLICT)	554	Transfiguration through transgression; Miriam smitten with leprosy	226
Sufferings of the good in the path of duty, the	193	Trial of the suspected wife, the	86
i. As a fact	194	i. Confidence in conjugal relations is of great importance	87
ii. As a problem	194	ii. Adultery is a sin of the greatest enormity	88
iii. Hints toward the solution of the problem	194	iii. The punishment of sin is closely related to the sin itself.....	88
Summoned home, the servant of God	511	iv. God will bring to light the secret sins of men	88
i. Sin is an evil of the greatest gravity	511	v. God will vindicate the innocent who have suffered from suspicion or slander	89
ii. God is the absolute Sovereign of human life	511	Trumpets, the feast of : how to begin a new year (See YEAR)	523
iii. Inspiring visions are often granted to the good as they approach the close of their earthly career.....	511	Trumpets, the silver	161
iv. Through the gates of death the good enter upon scenes of social life	511	i. They call the people to God's sanctuary	161
Support of religious institutions, the	118	ii. They give command to march	161
I. Some of the responsibilities of the wealthy	118	iii. They sound for war	162
II. An illustration of the voluntary principle	119		

	PAGE		PAGE
iv. In the grand feast they cheer the worshippers	162	iii. A people delivered from a present evil world	452
Trumpets, the silver, or the relation of the Gospel ministry to the seasons and services of the Christian life... ..	158	iv. A people sustained by Jehovah	452
They were used—		v. A pilgrim band	453
i. for the calling of assemblies;	158	vi. A people bought with a price	453
ii. for summoning the people to advance;	159	vii. A people loved with an infinite love	453
iii. for encouraging them in battle;	159	viii. A people preparing to pass over to the goodly land	453
iv. for suitably observing seasons of special interest	159	Vow of the Nazarite, the (See NAZARITE)	90
UNBELIEF of good men, the, and its Divine antidote	199	Vows of women, the—their ratification and abrogation	533
i. The proneness of good men to unbelief	199	i. Religious vows are sometimes rashly made	533
ii. The Divine antidote for unbelief in the good	199	ii. Religious vows made by females under the authority of a father, or a husband, and disallowed by him, cease to be binding	533
Unchangeableness of Jehovah, the	460	iii. Vows made by females under such authority and not disallowed, and vows made by females not under such authority, are binding	533
i. Some men think that God will lie	460	iv. If a husband improperly annul a vow made by his wife, the guilt of its non-fulfilment will rest upon him	533
ii. Others fear He may lie	461	Vows, the solemn obligation of religious	531
iii. But He neither will nor can lie	461	i. The case supposed	531
Unclean, the exclusion of the (See EXCLUSION)	75	ii. The danger implied	531
Uneventful stages in the pilgrimage of life	404	iii. The command given	532
i. Many scenes in the pilgrimage of life are quiet and uneventful	404	WAR SONG, lessons from an ancient (See LESSONS)	413
ii. In such scenes we should follow the Divine directions	405	Water from the rock in Horeb	583
iii. Many of the records of the pilgrimage of life are transient	405	i. The place of the miracle	584
iv. Present progress is promoted by the recollection of God's past doings	405	ii. The temptation connected with the miracle	584
Usurping the office of the priesthood, the sin of	296	iii. The nature of the miracle	584
VALUE of religion, the testimony of the irreligious to the (See TESTIMONY)... ..	453	Wicked ambition faithfully rebuked (See AMBITION)	293
Vengeance of Jehovah on Midian, the	536	Wicked, the duty of separation from the (See SEPARATION)	307
i. The punishment of sin is certain	536	Wickedness, audacity in (See AUDACITY)	297
ii. God can work by many or by few in the execution of His purposes	537	Wife, the trial of the suspected (See TRIAL)	86
iii. God honours the holy zeal of His servants by employing them as leaders in the execution of His purposes	537	Women, the vows of—their ratification and abrogation (See Vows)	533
iv. God enriches His people with the spoils of their enemies	537	Worship, propriety in	271
Veracity of God, the	462	i. The gracious intimation	271
Victorious army, the return of the (See RETURN)	541	ii. The directions concerning the worship of God	272
Vindicating the high-priesthood of Aaron, the Divine plan for, and its moral teaching	325	iii. The pleasure of God in the worship of His people	272
i. True ministers are elected by God	325	YEAR, how to begin a new	523
ii. It is of great importance that men should know that their ministers are called by God	325	i. With special attention to religious duties and privileges	524
iii. The vitality of sin is of dreadful tenacity	326	ii. With humble confession of sin and prayer for pardon	524
iv. God is engaged in eradicating sin from human hearts	326	iii. With grateful acknowledgment of Divine mercies	524
Vision from the rocks, the	452	iv. With complete consecration of ourselves to God	524
i. The ruggedness of the land of our present sojourn	452	Year, the preacher's blessing; or, the happy new	106
ii. The glorious land	452	ZEAL, ...	491

	PAGE		PAGE
i. The source of godly zeal ...	491	Zeal of Phinehas, the circumstances which	
ii. The seat of godly zeal ...	492	moved the ...	492
iii. The object of godly zeal ...	492	Zealophehad, the request of the daughters	
iv. True zeal is blended with know-		of (See ZEALOPHEHAD) ...	509
ledge	492	Zimri, the flagrant wickedness of, and	
v. Zeal is self-forgetful ...	492	the fervent zeal of Phinehas ...	489

INDEX TO ILLUSTRATIONS.

- AARON**, the death of, 381
Affection, filial, 535
Alarming appearances, boldly confronting, 423
Alarms of the good, the groundless, 422
 " " wicked, 423
Alienation between friends, the bitterness of, 377
Altar, the good man's tent and, 166
Ambition defined, 216, 293
 " the benefits of rightly directed, 295
 " the curse of ungoverned, 295, 602
 " what it is, 293
Angel of Jehovah, the, 438, 439
 " the destroying, 141
Anger and hatred distinguished, 299
 " righteous and sinful, distinguished, 299
 " the suppression of, 374
Appropriate the benefits of Christ's death, how to, 142
Ass, the speech of Balaam's, 438
Associations, the peril of evil, 306, 308, 351, 428, 488
Assumptions of Romanism, blasphemous, 457
Atonement, what it consists in, 279

BACKSLIDER, a spiritual loser, the, 97
Balaam, prophetic powers possessed by, 426
 " specially favoured by God, 427
 " the anger of God against, 438
 " the counsel of, 488
 " the egotism of, 471
 " the petulance of, 439
 " the veracity and truthfulness of, 475
 " tries to change God's will, 433, 447
Balaam's ass, the speech of, 438
Beauty of a true Christian, the, 329
 " of religion, the, 329
Beulah, in the land of, 420
Bible a clear light, the, 130
 " how to study the, 234
Blessedness, true, 451

Blessing of God in the heart, the, 105
Blood of Christ, conviction of sin necessary to appreciation of the, 359
Blood of Christ, our need of the, 356
 " " the cleansing efficacy of the, 355
Brotherhood of all men, the, 338
Burden, what the term includes, 70
Burdens, profitable, 71
 " should be blessings, 70

CANAANITES, the reason for the expulsion of the, 598
Care of men, God's constant, 301
Catholicity of Christianity, the, 205
Character, the continuousness of the construction of, 406
Children of godly parents, wicked, 47
Christ essential to man's spiritual life, 371
 " every eye shall see, 478
 " present with His Church, 149
 " the everlasting fulness of, 356
 " the holiness of, 355
 " the Saviour of all men, 613
 " the self-existence of, 371
 " the Star and Sceptre of Israel, 477
 " the vicarious sufferings and death of, 355
 " to be supremely trusted, the ever-living, 386
Christ's sacrifice, the perfection of, 141
 " how to appropriate the benefit of, 142
Christian needs the help of God, the, 269
 " will confess Christ, the true, 134
Christians have to fight real battles, 234
 " lights in the world, 130
 " should be separate from sin, 94
Church, Christ present with His, 149
 " Christ's garden, the, 471
 " marked by order, the, 471
 " of God, the comprehensiveness of the, 451

Church secured by God, the, 443
 „ strengthened through her enemies, 472
 „ the perpetuity of the, 472
 Claim upon all we possess, God has a just, 343
 Cleanliness recommended, 78
 Cleanse from sin, man's inability to, 352
 Cleansing needed even by good men, constant spiritual, 338
 Common things consecrated by religion, 276
 Companions, their influence on our character, 428
 Complaint, man's proneness to, 183
 „ contrasted with thanksgiving, 266
 Compulsion of sinful habits and circumstances, the, 299
 Confession of sin, a condition of forgiveness, 83
 Condescension of God, the, 122
 Conquerors, the fall of great, 415
 Conscience, the fallibility of, 623
 „ the misery of a guilty, 439
 „ the terrors of a guilty, 558
 Consecration claimed by our Lord, the extent of the, 101
 Consecration to God, entire, 93, 134, 344
 „ „ „ voluntary, 93
 Contentment, 43, 44
 „ a medicine for all miseries, 70
 „ in our position, 166, 503
 Contribute to the cause of God, every one should, 341
 Contributions to the cause of God should be in proportion to our means, 342
 Co-operation, Divine and human, 605
 Courage, true and false, 232
 Covenant, the new, 459
 Covetousness, a deceitful and dangerous sin, 426
 „ the sin of, 602
 Cowardice, moral, 238
 Creator, the faithful, 301
 Crowd, the unreasonableness of a, 246
 Curiosity should be controlled, 68

DEATH, a going home, 382
 „ glimpses of glory in, 512
 „ hope in, 365
 „ in itself the same to the righteous as to the wicked, 420
 „ neglect of conversation on, 97
 „ of faithful ministers a loss to society, 382
 „ of the good is ordered by God, 381
 „ sudden, 97
 „ the gate of life, 365
 „ the great leveller, 365
 „ the importance of preparedness for, 365, 366, 382, 561, 562
 „ the lot of all men, 365, 382, 613
 „ the penalty of sin, 613
 „ without God, terrible, 312
 Degradation of manhood, 368
 Degrees of guilt and punishment, 265
 Degrees of guilt in the same crime, 280
 Democracy a self-cancelling business, 292
 Departure of God from man, 221
 Dependence upon God, man's, 154, 276, 530
 Desires an injury, the granting of our selfish, 198

Destroying angel, the, 141
 Die the death of the righteous, how to, 452
 „ this year thou shalt, 526
 Difficulties, believing effort will overcome the greatest, 394
 „ in Christian life and work, 234
 „ removed by God, great, 577
 „ should not dishearten the Christian, 394
 Difficulty, the discipline of, 393
 Discouraging sin, the duty of, 308
 Disobedience hardens the heart, wilful, 299
 Duty are best, first thoughts of, 434

EARTHLY things, transient, 481
 Effort and its reward, Christian, 6
 Efforts to obtain salvation, earnest, 306
 Enemies of the godly, invisible, 176
 Enjoyment in quiet scenes and duties, 406
 Envy, the commonness of, 207
 „ the folly of, 208
 „ the proneness of man to, 205
 Evil-speaking, 216
 Examination, self-, 527

FAITH appropriates Gospel blessings, 190
 „ is possible to all, the exercise of, 396
 „ the achievements of, 239
 „ the eye of the soul, 396
 „ the inspiration and strength of, 239
 „ the wisdom of walking by, 239
 Faithful unto death, 249, 339
 Faithfulness in little things, 41
 „ of God, 460, 508
 „ valued by God, 259
 Fame, how it is gained, 498
 „ how to achieve enduring, 501
 „ uncertainty of earthly, 562
 Family, sacredness of the, 39
 Fasting, the efficacy of, 527, 528
 Feeblest power should be used, the, 41
 Felicity is transient, earthly, 583
 Festivals, the times of the Jewish, 525
 Fidelity in fulfilling promises, 554
 „ of each benefits all, the, 338
 Forgetfulness of mercies, trials leading to, 368
 Forgiving spirit, the nobility of a, 317, 396
 Fraud of every kind forbidden by God, 83
 Freedom of the gifts of God, 190, 369, 371
 Future a blessing, ignorance of the, 67

GENTLENESS of God, 39
 Gift to man, God's supreme, 343
 Giving religiously, 545
 „ the benefit of, 546
 Glory of God, the, in what it consists, 255
 „ unconscious, 593
 God all-mighty to fulfil His promises, 200
 „ approves the good, hates the evil, 327
 „ cannot change, 448
 „ dishonoured by man's unbelief, 252
 „ gives Himself to His people, 459
 „ is a jealous God, 438
 „ the guide of His people, 154, 164
 God's control of nations, 481
 „ interest in infant life, 55
 „ omniscience, 15
 „ withdrawal from man, 221

Good men to sin, liability of, 374
 Goodness of God contemned by man's unbelief, the, 252
 Gospel blessings, freeness of, 190, 369, 371
 " " refreshment of, 371
 " " sufficiency of, 371
 " water an emblem of the, 371
 Grapes, remarkable clusters of, 235
 Gratitude for small mercies, great, 546
 " to God, 276
 Greatness cannot be manufactured, true, 13
 " moral excellence essential to true, 500, 501
 " independent of class or station, true, 501
 " the obligations of, 113
 Gregarious, men are, 231
 Guidance implored, Divine, 154

HABITS, the miserable bondage of evil, 559
 Hands, the laying-on of, 515
 Hatred of sin, God's, 552
 Hearing the Gospel without serious attention, 327
 " the Word with attention, 457
 " " " " self-application, 123
 Heaven, holiness necessary to enter, 359, 360
 " rehearsing for, 420
 Help, mutual dependence and, 554
 " of God essential to the Christian, 269
 History is unwritten, the best part of human, 498
 Holiness in little things, 289
 " of God the chief reason for the holiness of man, the, 288
 Home without enquiry as to religious privileges, choosing a, 166
 Honour, duty the way to, 83
 " true, 442
 Honours, undeserved, 33
 Humility before God, 276
 " in religious teachers, becoming, 145

IDLENESS leading to sin, 488
 Idolatry, the heinousness of, 597
 Ignorance of the revealed will of God, a sin, 279
 Immortality a consolation to the bereaved, the revelation of a blessed, 387
 " brought to light in the Gospel, 387
 " of good deeds, the, 118
 Imperfect, the best of men in this world are, 100, 374
 Imperfections should not dishearten the Christian, 394
 Indignation against evil, 491
 Individuality of man, the, 496
 Influence, every one exerts a never-ending, 485
 " unremitting personal, 485
 Ingratitude, base, 368
 " the bitterness of, 247
 Insignificant people, 496
 Instruments, God can work by weak, 538
 " God usually employs suitable, 539
 Instruments of the Divine judgments, the, 252, 312
 Intercession, the power of, 183, 225
 Intercessor, Moses an, 587

Invitation to come to Christ, 190
 Irreversibility of human conduct, the, 439

JEALOUSY defined, 89
 " personified, 89
 Journey of life, the, 155
 Justice of God, the, 220, 306
 " " in the punishment of sin, the, 318
 " the temple of, 544

KEPT by God, Christians are, 105
 Kindness, brotherly, 377

LABOURERS wanted in the cause of God, 113
 Leaders of men, the trials of the, 192, 193
 Liberty in the service of God, 75
 Life a condition of successful Christian work, intense spiritual, 329
 Life a reason for earnestness in Christian work, the brevity of, 525
 " of souls, goodness the only true, 329
 " the sacredness of human, 609, 610
 Little things, faithfulness in, 73
 " " make human characters, 73
 " " seeds of great ones, 73
 " " the importance of, 73
 Lives, how to ennoble commonplace, 499
 Living for the invisible, 482
 Looking to Christ, healing and life through, 396
 " " " life by, 402
 Love of God purifying, the, 352
 " " the fountain of blessing, the, 189
 " " unmerited, the, 190
 Loving-kindness of God, the preventing, 583
 Lusts of the Israelites, the carnal, 186

MAGICIANS to curse enemies, employment of, 425
 Man a great boon to the world, a great, 386
 Man does not die until his work on earth is done, the good, 386
 " God manifest in, 497
 " God's interest in, 497
 " something good in the worst, 497
 Manna a miraculous product, the, 189
 Marah, the bitter disappointment at, 581
 Marriage, a model, 535
 " and celibacy contrasted, 618
 " different conditions of, 618
 " of Christians, a principle to be observed in the, 621
 Marriages, early, 621
 " prohibited, 621
 " thoughtless, 621
 " unprincipled, 620
 " unsuitable, 621
 Materialism degrades manhood, 368
 Meekness defined, 217
 Memory an inspiration in conflict, 416, 417
 Memory a source of misery, 558
 " imperishable, 558
 Memory, life enriched and inspired by, 407
 " nothing lost to, 558
 Mercies, grateful acknowledgment of God's, 525
 " the multitude of God's, 525

- Mercy cried for too late, 312
 " God's delight in, 225
 " of God infinite, the, 258, 369
 " of God, salvation through the, 35
 " of God, various manifestations of the, 318
 Messiah, the conquests of the, 478
 Minister is called of God, the true Christian, 23, 326
 " learning is requisite for the Christian, 130
 " prayer indispensable to the, 146, 515
 Ministers a loss to society, the death of faithful, 382
 " cannot do everything, 515
 " experienced, 65
 " like trumpets, 160
 " reverent, 65
 " should be adequately supported, 86, 341
 " should be holy, 23
 " should be honoured, 62
 " should feed their flocks, 86
 Ministers, the greatness of the work of, 62, 515
 Ministry a Divine institution, the Christian, 326
 " 50, 326 " vocation, the Christian, 23,
 " great gifts not indispensable to usefulness in the, 341
 " is life-giving, the true, 329
 " is perennial, 23
 Minorities, honour to small and genuine, 248
 Money, a ruinous passion for saving, 442
 " cannot buy, the things which, 443
 Monotony a source of enjoyment, 406
 Murder, the criminality of, 609, 610
 Murmurers, habitual, 267
 Murmuring embitters life's mercies, 247
 Mystery, omnipresence of, 67

 NATIONAL revolutions controlled by God, 481
 Needs of man, the abundant provision of God for the, 409
 " " the continuousness of the, 409
 " " the immense number of the, 409
 Neglect of religious worship, 147
 Number of the redeemed, the countless, 175, 451

 OBEDIENCE, blessedness of, 44, 55
 " complete, 55
 " filial, 534
 Obligation and liberty, 75
 " and power, 74
 Offering our best to God, 101, 117
 " praise to God, 118
 Offerings accepted by God, humble, 137, 546, 547
 Omissions of duty, sinful, 278
 Omniscience of God, 15
 Onwardness of life, 168
 "Order is Heaven's first law," 27

 PALESTINE, the natural fertility of, 603
 " the secure boundaries of, 603
 " the small extent of, 603
 Parental authority, 33
 " encouragement of pious children, 47
 " example, 47
 Parental influence, 33
 " prayers, 47
 " responsibility, 534
 " teaching, 47
 " training, 46
 Parents, honour due to, 33
 Passage of the Red Sea, the, 578
 Passive virtues, the heroism of the, 573
 Past favours an encouragement to seek Him, God's, 255
 Penitence and pardon cannot abolish all the consequences of sin, 258
 " begotten of pain is short-lived, 186, 269
 " leads to joy, 527
 Perfection of Christ's character, the, 351, 355
 Persistence in sin, the great guilt of, 457
 Pilgrimage, continuousness of human, 409
 Pillar of cloud and fire adapted to the needs of Israel, 149
 " " a protection, 164
 Places, sacred, 57
 Please ourselves without displeasing God, striving to, 434
 Pleasures of sense, the perils of the, 489
 Portion, God the only abiding and unchanging, 347
 " of the Christian, the all-sufficiency of the, 346
 " of the Christian, the joyfulness of, 347
 Power proportioned to human needs, Divine, 114
 " should be used, the feeblest, 41
 Prayer and effort combined, 587
 " and praise, daily, 518
 " efficacy of, 183, 225, 317
 " elements of, 123
 " indispensable to ministers, 146, 515
 " what is, 123
 Prayers, the punishment of unsubmitive, 199
 Preacher, a lifeless, 328
 " solemnity of the work of the, 321
 Preaching, not easy work, 137
 Preciousness of small services, 42
 Preparation for religious work, necessary, 136
 " of heart for public worship, 145
 Presence of Christ the secret of His people's success, the, 150
 " of God in human life, 123
 " of God, the blessedness of realizing the, 176
 Preserved by the Lord, Christians, 105
 Presumption, a growing sin, 301
 " the peril of, 269
 Presumptuous sins, an example of, 280
 " " harden the heart, 281
 Priestcraft, a great evil, 457
 Privileges estimated in hell, religious, 295
 Progress a great law of the universe, 577
 " is from one difficulty to another, Christian, 577
 " should be continuous, Christian, 160
 Promises are reliable, God's, 508
 " should be pleaded in prayer, God's, 255
 Prospects of the godly, the glorious, 169
 Providential care, God's, 301
 Punishment corresponding to sin, 225
 Punishment, God has many methods of, 312

- Punishment growing out of the sin, 89, 265, 481
 „ of sin, certain, 89, 258, 265, 312, 318, 374
 „ of sin, impartial, 225, 374
 Purposes of God, eternal and unchangeable, the, 508
- REASON** and faith, 200
 „ the insufficiency of human, 624
 Rebellion against God, the futility of, 332, 333
 „ at Rephidim, the, 584
 Receiving and giving, universal, 117
 Reconciliation of brethren at the Cross, 378
 Redemption, an illustration of, 51
 Reflection, a time for, 525
 Refuge for the manslayer, a, 613
 Religious efforts should begin at home, 169
 Reputation, posthumous, 232
 Resistance reveals the strength of opposition, 416
 Responsibilities, great honours involve great, 338
 Rest in heaven, 420
 „ true, 530
 „ uses of, 163
 Restitution a condition of forgiveness, 84
 Restraints, the need of Divine, 443
 Revelation, unacknowledged obligations to Divine, 623
 „ man's need of Divine, 624
 Reverence, filial, 534
 Reverence for sacred places and things, 314
 Revival of psalmody a token of revival of religion, 409
 Revolutions, noiseless, 499
 Rod of Moses an incentive to valour, the, 587
- SABBATH**, importance of preserving the religious spirit of the, 285
 „ man's need of the, 285
 „ obligation, the true basis of, 285
 „ observance, the effect of, 520
 Sacred places, 57
 Sacrifice in the path of duty, self-, 544
 „ salvation through, 133, 279
 „ the perfection of Christ's, 141
 „ the true value of, 448
 „ without mercy, worthless, 448
 Saddling of asses, 434
 Safety in battle to be ascribed to God, 546
 Salvation attainable only by faith, 402
 Satisfaction cannot be found in worldly things, 9
 Saviour of all men, Christ the, 613
 Security of the Christian, 154, 451, 485
 Self-accusation follows sin, 613
 Selfishness of men, 475
 „ the failure and folly of, 550
 „ the injustice of, 550
 „ the prevalence of, 550
 „ warning against, 550
 Separate from the world, Christians should be, 94, 451
 Service, the dignity of, 13
 Services recognized by God, the smallest, 137
 „ value of slight, 42
 Serving God with our worst, 605
 Sin brought to light, secret, 90, 553
 Sin cannot enter heaven, 78, 359, 360
 „ discouraged by Christianity, 288
 „ forgiven yet punished, 258
 „ immortality of, 35
 „ in a child of God is punished, 97, 512
 „ infectious, 187, 351, 428
 „ injures the sinner, 314
 „ is against God, all, 83
 „ leads to death, 281, 314, 475
 „ must be slain, 599
 „ of one an injury to many, the, 552
 „ the folly of, 475
 „ universal, 613
 Sins of ignorance, 279
 „ „ omission, 278
 „ „ presumption, 281
 Slander best answered by silence, 218, 219
 „ the best men are exposed to, 218
 Socialism of grace, the, 168
 Soldier, exhortation to the Christian, 417
 „ is assured of victory, the Christian, 416
 „ the Christian a, 416
 Soul of man, everlasting individuality of the, 304
 „ „ unspeakable importance of the, 304
 Sovereignty of God, the basis of the, 33
 „ „ the manifestation of the, 502
 „ „ the righteousness of the, 503
 Spirit, a prayerful, 518
 „ of man, evidence of the existence of the, 304
 Standing still, progress in, 573
 Star, Christ the bright and morning, 477
 Stillness beneath the hand of God, 573
 Stimulants contrasted with the Holy Spirit, 94
 Strangers and pilgrims, 163
 Suffering, character tested by, 195
 „ knowledge through, 71
 „ progress through, 195
 „ promotes future joy, present, 195
 „ vicarious, 196
 Suicide, the criminality of, 610
 Sundays, the happiest, 286
- TEARS** should be controlled, 246
 „ „ „ sacred, 246
 Temperance, the obligation, 187
 Temptation, likely instruments used in, 494
 „ not to be parleyed with, 428, 429
 „ should be avoided, occasions of, 543
 „ the all-triumphant answer to, 493
 „ veiled with the mask of virtue, 494
 Tempting to sin, the extreme guilt of, 265, 433
 Tent and altar, the good man's, 166
 Thirst, the intense misery of, 581
 Trials, how they should be borne, 369
- UNBELIEF** dishonours God, 252
 „ of good men, 200
 Unchangeableness of God, 460
 Unsatisfactoriness of worldly pleasures and possessions, 9, 209
 Use of the gifts of God, obligatory, 51, 52

- VARIETY**, the beauty of, 27
Various ways of serving God, 137
 „ manifestations of God to the soul, 150
Veracity with truthlessness, 475
Victories of faith, the, 20
Victory of the Christian, through Christ, 176
 „ „ „ right is certain, 161
Vitality of sin, the terrible, 327
Vocation, the Christian ministry & Divine, 23, 50, 62
Voice of God in nature, the, 10
Voluntaryism, efficiency of, 119
Vows, forgotten, 532
 „ should be fulfilled, baptismal, 532
 „ should be fully performed, 532
 „ the voluntariness of religious, 532

WAITING for the home-call, 420
 „ judicious, 6
Walking by faith, not by sight, 239
War, sometimes justifiable, 19, 538
 „ the cruelty, 542
 „ the injustice of, 19, 414
 „ the ravages of, 414
Warnings precede Divine judgments, solemn, 307
Watchfulness, the importance of, 375
Water an emblem of the Gospel, 371
Way, the evil of having our own, 231
Wealth and spiritual poverty, material, 209
 „ does not satisfy men, 209
 „ should be properly used, 117
Wells a valuable property in the East, 377

Wicked should be excluded from the Church the, 78
Wisdom of God seen in the variety of His gifts, the, 74
Women, the disabilities of, 510
 „ the power of, 510
Word aright, hearing the, 123
Work, diversity of Christian, 49, 57, 137
 „ sacredness of, 49, 57
 „ under Jesus Christ, Christian's, 338
Workers in the Church to look to their own salvation, 218
World is too much with us, the, 520
Worldly things, transitory, 595
Worship a necessity of the human soul, 148
 „ can be offered in any place, acceptable, 146
 „ culture and beauty in, 273
 „ ennobles the worshipper, 274
 „ imperfection and sin in public, 338
 „ morning and evening, 518
 „ ordinary and extraordinary seasons of, 520
 „ praise the supreme act of, 274
 „ propriety in, 273
Wrath of God, the, 220, 221

ZEAL, defined, 491
Zeal for the glory of God, constant, 254
 „ in the service of Christ, 491
 „ like fire, 491
 „ works wonders, 491

INDEX TO AUTHORS QUOTED.

- ADAMS, Thomas**, 129, 130
Addison, Joseph, 78, 295
Ainsworth, 437
Alford, Dean, 180, 188, 349, 362, 515, 536, 563, 569, 577
Allon, Dr. Henry, 20, 148, 273, 274
Anon., 338, 422, 460, 462, 554
Arnold, Dr. Thomas, 285
Arvine, R., 198, 318
Attersoil, W., 37, 65, 70, 78, 86, 88, 89, 206, 216, 265, 279, 312, 341, 368, 378, 427, 451, 452, 481, 488, 489, 518, 602
Augustine, 299

BABINGTON, Bishop, 65, 68, 116, 184, 217, 373, 436, 475, 489, 618
Baillie, Joanna, 18
Barnes, Dr. Albert, 333
Barrett, W. G., 430, 432, 444
Barrow, Dr. Isaac, 613
Bates, Dr., 583
Baxter, Richard, 321, 533, 598, 599
Bayne, Paul, 396
Beaumont, Sir J., 113
Beecher, H. W., 15, 19, 28, 33, 39, 57, 70, 72, 73, 123, 130, 150, 176, 190, 195, 196, 200, 209, 255, 258, 265, 269, 299, 307, 308, 327, 329, 338, 352, 365, 382, 394, 409, 416, 422, 448, 451, 475, 482, 491, 497, 534, 543, 547, 550, 558, 605, 621
Bevan, W. L., 621
"Biblical Museum," 57, 90, 152, 187, 240, 274, 339, 385, 543, 554
Bonar, Dr. H., 213, 246, 453, 541, 567
Boston, T., 370
Brooks, Thomas, 218, 247, 347
Brown, J. B., 174, 187, 211
Browning, Mrs. E. B., 73, 120, 183, 184
Brougham, Lord, 304
Bubier, G. B., 100, 346
Buddicom, 570
Burder, G., 263
Burke, E., 293
Burkitt, W., 64
Burns, Dr. Jabez, 24, 203, 233, 250, 283, 324, 455, 463, 466
Burritt, Elihu, 485
Burton, R., 293
Busfield, W., 528
Bushnell, Dr. H., 14, 42, 47, 55, 75, 94, 114, 134, 142, 221, 495
Byron, Lord, 557

CARLYLE, Thomas, 23, 50, 232, 238, 249, 273, 293, 413, 552
Carpenter, Dr. H. S., 483
Caryl, Joseph, 338
Chalmers, Dr. Thomas, 118, 122, 302
Channing, Dr. W. E., 414, 415
Chaplain, A Military, 435
Charnocke, Stephen, 16, 39, 74, 252, 253, 307, 397, 459, 460, 503, 606
Cheever, Dr. G. B., 169, 420, 421, 423, 558
"Christian Treasury," 97, 535
"Christian World," 147, 384
"Christian World Pulpit," 483
Cicero, M. T., 439
Clarendon, Lord, 207
Clarke, Dr. Adam, 89, 229, 331, 335, 336, 349, 362, 437, 444, 467, 597
Clarke, Samuel, 91, 525
Clayton, George, 179
"Clerical Year Book," 300
Close, Dean, 334
Coleridge, Bishop, 306
Coleridge, S. T., 415
Collier, Jeremy, 206
Cook, Eliza, 10
Cowper, William, 65, 355, 356, 412
Cox, Samuel, 142
Crabbe, G., 182
Culross, Dr. J., 177
Cumming, Dr. J., 30, 105, 125, 150, 222, 247, 255

DALE, Dr. R. W., 62, 93, 101, 135
Davenant, Sir W., 208
Dibdin, R. W., 297
Dickens, Charles, 118
"Dictionary of the Bible," Dr. Smith's, 76, 84, 91, 157, 181, 229, 362, 363, 377, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 407, 469, 524, 525, 547, 548, 562, 563, 601, 621
"Dictionary of Illustrations," 51, 73, 219, 255, 265, 267, 269, 377, 457, 534
Doddridge, Dr. P., 22, 513, 515, 525
Donne, Dr. J., 365
Dryden, J., 557
Dwight, Dr. T., 460, 550
Dykes, Dr. J. O., 131, 217, 359, 360, 452

"ECLECTIC Review." 148
Emerson, R. W., 329
"Evangelical Synopsis," 336

FARRAR, Canon, 90, 225, 375

- Feltham, Owen, 207
 Ferguson, Dr. R., 57, 193, 195, 374, 501, 512, 544
 Flavel, J., 457, 493, 532
 Fletcher, Dr. Joseph, 280
 Fuerst, Dr. Julius, 562
 Fuller, Thomas, 23

 GARDEN, Francis, 284
 Gerhard, P., 38
 Gilfillan, G., 98, 141, 381, 383, 512, 577, 590, 594
 Gill, Dr. John, 271, 439
 "Gleanings," 97, 117, 118, 183, 219, 429, 518
 Goldsmith, O., 23
 "Good Words," 404
 Griffin, R. A., 138, 156, 228
 Grindon, L. H., 365
 Grosart, 6
 Grove, George, 388, 389, 390, 600, 601
 Gurnall, W., 428, 491, 493, 494
 Guthrie, Dr. Thomas, 50, 281, 333, 356, 525, 546, 623

 HALE, Sir M., 129, 428
 Hall, Robert, 68, 123, 145, 154, 398, 414, 457, 458
 Hamilton, Dr. James, 10, 137, 338
 Hamilton, Dr. R. W., 78
 Hare, A. W., 108
 Harmer, 158
 Harris, Dr. John, 342, 343, 344,
 Harris, W., 578
 Havard, W., 423
 Hayman, Dr. H., 157, 229, 388, 389
 Hemans, Mrs., 580
 Hengstenberg, Dr. E. W., 449, 450, 484
 Henry, Matthew, 47, 55, 74, 181, 245, 254, 294, 338, 395, 617, 618
 Heraud, J. A., 558
 Herbert, George, 43, 44, 57
 Hervey, Bishop, 290
 Holmes, O. W., 47
 "Homiletic Quarterly," 179, 435
 Hood, E. P., 160
 Horns, Bishop, 279, 562
 Horton, T. G., 440
 Howe, John, 396
 Hunter, Dr. H., 439
 Huntington, Dr. F. D., 21, 47, 68, 101, 137, 194, 329, 369, 494, 510, 573, 574

 JAHN, Dr. John, 349, 612
 James, J. A., 207, 382, 428
 Jones, Harry, 163
 Jones, Thomas, 190
 Josephus, Flavius, 413
 Judkin, T. J., 528

 KEBLE, John, 52, 133
 Keil and Delitzsch, Drs., 25, 44 88, 99, 103, 110 127, 128, 179, 180, 192, 214, 243, 244 269, 270, 271, 278, 290, 316, 324, 335, 339, 340, 345, 348 349, 362, 387, 417, 418, 438, 444, 445, 446, 450, 467, 468, 469, 484, 486, 509, 531, 536, 545, 548, 563
 Kennicott, Dr., 55

 Kitto, Dr. John, 235, 395, 423, 425, 426, 432, 434, 488, 538, 543, 581, 585, 587, 598
 Knobel, 606
 Krummacher, G. D., 186

 LANE, J. D., 323
 Law, Dean, 11, 30, 103, 162, 236, 331, 403, 491, 608
 Leask, Dr. W., 303
 Leighton, Abp., 481
 Lester, Dr. J. W., 193
 Liddon, Canon, 371
 "Literary World," 457
 Lloyd, David, 17, 29, 53, 59, 80, 90, 119, 213, 257, 282, 315, 376, 399, 568
 Locke, John, 624
 Longfellow, H. W., 385
 Lynch, T. T., 41, 200
 Lyte, 69
 Lyttelton, Canon, 404
 Lytton, Lord, 246, 277, 406

 MACAULAY, Lord, 499
 Macdonald, Dr. G., 13
 Mackay, Dr. C., 258
 Macmillan, D., 588
 Mant, Bishop, 62, 295
 Martin, Samuel, 183, 288
 Mathew, 423
 McCormac, H., 239
 Melville, H., 7, 176, 206, 310, 451, 477, 478, 479, 507
 Miller, Hugh, 21
 Miller, M., 120
 Miller, S., 260
 Milman, Dean, 86, 569, 571, 579, 608
 Milton, John, 27, 129
 Moore, Daniel, 281
 Monsell, J. S. B., 368
 More, Hannah, 87
 Morris, A. J., 102, 539
 Mullens, Dr. Joseph, 147
 Murray, W. H. H., 35

 NEWMAN, Cardinal, 154, 304, 305, 360, 427, 434, 438, 439
 "New York Independent," 33

 "ONE hundred Sketches of Sermons," 593
 "Outlines of Sermons on the Miracles and Parables of the Old Testament," 227, 313, 330, 441, 584
 Outram, Dr. W., 517
 Owen, Dr. John, 428

 PARKER, Dr. Joseph, 41, 49, 55, 66, 67, 83, 99, 106 114, 155, 161, 163, 164, 166, 168, 195, 200, 205, 221, 231, 232, 239, 241, 259, 274, 276, 306, 312, 327, 341, 356, 359, 366, 369, 374 378, 407 409, 417, 442, 443, 448, 482, 485, 494, 496, 498 499, 501, 503, 508, 515, 530, 552, 538, 545, 550, 622
 Parsons, James, 385, 613
 Patrick, Bishop, 37, 270, 444
 Payson, Dr. E. 83 84, 299, 308
 Perowne, Dean, 3, 389, 390, 391, 407
 Phillott, H. W., 377
 Pigg, J. G., 42

- Pilkington, J. G., 220
 Playfere Thomas, 23
 Plumer, Dr. W. S., 560
 Plumptre, Prof. E. H., 84
 Pope, Alexander, 433
 Porter, Dr. J. L., 599
 Pulsford, John, 39, 234, 301
 Punshou, Dr. W. M., 73, 146, 155, 161, 276,
 314, 326, 347, 491
 Pusey, Dr., 176

RAFFLES, Dr. Thomas, 562
 Raleigh, Dr. Alex., 190, 382, 407, 410, 583
 Reid, J. M., 339
 Reynolds, Dr. H. R., 62, 84, 286, 289
 Richard, Henry, 415
 Riddel, John, 386, 387
 Roberts, Arthur, 582
 Robertson, F. W., 70, 71, 72, 78, 94, 96, 221, 285,
 286, 431, 439, 448, 471, 475, 481, 520, 596
 Rochester, Lord, 619
 Rowe, N., 245
 Ruskin, John, 13, 19, 27, 44, 550, 554

SALTER, H. G., 252, 508
 Saurin, James, 361
 Scott, Thomas, 82, 524, 541, 597
 Secker, William, 351
 Shakespeare, W., 33, 51, 67, 87, 197, 208, 217,
 247, 295, 298, 380, 422, 558, 619
 Sibbs, Richard, 396
 Simeon, Charles, 109, 462, 480, 557
 Sleigh, William, 143, 263, 617
 Smiles, Dr. S., 393, 394
 Smith, Henry, 62
 Smith, J. H., 355
 Socrates, 207
 South, Dr. R., 391, 346
 "Speaker's Commentary," 2, 63, 69, 75, 90,
 110, 128, 156, 157, 180, 181, 214, 244,
 289, 290, 291, 325, 335, 348, 361, 363,
 388, 390, 391, 392, 418, 445, 468, 469,
 486, 529, 531, 536, 548, 564, 565, 599,
 600, 606
 Spencer, Thomas, 583
 Spenser, Edmund, 89
 "Spiritual Bee," 187
 Spitta, 136
 Sprague, Dr. W. B., 591
 Spring, Dr. G., 317, 318
 Spurgeon, C. H., 123, 134, 137, 149, 150, 163,
 164, 166, 171, 176, 178, 183, 187, 190,
 195, 202, 209, 218, 225, 226, 235, 239,
 243, 255, 259, 262, 269, 279, 289, 295,
 312, 314, 322, 327, 329, 332, 347, 352,
 358, 365, 366, 368, 369, 371, 375, 394,
 409, 411, 416, 417, 420, 423, 443, 451,
 471, 472, 475, 491, 497, 520, 525, 527,
 528, 535, 539, 546, 547, 552, 577

 Stanford, Dr. C., 530
 Stanley, Dean, 181, 361, 363, 388, 424, 563,
 601, 603, 604
 Steele, Sir R., 619
 Sterne, Laurence, 396
 Steward, George, 401
 Storr, Dr., 486
 Stowe, Dr. C. E., 189
 "Study," 71, 492
 "Sunday School Teacher," 94, 249, 301, 554
 "Sunday School Teacher's Treasury," 276,
 356

TALBOT, 97
 Talmage, Dr., 308, 371, 372, 525, 526, 559,
 562
 Taylor Bishop, Jeremy, 36, 374, 618
 Temple, Ebenezer, 152
 Tennyson, Alfred, 32, 33, 182, 501, 576
 Thodev, Samuel, 319, 321, 400, 454, 464, 466,
 473, 516, 521, 555, 616
 Thomas, Dr. David, 75, 86, 117, 146, 384
 Thompson, H., 338
 Thomson, J. R., 472
 Tillotson, Abp., 318
 Todd, Dr., 267
 Tourneive, 111
 Trapp, John, 73, 184, 191, 220, 229, 291, 337,
 519
 Trench, Abp., 75, 96, 100, 129, 222, 223, 266,
 468, 532
 Trench, F. F., 554
 Tulloch, Dr., 387
 Tupper, Martin F., 225
 Turner, Dr. G., 613

 "UNION Magazine," 428

VAUGHAN, Dr. R., 123, 279
 Vinet, Dr. Alex., 23, 118, 402

WARDLAW, Dr. R., 527, 610, 621
 Waring, A. L., 75
 Watson, Richard, 104, 127, 508, 610, 624
 Watt, C. K., 277
 Watt, D. G., 354
 Watts, Dr. Isaac, 522
 Webster, 544
 Wesley, Charles, 18, 21, 159
 Whale, W., 592
 White, H. K., 595
 Whittier, J. G., 199
 Williams, W., 149
 Willis, N. P., 295
 Wordsworth, William, 40, 520
 Wythe, W. W., 456

YOUNG, Dr. Edward, 87, 295, 380, 562

ERRATA.

Page 36a, line 50, for "xxvii." read "xxxvii."

- " 39a, " 2, " "form" " "from."
- " 84a, " 53, " "Plumtre" read "Plumptre."
- " 100b, " 17, " "God " "Christ."
- " 115b, " 45, " "taonement" read "atonement."
- " 191a, " 43, " "negotüs" " "negotius."
- " 224a, " 44, supply "the" before "good."
- " 415a, " 50, for "2 Cor. ix." read "2 Cor. x."
- " 448a, " 26, " "word" " "way."
- " 466, " 24, " "blessings" " "blessing."
- " 494b, " 27, " "Huntingdon" read "Huntington."
- " 583a, " 18, " "them" "him."