THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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ISAIAH.

Exposition and Homiletics

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Homilies by Various Authors.

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THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

PART II. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF EVENTS IN THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH (CH. XXXVI.—XXXIX.).

SECTION I. SENNACHERIB'S ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE JUDÆA, AND HIS OVERTHROW (CH. XXXVI., XXXVII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

If the Book of Isaiah be regarded as the result of a gradual accretion (see the General Introduction), whether that accretion is to be ascribed to the action of the prophet himself or to that of later editors, we may equally consider the present chapters (ch. xxxvi.—xxxix.) to have been originally an "Appendix," attached as furnishing illustration to the preceding prophecies, and at one time terminating the book. They will thus stand to the preceding chapters in much the same relation as that in which the last chapter of Jeremiah stands to the rest of that prophet's work, differing only in the fact that they are almost entirely the prophet's own composition. Isaiah wrote the history of the reign of Hezekiah for the general "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (2 Chron. xxxii. 32). From this "book" the account of the reign which we have in 2 Kings (xviii.—xx.) is almost certainly taken (2 Kings xx. 20). The close verbal resemblance between the present chapters and those in Kings, and the differences, which are chiefly omissions, are best accounted for by supposing that both are abbreviations of a more extensive narrative, such as that composed for the original "Book of the Chronicles" probably was. The abbreviation here inserted may have been made either by the prophet himself, or by a "co-editor." The point is one which is not very important, and which it is quite impossible to determine, unless arbitrarily.

Ver. 1.—**It came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah.** There is an irreconcilable difference between this note of time, in the passage as it stands, and the Assyrian inscriptions. The fourteenth year of Hezekiah was B.C. 714 or 713. Sargon was then King of Assyria, and continued king till B.C. 705. Sennacherib did not ascend the throne till that year, and he did not lead an expedition into Palestine till B.C. 701. Thus the date, as it stands, is eleven or twelve years too early. It is now the common opinion of critics that the chronology of the Books of Kings, speaking generally, is "a later addition to the Hebrew narrative" (Cheyne, 'Isaiah,' vol. i. p. 199, note 1). It is uncertain when the dates were added; but it would not be long from the time when the addition was made before "Isaiah" would be brought into accord with "Kings." Another view is that the date belongs to the original writings, but that it has suffered corruption, "fourteenth" having been substituted for "twenty-sixth," from

an overstrict rendering of the expression, "in those days," which introduces the narrative of ch. xxxviii. That narrative undoubtedly belongs to Hezekiah's fourteenth year. A third view is that of Dr. Hincks, who suggests a derangement of the text, which has attached to an expedition of Sennacherib a date originally belonging to an attack by Sargon. He supposes the original text to have run thus: "And it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah that the King of Assyria came up (against him). In those days was King Hezekiah sick unto death, etc. (ch. xxxviii., xxxix.). And Sennacherib, King of Assyria, came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them," etc. (ch. xxxvi., xxxvii.). The subject has been treated at considerable length by Mr. Cheyne ('Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. i. pp. 196—204), who has accidentally ascribed to Sir H. Rawlinson the second of the above theories, which really originated with the present writer.

Sennacherib, King of Assyria. The Hebrew rendering of the name is *Sankhêrib*, the Greek *Sanacharibus* or *Senachêribus*. In the Assyrian the literation is *Sin-akhi-irib*—and the meaning "Sin (the moon-god) multiplies brothers." Sin-akhi-irib was the son and successor of Sargon. His father was murdered, and he ascended the throne in B.C. 705 (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 67).

Came up against all the defenced cities; rather, *all the fenced cities*, as in 2 Kings xviii. 13, or "all the *fortified* cities" (Cheyne).

And took them. Sennacherib tells us that, in the campaign of his fourth year (B.C. 701), he "captured forty-six of the strong cities" belonging to Hezekiah, King of Judah, while of the "fortresses and small cities" he took "a countless number" ('Eponym Canon,' p. 134). (On the causes of the war and its general course, see the Introduction to the book.)

Ver. 2.—**And the King of Assyria sent Rabshakeh . . . with a great army** (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 13—17, where we find sufficient ground for believing that this expedition is entirely distinct from that of ver. 1, which was conducted by Sennacherib in person, and led to Hezekiah's submission and the payment of a large tribute). It is inconceivable that, immediately after the grant of terms of peace and their acceptance, Sennacherib should have renewed the war; there must have been an interval, and a fresh provocation. The interval can have been only a short one, since Hezekiah died in B.C. 697. It may have been a couple of years, or perhaps no more than a year, or possibly only a few months. The fresh provocation probably consisted in an application for aid, made by Hezekiah to Tirhakah, or to the subordinate Egyptian kings, which is glanced at in ver. 6. **The Assyrian** annals, which never record any reverse or defeat, are wholly silent as to this second expedition. The only profane confirmation of it is to be found in Herodotus (ii. 141).

From Lachish. Lachish, an ancient city of the Amorites (Josh. x. 5), was assigned by Joshua to the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv. 39), and seems to have been still a Jewish possession (2 Kings xiv. 19). It occupied "a low round swell or knoll" in the Shefelah, or low tract between the Judæan highland and the Mediterranean, and lay near, if not directly on, the direct route which armies commonly followed in their march from Syria into Egypt. The site is now known as *Um-Lakis;* it lies between Gaza and *Ajlan* (Eglon), about two miles west of the latter. Sennacherib represents himself as engaged in its siege on a bas-relief in the British Museum (see Layard, 'Monuments of Nineveh," second series, pl. 21).

The conduit of the upper pool (see the comment on ch. vii. 3). The spot was that at which Isaiah had been commanded to meet Ahaz some forty years previously. It was probably on the north side of Jerusalem, not far from the Damascus gate.

Ver. 3.—**Eliakim, Hilkiah's son** (see above, ch. xxii. 20). Eliakim had now taken the place of the Shebna who was "over the house" when Isaiah prophesied his downfall (ch. xxii. 19) and Eliakim's advancement (ch. xxii. 21—23). **Shebna the scribe.** It is not quite certain that this is the same "Shebna" as the former prefect of the palace, but the uncommonness of the name is a strong argument for the identity. The post of "scribe" or "secretary" (marginal rendering) was one of some importance (see 1 Kings iv. 3), though inferior to that of palace prefect. **Joah . . . the recorder** (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 18, where the same three officials are mentioned in the same order). We learn from Kings that Sennacherib sent in reality three envoys (2 Kings xviii. 17) to Hezekiah—the Tartan, or "commander-in-chief;" the Rabsaris, or "chief eunuch;" and the Rabshakeh, or "rabsak," the "chief captain," the second in command after the tartan. Hezekiah thought it right to appoint an equal number of officials to meet and confer with them.

Ver. 4.—**And Rabshakeh said.** Of the three Assyrian envoys Rabshakeh alone obtains mention in Isaiah, probably because he was the spokesman (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 19, 26, 27, 37; xix. 4). He was probably chosen for spokesman because he could speak Hebrew fluently (*infra*, vers. 11, 13).

The great king. "The great king" (*sarru rabbu*) is the most common title assumed by the Assyrian monarchs in their inscriptions. It is found as early as B.C. 1120.

Ver. 5.—I say. In 2 Kings xviii. 20 we read, "Thou sayest" for "I say," which gives a better sense. Dr. Kay holds the two forms to be "complementary." **I have counsel and strength for war.** Either the words of Hezekiah had been reported to Sennacherib, or he rightly divined Hezekiah's thoughts. It was, no doubt, in reliance on the "counsel" of Eliakim and the "strength" of Egypt that the Jewish monarch had a second time provoked his suzerain.

Ver. 6.—This broken reed; rather, as in 2 Kings xviii. 21, *this bruised reed* (comp. ch. xlii. 3). A reed may be "bruised," and wholly untrustworthy as a support, while it appears sound. A "broken" reed no one would lean on. **Egypt.** There had been times when Egypt was a strong power, feared and respected by her neighbours, and a terror even to Assyria. But these times were long past. For the last fifty years the country had been divided against itself (see the comment on ch. xix. 2), split up into a number of petty principalities. Recently the neighbouring kingdom of Ethiopia had claimed and exercised a species of sovereignty over the entire Nile valley, while allowing tributary princes to govern different portions of it. Of these princes the most important at the time of Rabshakeh's embassy seems to have been Shabatok, who reigned in Memphis, probably from B.C. 712 to B.C. 698. Egypt is likened to a "bruised reed" on account of her untrustworthiness. "So" (Sabaco) had given no substantial help to Hoshea. Shabatok was little likely to imperil himself in order to assist Hezekiah. Even Tirhakah would probably avoid, as long as he could, a conflict with the full power of Assyria. **Pharaoh, King of Egypt.** Sennacherib uses the generic term, "Pharaoh," instead of mentioning any of the petty princes by name, because he means to speak generally. The King of Egypt, under present circumstances, whoever he may be, is no better than a bruised reed. In his own inscriptions, Sennacherib about this time uses the expression, "the kings of Egypt" ('Eponym Canon,' p. 133, l. 47).

Ver. 7.—If thou say to me, We trust in the Lord. "The Assyrians," it has been observed, "had a good intelligence department" (Cheyne). It was known to Sennacherib that Hezekiah had a confident trust, which seemed to him wholly irrational, in Jehovah—the special God of his people. It was also known to him that Hezekiah, in the earlier portion of his reign (2 Kings xviii. 4), had "removed the high places" and broken down the altars, where Jehovah had for centuries been worshipped throughout the length and breadth of the land. He concludes that, in so doing, he must have offended Jehovah. He is probably ignorant of the peculiar proviso of the Jewish Law, that sacrifice should be offered in one place only, and conceives that Hezekiah has been actuated by some narrow motive, and has acted in the interests of one city only, not of the whole people. **Ye shall worship before this altar.** The parallel passage of 2 Kings (xviii. 22) has "this altar *in Jerusalem*." The brazen altar in the great court of the temple is, of course, meant. Hezekiah had cleansed it from the pollutions of the time of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxix. 18), and had insisted on sacrifice being offered nowhere else (2 Chron. xxix. 21—35; xxx. 15—24; xxxi. 1, etc.). Such a concentration of worship was unknown to any of the heathen nations, and may well have been unintelligible to them.

Ver. 8.—Now therefore give pledges; *i.e.* "bind yourselves under some penalty." Rabshakeh here interrupts his message to introduce an offer of his own. Intent on ridiculing the absurdity of Hezekiah's resistance of Assyria, he promises to make him a present of two thousand horses, if he (Hezekiah) can find two thousand trained riders to mount them. It is quite likely that he was safe in making this promise, and that, notwithstanding the abundant use of chariots and horses by the Jews of the time for purposes of luxury (ch. ii. 7), they were destitute of a cavalry force and unaccustomed to the management of war-horses.

Ver. 9.—How then wilt thou turn away the face, etc.? *i.e.* "How wilt thou be able to defeat, and *cause to retreat*, a single Assyrian captain at the head of his squadron?" **And put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen;** rather, *but thou trustest in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen.* Consciousness of the weakness, with which Rabshakeh had just reproached them, had led to their application to Egypt for a chariot and a cavalry force. Egypt was well able to furnish both, and had sent a large force of both to the help of Ekron a short time previously ('Eponym Canon,' p. 133, ll. 48—56). That force had, however, suffered defeat at the hands of Sennacherib.

Ver. 10.—The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it; literally, *Jehovah said unto me, Go up*, etc. (comp. 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, where Necho tells Josiah that "God commanded" his expedition against Carchemish). The heathen monarchs frequently represented themselves as directed to make war on a nation by God, or by some particular god. Piankhi Merammon says, "I am born of the loins, created from the egg, of the Deity . . . I have not acted without his knowing; he ordained that I should act" ('Records of

(the Past,' vol. ii. p. 91). Mesha, King of Moab, declares, "Chemosh said to me, Go and take Nebo [in war] against Israel" (ibid., vol. xi. p. 166). Asshur is generally represented as commanding the expeditions of the Assyrian kings (ibid., vol. i. pp. 21, 48, 60, etc.). Still, it is surprising that Sennacherib should mention "Jehovah" as the God from whom he had received the order to attack Hezekiah, and we may suspect that the term which he actually employed was *Ilu*, "God," and that either Rabshakeh, or the reporter of the speech, substituted "Jehovah" as more intelligible to the Jews.

Ver. 11.—**Speak . . . unto thy servants in the Syrian language**; literally, *in the Aramaic language*. Aramæans were widely spread over the entire region between the Lower Tigris and the Mediterranean; and their language seems to have been in general use, as a language of commerce. "Private contract tablets in Aramaic and Assyrian have been found in the remains of ancient Nineveh" (Cheyne). Rabshakeh had, perhaps, spoken "in the Jews' language" without any ill intent, thinking that it was the only tongue which Jewish envoys would understand; but his so doing was calculated to affect the minds of the common people, and to shake their allegiance to Hezekiah. The envoys, therefore, requested him to employ a foreign tongue, and suggested Aramaic as one which was familiar to them, and which they supposed that he would understand. His employment of Hebrew had shown them that he was a linguist. **In the Jews' language.** There was no language peculiar to the Jews as Jews, that is to say, different from the ordinary speech of the Israelites. Both alike spoke Hebrew. In the Old Testament, however, this common language is never called "Hebrew," but either "the tongue of Canaan" (ch. xix. 18) or "the Jewish language" (2 Kings xviii. 26, 28; 2 Chron. xxxii. 18; Neh. xiii. 24). Similarly, our own tongue is called "English," though spoken also in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, America, and Australia. **In the ears of the people that are on the wall**; *i.e.* of the soldiers placed on the wall to defend it. We must suppose that the conference took place immediately outside the fortifications, so that some of those on the wall could hear.

Ver. 12.—**Hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall?** Rabshakeh was contravening all diplomatic usage, and no doubt was conscious of it. But the pride and arrogance of the Assyrians rendered them as careless of diplomatic etiquette as, at a later date, were the Romans (see Polybius, xxix. 11, § 6; Liv., xlv. 12). **That they may eat**, etc.; rather, *to eat*. That is, with no other result than that of being reduced, together with you, to the last extremity of famine, when the siege comes.

Ver. 13.—**Then Rabshakeh stood**; *i.e.* "rose from a sitting or reclining posture"—to attract attention, and the better to make himself heard. He continued his speech in Hebrew, and at the same time purposely raised his voice to a loud pitch. The envoys would have been justified in ordering the archers to shoot him from the wall. But they seem to have been struck of a heap, as Epiphanes was by the audacity of Popillius (see the comment on the preceding verse).

Ver. 14.—**Thus saith the king.** It is scarcely probable that Sennacherib had expressly empowered Rabshakeh to make a speech to the Jewish people, much less that he had dictated its words. But the envoy regards himself as having plenary powers to declare the king's mind. **Let not Hezekiah deceive you.** By vain hopes of resisting the Assyrian arms successfully (comp. vers. 5—7).

Ver. 15.—**Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah.** There is nothing improbable in Rabshakeh's having thus spoken. Isaiah had long been encouraging Hezekiah to resist Sennacherib by promises of Divine aid (ch. xxx. 31; xxxi. 4—9). Hezekiah would naturally repeat these promises to the people, and could not give their effect in simpler words than by saying, "Jehovah will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the King of Assyria." Spies and deserters would naturally tell the Assyrian envoys what he had said.

Ver. 16.—**Make an agreement with me by a present**; literally, *make a blessing with me*. Delitzsch paraphrases, "Enter into a connection of mutual good wishes with me." Vance Smith translates boldly, "Make *peace* with me;" and Mr. Cheyne, "Make a treaty with me." There seems to be no doubt that *b'rakah*, besides its primary sense of "blessing," had two secondary senses, "present" and "treaty." Here "treaty" is no doubt intended. **Come out to me**; *i.e.* "come out of Jerusalem, and surrender yourselves" (comp. 1 Sam. xi. 3; Jer. xxxviii. 17). **And eat ye . . . drink ye.** Peace being made, the Jews could leave the protection of their walled cities, and disperse themselves over their lands, where they could live in plenty and security (comp. 1 Kings iv. 25), at any rate for a time. They would be safe from the terrible extremities hinted at in ver. 12, and might confidently await the great king's ultimate disposal of them, which would be determined when the war in these parts was over. **The waters of his own cistern**; rather, *of his own well*. All cultivators had

wells in their plots of ground. Cisterns, or reservoirs, in which the rain-water was stored, were comparatively uncommon.

Ver. 17.—**Until I come and take you away.** It was so much the usual policy of Assyria to remove to a new locality a conquered people, which had given them trouble, that Rabshakeh felt safe in assuming that the fate in store for the Jews, if they submitted themselves, was a transplantation. Sargon had transported the Israelites to Gozan and Media (2 Kings xviii. 11), the Tibareni to Assyria, the Commageni to Susiana ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 423). Sennacherib himself had transported into Assyria more than two hundred thousand Aramæans (ibid., p. 430). It might be confidently predicted that, if he conquered them, he would transplant the Jews. Rabshakeh tries to soften down the hardship of the lot before them by promises of a removal to a land equal in all respects to Palestine. **To a land like your own land.** This was certainly not a general principle of Assyrian administration. Nations were removed from the far north to the extreme south, and *vice versâ*, from arid to marshy tracts, from fertile regions to comparative deserts. The security of the empire, not the gratification of the transported slaves, was the ruling and guiding principle of all such changes. **A land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.** The writer of Kings adds, "a land of oil olive and of honey." (On the productiveness of Palestine, see Numb. xiii. 27; xiv. 7; Deut. i. 23; viii. 7—9; xi. 11, 12.)

Ver. 18.—**Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you**; rather, *seduce you* (comp. Deut. xiii. 6; 1 Kings xxi. 25). Sennacherib claims to be entitled to the people's allegiance, and represents Hezekiah as a rebel, who seeks to draw them away from their duty. **Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land?** The successes of the Assyrians, and the religious character of their wars, justified this boast. The pervading idea of the inscriptions is that wars are undertaken for the glory of the Assyrian deities, particularly of Asshur, for the chastisement of his enemies, and with the object of establishing in each country, as it is brought under subjection, the laws and worship of Asshur (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 322—324 and 531). The nations fight under the protection of their own gods, and thus each war is a struggle between the Assyrian deities and those of the nation with which they are contending. Hitherto, undoubtedly, Assyria had met with almost uniform success (see ch. x. 5—14).

Ver. 19.—**Where are the gods of Hamath?** (comp. ch. x. 9). Sargon had reduced Hamath in his third year, B.C. 720. He had "swept the whole land of Hamath to its extreme limit," taken the king prisoner, and carried him away captive to Assyria, where he flayed and burned him; removed most of the inhabitants, and replaced them by Assyrians; plundered the city of its chief treasures, and placed an Assyrian governor over it (see 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 126—128). Among the treasures taken were, no doubt, the images of the Hamathite gods, which were uniformly carried off by the Assyrians from a conquered city. **And Arphad.** Arphad, or Arpad (ch. x. 9), had joined with Hamath in the war against Assyria, and was taken by Sargon in the same year ('Eponym Canon,' p. 127). **Of Sepharvaim.** Sepharvaim, or Sippara, was besieged and captured by Sargon in his twelfth year, B.C. 710. A severe example was made of the inhabitants (G. Smith, 'History of Babylonia,' p. 122). A discovery made by Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, in 1881, is thought to prove that Sippara was situated at Abu-Habbah, between Baghdad and the site of Babylon, about sixteen miles from the former city (see the 'Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæology,' vol. viii. pp. 164, 173). "Hena" and "Ivah," joined with Sepharvaim by the author of Kings (2 Kings xviii. 34), seem to be omitted by Isaiah as unimportant. They are thought to have been towns upon the Euphrates, not very distant from Babylon, and have been identified respectively with Anah and Hit. But the identification is in both cases uncertain. **Have they delivered Samaria?** Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne translate, "*How much less* have they delivered Samaria?" Kay, "*Verily have they* delivered," regarding the sentence as ironical. Sennacherib can see no distinction between the cities where Jehovah was worshipped, and those which acknowledged any other tutelary god. As Samaria fell, why should not Jerusalem fall?

Ver. 21.—**They** (*i.e.* the people, as in 2 Kings xviii. 36) **held their peace.** Rabshakeh's attempt to shake their fidelity had, at any rate, no manifest effect. **For the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.** Hezekiah can scarcely have anticipated that Rabshakeh would so far depart from ordinary usage as to make a speech to "the men on the wall." But he may have been in the immediate neighbourhood, and, when apprised of the envoy's proceedings, may have sent the order. We are not to suppose that the Jewish king was at a loss for an answer. He did not choose to bandy words with an envoy who had behaved himself so outrageously.

Ver. 22.—**With their clothes rent.** Garments were "rent," not only as a sign of mourning, but whenever persons were

shocked or horrified (see Gen. xxxvii. 29; 1 Sam. iv. 12; 2 Sam. i. 2; Ezra ix. 3; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19; Matt. xxvi. 65). The Jewish officials meant to mark their horror at Rabshakeh's blasphemies.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—9.—*Wise and foolish trust.* Rabshakeh laughed to scorn equally all the grounds of trust which he regarded Hezekiah as entertaining. His ridicule was just with respect to two of them, wholly unjust and misplaced with respect to the third.

I. IT IS A FOOLISH TRUST TO PUT CONFIDENCE IN WISE COUNSELLORS. Princes, no doubt, do well to seek advice from the wisest among their subjects, and, speaking generally, cannot do better than follow such advice when it has been deliberately given. But to place absolute confidence in the wisest of human counsellors is sheer folly. "The wisdom of the wise is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 19); "God casteth out the counsel of princes." The wisest of men are liable to err, to misinterpret the past, to misconceive the future. The best of counsellors are "blind guides," and are liable to "fall into the pit" with those who are guided by them. It is the truest wisdom to mistrust all human advisers, and to look elsewhere for an infallible guidance.

II. IT IS A FOOLISH TRUST TO PUT CONFIDENCE IN AN ARMED FORCE, however strong it may seem to be. "It is nothing to the Lord to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power" (2 Chron. xiv. 11). "It is no hard matter" with him "for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with Heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company: for the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven" (1 Macc. iii. 18, 19). Even a heathen could remark that "ofttimes a mighty host is discomfited by a few men, when God in his anger sends fear or storm from heaven, and they perish in a way unworthy of them" (Herod., vii. 10, § 6). The children of this world put their trust in "big battalions;" but the entire course of history testifies to the frequent triumph of the weak over the strong, of small over large armies—Platæa, Cunaxa, Issus, Arbela, Magnesia, in the ancient; Soissons, Mortgarten, Cressy, Poitiers, Waterloo, Inkerman, in the modern world, are cases in point. "The race is not to the swift, neither the battle to the strong." At any rate, it is foolish to trust implicitly in "strength for the war" (ver. 5), since such trust is often the forerunner of a dire calamity.

III. BUT IT IS A WISE TRUST TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD GOD. Rabshakeh ridicules this trust no less than the others (vers. 7, 18—20); but wholly without reason. He imagines, indeed, that Jehovah is only *a* god—one of many. He has no conception of one Supreme God, "Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible." For want of this fundamental idea his whole reasoning is confused and mistaken. Theists know that, while all other trust is vain, absolute reliance may be placed on God (1) to perform his promises; (2) to succour all them that flee to him for aid with faith and penitence; (3) to abase those that proudly lift themselves up against him, if not immediately, at any rate in his own good time. Hezekiah's trust was based on all three grounds: God had promised to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians (ch. xxxi. 5—8); Hezekiah had given up his trust in Egypt, and turned to God (ch. xxxvi. 18) in sincerity; and Rabshakeh's own boastings had placed both himself and his master in the category of God's open enemies, on whom judgment was almost sure to fall.

Ver. 10.—*The false boastings of the wicked confuted by the event.* The Goliaths and Sennacheribs of the world are rarely content with silent endeavours to accomplish the ends that they set before them. They delight in boasting beforehand of their coming achievements, and are not very scrupulous as to the language they employ, so that it seems to exalt them above their fellows. "Come to me," said the Philistine champion to David, "and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam. xvii. 44). "With the multitude of my chariots," said Sennacherib, "I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel" (2 Kings xix. 23); and again, "Shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and *her*

idols?" (ch. x. 11). It was of a piece with these boasts to give the Jews to understand that the voice of God had ordered the expedition, which, therefore, was certain to be successful. In all probability this boast was a purely gratuitous one, not grounded upon any even supposed oracle or announcement. It was hoped that it might alarm some of the Jews, and induce them to go over to the enemy, or at least stand aloof from the contest. A few weeks—perhaps a few days—showed the baselessness of the assertion. Had God ordered the expedition, he would have prospered it; had he "given the Assyrians a charge," he would have caused them "to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread Judah down like the mire of the streets" (ch. x. 6). But the boast was wholly false. God had, in fact, declared himself against the expedition (ch. xxxi. 8), and had promised his protection to Jerusalem (ch. xxxi. 5). The event was in the fullest accord with these announcements, and put to shame the Assyrian, with his vain boasts (ch. xxxvii. 36). In all ages, boasters have declared that they would destroy the Church. Epiphanes, Galerius, Julian, Mohammed, designed and attempted the extirpation of true religion. They boasted beforehand that they would succeed. In the event they egregiously failed. So, in our own day, pseudo-science declares that it is just about to sweep away Christianity from the earth. The wretched effete religion is, the scientists maintain, on its last legs, dwindling, dying, just about to disappear. But year by year, month by month, day by day, facts give their predictions the lie. The Church remains firm upon its Rock, against which the gates of hell will never prevail. Christianity declines to disappear at the scientist's bidding, and, as time goes on, seems continually to obtain a firmer grasp upon the mind of the age. Scientific extravagance provokes a religious reaction, and these are signs in various quarters of a real "Nemesis of Faith." If the tree has contracted its shadow, it has struck its roots more deeply; and is more capable of resisting storms and tempests than of yore. Christians may calmly await the verdict which events will pronounce, and meanwhile will do well not to let themselves be greatly alarmed by the proud boasts and confident predictions of their adversaries. Sennacherib's boasts had an unsatisfactory issue.

Ver. 21.—*Silence the best answer to many an argument.* "Speech is silvern," it has been said; "but silence is golden." "Answer not a fool according to his folly," says the wise king (Prov. xxvi. 4)—an injunction no doubt balanced to some extent by the counter-phrase, "Answer a fool according to his folly"—which immediately follows (Prov. xxvi. 5). No universal rule can be given. "There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence" (Eccles. iii. 7); and the wisdom of the wise is shown in few things more strikingly than in their faculty of discerning the right time for each. But the tendency to err is on the side of speech, and the practical want with most men is to know when they should refrain from uttering the words which rush so readily to their lips; and keep silence, "though it be pain and grief to them" (Ps. xxxix. 2, Prayer-book version). A few suggestions on this point may be serviceable.

I. SILENCE IS TO BE PREFERRED TO SPEECH WHEN THE "FOOL" IS ALONE, AND IS EVIDENTLY AWARE OF THE WORTHLESSNESS OF HIS OWN ARGUMENTS. Great numbers of persons argue merely for the sake of arguing, having no care for truth, and no belief in the validity of their own reasonings. It is a waste of time to argue with such; they have no real convictions, no seriousness; and it is impossible to impress them, however clearly we prove them to be in the wrong.

II. SILENCE IS TO BE PREFERRED TO SPEECH WHEN WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SPEECH ON OUR PART WILL ONLY DRAW FORTH IMPIETY AND BLASPHEMY FROM OUR OPPONENTS. The principle here is that involved in our Lord's injunction: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt. vii. 6). The truth is desecrated by being put before persons wholly unfit for it, as avowed infidels and blasphemers. They are provoked by opposition to further sins, which are an offence to God, injurious to themselves, and shocking to others.

III. SILENCE IS TO BE PREFERRED TO SPEECH WHEN WE FEEL OURSELVES ILL EQUIPPED FOR CONTROVERSY, AND KNOW THE GAINSAYER TO BE WELL EQUIPPED. It is difficult to estimate the injury done to the cause of truth by well-meaning persons, of little natural ability and less acquired learning, who attempt to answer the attacks of well-read and clever sceptics. The best cause may be not only injured, but lost, so far as the immediate occasion goes, by the unskilfulness of its advocates. Ordinary unlearned persons should

decline to argue with educated unbelievers, and refer them to those skilled defenders of the truth, who have never been lacking in any age, and who are numerous in the present. In a court of justice a man is regarded as a fool who pleads his cause in person against a professional lawyer. He should equally decline to plead the cause of religion against a professional impugner of it.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Hezekiah and the Assyrian.* The Assyrian king made a campaign against Judah, Lachish was taken, and the event was commemorated on bas-reliefs in Sennacherib's palace. The place commanded the direct road from Egypt to Judah. Hence the Rabshakeh, one of the chief officers of the Assyrians, was sent against Hezekiah, and by the "conduit of the upper pool"—the very spot where Ahaz had spoken with Isaiah (vii. 3)—he took up his quarters. "Unbelief was then represented by an Israelite, now more naturally by an Assyrian" (Cheyne). To meet him there go forth Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, disciple of Isaiah; Shebna, the secretary (cf. ch. xxii. 15—25); and Joah, the annalist.

I. THE PRIDE AND POWER OF THE ASSYRIAN. It seems to be the very type of worldly pride and power. 1. *His title.* He is the *sarru rabu*, the great king, or the strong king, or the king of hosts. The ruler of Judah is no king at all in his thought, but a name and shadow, or a mere puppet in the hands of a giant. 2. *His contemptuous trust in force.* Hezekiah trusts in a "mere word of the lips," according to the insolent conqueror. What of the *alliance of Egypt?* On the banks of the Nile grow abundance of reeds; a "cracked reed" is the symbol of that alliance, and of the Pharaoh's help (cf. Ezek. xxix. 6, 7). The Assyrian predicts that the alliance will be broken asunder, and that crushing defeat will follow. But what of the *protection of Jehovah?* The Assyrian taunts Hezekiah with inconsistency, and turns his own conduct as a reformer against himself. The latter had abolished the "high places" (2 Kings xviii. 4; 2 Chron. xxxi. 1), and had centred worship at Jerusalem. To a superficial observer it looked as if the God of Israel had been robbed of his altars and a part of his due rites. How, then, could Judah expect the countenance of Jehovah? A reformation is always attended by evils, and it is a weapon in the hands of the enemy to charge these evils upon the reformation itself, instead of upon the human passions stirred up in the course of any great change. So the heathen charged the calamities of the Roman empire on Christianity, and the disorders attending the great Reformation of the sixteenth century were laid at the door of the reformers. Against these weaknesses in the position of Hezekiah, as the Assyrian deems them, he himself opposes *brute force.* He is strong in cavalry, and Judah is weak. Judah may have two thousand horses if she can find riders for them. How can she resist the attack of a single Assyrian satrap? She may well look to Egypt for chariots and horsemen.

II. HIS APPEAL TO THE WEAKNESS OF DOUBTFUL MINDS. 1. The Assyrian *pretends that he has even an oracle from Jehovah* himself to destroy the land of Judah, because of the violation of the high places. Our spiritual enemies would not be so mighty if we were not so weak. In times of trial, it is the doubtful conscience which makes us weak; the self-betraying heart. The reaction and revival even from righteous efforts may be felt by good men. What if when they thought to serve God they have been displeasing him? And now, when danger and opposition have to be encountered, suppose that these assume the aspect, not of obstacles to be overcome in his strength, but of judgments sent in his wrath, to be withstood? There is, after all, no enemy to be feared like the traitor in our bosom, no force against us so formidable as that which is cloudily projected from an uneasy imagination; no bulwark so strong as a conscience void of offence toward God. 2. *He endeavours to undermine the source of spiritual confidence.* Hezekiah had encouraged the people, as he himself was encouraged by Isaiah—by pointing to the Divine Saviour of the nation: "*Jehovah will surely deliver us*, and the city shall not fall into the Assyrian's hands" (cf. ch. xxxvii. 35). How typical this of spiritual temptation! If the devil can get men to question the words of God, his victory is assured. It is not so much the open warfare, the battles about the outposts and fortifications of the faith, that we have to dread, as the sapping and mining opera-

tions directed at the very principle and seat of faith itself. Is this world governed? Has it a righteous constitution and administration? Does all repose upon the mind and will of a just and holy Being? Then faith may live, and the weakest may be strong. Or is all the effect of chance? and are we at the mercy of some blind and fatal power, which neither loves nor knows? Then the stoutest knees will be loosened, and the bravest heart will quail. 3. *He holds out enticing promises.* Let the people make a treaty with the Assyrian. Let them surrender to him, and he will secure them a happy future. They will be removed from their own land, it is true; but they shall find another home in a land equally goodly, abounding in corn and grapes, in bread-corn and orchards. There each family shall possess its vine and its fig tree and its cistern. Here, again, worldly hopes are made to take the field against the instincts of religious faith. Why cling to Judah? Because it was sacred soil—the land of the fathers, the land whose holy centre was Jerusalem, the altar of God, the meeting-place of the tribes, the earthly mirror of heaven. But was not this mere charm of imagination? Were not other lands as fair and as fertile? Could not a peaceful and a happy home be found in distant lands? Perhaps they are clinging to a pleasing illusion, a vain dream, and are blind to the good which lies at their feet. Perhaps they are defending themselves against their own happiness. 4. *He appeals to seeming facts of history.* The "gods of the nations" appear to have gone down before the victorious Assyrian. They, in the struggle, had not manifested a power to save. In ancient thought, religion and political power were closely connected. If a city or a nation stood, it was because of the protecting presence of the national god; its wanderings were his wanderings, its victories the effect of his prowess, its failures the signs of his defeat. Now, the gods of Hamath were captive in Assyrian shrines. And what probability was there, from a heathen point of view, that it would be otherwise with Jehovah, the national God of Israel? Such a rivalry between the long-vanished power and religion of the Assyrian, and that of the living God, whom we at this day own, not only as national God of Israel, but as the Eternal himself—may seem strange. To the eye of the heathen, and from the heathen view of politics and history, it was not so. Time alone can discover the short-sightedness of human calculation, and expose the superficiality of worldly views of history.

III. THE ANSWER OF SILENCE. It was by Hezekiah's command that no answer was returned. "For they had nothing that would seem, from an Assyrian point of view, a satisfactory answer." And the rent clothes of the Jewish officials confess the last extreme of helpless grief. And may not the facts of this situation remind us of spiritual situations? There are hours of perplexed thought when the mind turns its own weapons against itself. All circumstances conspire against us, or seem to do so. We seek for the "bright side" of the situation, but there is no bright side to look upon. We turn to the east, hoping for a ray of light: all is darkness. The known is distinct and threatening; the unknown veiled and, to the depressed imagination, more threatening still. We are cowed by our own reason, quelled by the pressure of our most fixed habits of thinking. The problem is without solution to the intelligence. But there is a secret sympathy of our being with the Unseen. There is a secret channel by which we may communicate with the Unseen, and pierce behind the veil. When temptations close around us like the serried ranks of the Assyrian host, shutting out from view every possible way of escape, we may, nevertheless, believe that there is such a way—a passage into the clear light, which Jehovah has made, and which he will presently reveal.—J.

Ver. 6.—*The broken staff.* "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it." Man must *lean*. He is constituted to rest on some object *outside* himself, and it would be a wise though painful study to review the false resting-places of the human heart. Egypt stands in the Scripture for the world outside God—its pleasure, its skill, its science, its entire wealth of means and appliances. For Egypt was once the repository of the world's wealth, and skill, and science, and beauty, and glory.

I. THIS IS HISTORICAL TRUTH. How eagerly the Jews turned from the true God to idols! Their life was dishonoured during a long part of their history by idolatry, for which they were punished by captivities, and against which they were warned by prophets. Still they rebelled against God, and vexed and grieved his Holy Spirit.

Delivered from Egypt and its slaveries and wrongs, as their fathers were, they yet turned in heart to all that was represented by Egypt.

II. THIS IS SYMBOLIC TRUTH. Men lean still on reeds, that in time become broken reeds. They trust in wealth, friendship, fortune; and these at last give way, and the reed pierces them to the heart. This is the story often told of the world's disappointed conditions—broken health and lost fortunes. Having no God to turn to, men are left desolate and deserted in the hour when heart and flesh faint and fail. We see all this in Byron and Shelley, and in the "Midases" of the world, who love wealth and all that wealth can bring. Nothing in the world answers to the deep necessities of man's immortal nature, and the "rest under the shadow of Egypt" is not broad and deep enough for the soul of man.

III. THIS IS SURPRISING TRUTH. "Lo!" we may well *exclaim*. Is this world a lunatic asylum, after all, full of men and women who have lost the fine balances of judgment? or is it a blind asylum, where they have lost the clear vision of truth? After all the records of observation and of history, has it come to this—that each succeeding generation takes up the old lie and forsakes the living God? Even now and here, where the Saviour says, "Come unto me and rest," how many seek "rest" out of God! Some find human love itself a broken reed, and in their hours of sad discovery turn cynical and despairing, whilst to others friendship itself has proved superficial and fickle. There *are* many who have drawn out the broken reed, and dressed the wound as well as they may; but it remains unhealed. What they really want is the balm of Gilead and the great Physician of souls.—W. M. S.

Vers. 4—21.—*Contemptuousness.* An air of intolerable arrogance breathes in almost every sentence of this "railing Rabshakeh." It comes out in insolent characterization (vers. 5, 6), in disdainful challenge (ver. 8), in haughty self-confidence (ver. 9), in contemptuous disregard of the conventionalities of war (ver. 12), in a reprehensible vulgarity (ver. 12), etc. From this incident, or from other parts of Scripture, we conclude respecting it—

I. THAT IT IS APT TO BE VERY IGNORANT. Rabshakeh made a large and even ludicrous mistake respecting the action of Hezekiah in his iconoclastic policy. He thought the Jewish king was doing that which would excite the anger of Jehovah, when he was really securing his Divine favour (ver. 7). Contemptuous men are often found to be ignorant: and, naturally, if not necessarily, so; for they imagine themselves to be above the necessity to inquire and ascertain, and their assumptions are soon discovered to be false. Those who are too proud to learn must be content to be numbered with the foolish.

II. THAT IT SINKS INTO IMPIETY. Rabshakeh held up to derision the idea that Jehovah could preserve Jerusalem (ver. 15), and classed the Lord of heaven with the helpless deities of Syria (vers. 18—20). The arrogant spirit is essentially an irreverent one. Men that look with scorn upon the human soon come to regard themselves as independent of the Divine. They are not deified in the daring and presumptuous form which was once known; but they assume to themselves a power, a control, a providence, which belongs only to the Lord of our hearts and lives. Hence we find—

III. THAT IT MAKES FATAL BLUNDERS. The king for whom Rabshakeh was speaking and whose haughty determination he was announcing *never did* "come and take away" to his own land these despised Jews who were on the walls of Jerusalem. He returned with haste and humiliation into his own land. The scornful will find that events do not fill up their bold outlines; on the contrary, they will entirely traverse them: their pretensions will be overthrown, and their promises and their threats left unfulfilled.

Expel the contemptuous spirit from the heart: it is an evil thing in itself, and it works evil to him that cherishes it. 1. It is exceedingly unlovely; it is utterly unbecoming in any child of man who, be he what he may, stands on the same level of fallibility on which his fellows stand. 2. It meets with the deep displeasure, and will bring down the strong rebuke, of God. He resists the proud and humiliates them. 3. It is only worthy of the disregard of man; all wise people, when they are treated with arrogance, return a rebuking silence, like these sensible sons of Jerusalem (ver. 21).—C.

Ver. 6.—*Treacherous trusts.* The arrogant language of Rabshakeh was full enough

of falsehood, but it had one grain of truth. Egypt *was* but a broken reed on which to lean, and any trust reposed in its aid would be attended with disaster and humiliation. The imagery which is here used is forcible enough, and it admirably describes the character and the consequences of an ill-founded confidence. Of these treacherous trusts are—

I. OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. 1. We are expressly warned of God not to lean on this (Prov. iii. 5). 2. Our known weakness, our incapacity to penetrate the hearts of men and to foresee the issue of events, our liability to make deplorable and ruinous mistakes,—this should teach us to forbear. 3. And the many lamentable instances, recorded in histories and witnessed by our own eyes, of the evil consequences of men trusting to their own sagacity, should also dissuade and deter us.

II. HUMAN FRIENDSHIPS. The language of Scripture on this subject is remarkably, is significantly, strong (Jer. xvii. 5). When we consider how often it has happened, as the consequence of human insufficiency, not only that men have failed to secure what they were expecting, but that they have been thereby plunged into the deepest distress and even into irremediable ruin; that—to use the image of Rabshakeh—the staff has not only broken under them, but pierced the hand that leant on it;—we may well feel that this scriptural language is not a whit too strong. Human friendship breaks down and wounds us by its fracture, (1) through the limitations of our faculty; (2) through inconstancy, and even treachery; (3) through moral or spiritual shipwreck.

III. TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES. Riches, rank, official position and the power it confers, —these are things on which we are prone to place reliance. But woe unto the man who has no firmer ground on which to build! In the day of his calamity, in the hour of bereavement, in the time of desolation, in the hour of death, those things will fail him; and to have trusted in any or in all of them, to the negligence of a hope that is surer than they, will add unspeakable bitterness to the sense of failure and of need. The broken reed will pierce the hand that holds it.

Only in a Divine Saviour, whose wisdom will never be found wanting, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose power to succour and befriend in the saddest sorrows and darkest hours will continually suffice—only in him will be found the support which "cannot be broken." "Our God is a Rock;" and blessed is the man who rests all the weight of his joy and of his hope on his inviolable word, on his irrefragable power.—C.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The invitation of the enemy.* The King of Assyria, by the mouth of his general, appeals to the citizens of Jerusalem to abandon their allegiance to Hezekiah and "go out to him," promising them great advantages for their disloyalty. It is closely analogous to the invitation of our spiritual enemy to go over to him and receive the wages of sin which he offers to our souls.

I. IT IS A VERY PLAUSIBLE OFFER. 1. Under the circumstances in which they then were, *loyalty was threatened* with decided disadvantage: (1) with privation, for there was the probability of a long siege and its attendant scarcities; (2) with suffering, or even death, for attacks would be made and missiles would be hurled against the city. 2. On the other hand, *surrender promised material good:* (1) present exemption from exigency and assault (ver. 16); and (2) abundance of comfort in future days (ver. 17). So is it in the spiritual realm. Our great Adversary seeks to allure us from the true citizenship, and he has a plausible proposal to make. He says (1) that to serve God is to suffer loss; is to be shut out from many sources of wealth and joy; is to be starved and beggared; is to be exposed to the dislike, the derision, the hostile action of those who are the strongest and most numerous among men. He says also (2) that to be on the side of evil is to be in the way of prosperity; that its land is "a land of corn and wine," of strength and joy, of material prosperity and sensual enjoyment: be selfish and unscrupulous, and the prizes of life and the pleasures of sense are yours. But in regard to each of these proposals, the historical and the existing, it must be considered that—

II. IT IS ESSENTIALLY FALSE. 1. Rabshakeh and his royal master were both mistaken in their calculations. Jerusalem was not to be reduced to the severe straits of a protracted siege, was not to be taken by assault; neither want nor sword was to devastate the city. And they left the most important consideration out of their account; for even if their military projects had succeeded, and if the Jews had been defeated and had found the plains of the Tigris as fruitful as the valley of the Jordan, yet would

they have missed and mourned the liberty, the sacred services, the natural independence of their own beloved country,—they would have hung their harps upon the willows, instead of making them sound the joyous strains of patriotism and piety. 2. Our spiritual enemy is also essentially wrong in his representations; he, too, leaves the principal considerations out of his reckoning. (1) All that we lose by our loyalty to God is that which no wise man would accept—iniquitous gain, injurious friendship, demoralizing pleasure, etc.; it is well, indeed, to be without these. (2) All that we could gain by subservience to his unholy will would leave us unblessed with the true riches—with the favour and friendship of God, with a sense of moral and spiritual integrity, with the power of rendering holy service to our kind, with the joy of sacred intercourse with a Divine Redeemer and with like-minded fellow-servants, with the elevating and sustaining hopes that "enter within the veil."—C.

Ver. 2.—*Right attitude in times of threatening.* This general of the Assyrian army seems to have been a rude, violent, boastful man, who thought to do his work by means of great swelling words. He was big in threatening; and it is not often that such men prove big in deeds. Dean Plumptre says that "his words, in their brutal coarseness, have hardly a parallel in history, till we come to Bismarck's telling the Parisians that they may 'stew in their own gravy.'" The Rabshakeh, it should be observed, stood in the position, while he thus threatened, which intimated his power to destroy the aqueduct which supplied the city with water. Times of threatening are to be clearly distinguished from times of actual calamity. Trouble threatened is apt to relax our natures and weaken us with fears. Trouble actually come calls out our powers of endurance, and braces us for bearing and battling. And so, sometimes, trouble threatened, taking bigger shape in appearance than it ever can take in reality, has a special work of testing to do. He must be well centred in God who holds fast his calmness and trust, even in times of fright. Society is peculiarly liable—more especially highly civilized society—to sudden fears, which very easily become helpless panic. A few criminals in a great city get an hour's licence, and loot the shops in one district, and the whole city goes into a panic, stops its business, and pours its wealth into a fund to quiet the people who had little or nothing to do with the looting. So it has been again and again in the world's history. Threatenings have been more morally mischievous than actual calamity. The godly man should be easily master even of such circumstances.

I. HE KNOWS WELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOAST AND PERFORMANCE. Observation teaches him that the man who threatens much accomplishes little; the man who swears and yields to passion is always weak in action. There is "sound, and nothing more." There is always room for this good advice, "Let not him that putteth on his armour boast as he that putteth it off."

II. HE KNOWS THAT THIS CONDITION APPLIES TO ALL THREATENINGS AND ALARMS: "IF THE LORD WILL." Men cannot, any more than tidal waves, go beyond their appointed bounds. Threats may do the Lord's will, but they can do nothing beyond the Lord's will. The godly man, therefore, waits to read God's will behind the threats or the fears, and can afford to be quite calm, and master of all circumstances.

III. HE KNOWS THAT GOD IS ALWAYS ON THE SIDE OF THE PERMANENTLY GOOD, AND IS ALWAYS WORKING TOWARDS IT. The way to the good is often like the twisting and winding of the stream of Jordan; but the godly man does not make too much of the rushes and rapids in the twists and falls—he knows Jordan moves steadily on to the sea, and life, however ruffled may be its surface, moves on to fulfil the good purpose of God. We may do as did the apostolic company when its leaders were threatened—we may bend before our God, and pray, "Now, Lord, behold their threatenings" (Acts iv. 29, 30).—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Satire on our human confidences.* Evidently the Rabshakeh was informed concerning the parties that divided the people of Jerusalem at this time. Hezekiah seems to have been so far persuaded as to give his reluctant assent to sending the embassy to Egypt. The complaints which Sennacherib had to make against Hezekiah were (1) that he had refused tribute (2 Kings xviii. 14); (2) that he had opened negotiations with Babylon and Egypt (2 Kings xviii. 24), with a view to an alliance

against Assyria; (3) that he had helped the Philistines of Ekron to rise against their king. The second of these is dealt with in this verse. The Rabshakeh satirizes the helplessness of Egypt, likening that nation to a *cracked*, not *broken*, reed, which breaks suddenly, and pierces the hand of him who leans hard on it as a supporting staff. The keenness of the satire lies in the truth of it. Of the hopelessness of leaning on Egypt Isaiah had already warned the people (ch. xxx. 7, see the true reading). Egypt, in relation to Israel, is the type of the human confidences to which men turn so readily in their distress, forgetful of the Divine confidence in which alone they can be secure.

I. THE SATIRE OF GOD'S MINISTERS. Illustrate from the Prophet Isaiah, who dealt so vigorously with this trusting to Egypt. Sometimes he gave serious and solemn warnings; sometimes grave reproaches; and sometimes keen criticism and biting satire, as if he would shame them into giving up the foolish and hopeless scheme. He put the character of Egypt into a word, almost an offensive word. Cheyne suggests that he wrote this word *Rahab*, "utter indolence," "helpless inaction," in large characters, and set it up in a public place. That was his idea of Egypt. So, still, Christian ministers must not hesitate to wither up men's self-trusting and man-trusting with the keenest satire. It is a fair weapon for destroying self-confidences.

II. THE SATIRE OF RIVALS. Such was the satire of Assyria, through its Rabshakeh. At this time Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt were each seeking the alliance of Judah, and the jealousy of the one that did not succeed found expression in descriptions of the one that did. We can often get some self-knowledge through the things our rivals say of us in the bitterness of their disappointment. It is often surprising, it should be always helpful, to "see oursel's as ithers see us."

III. THE SATIRE OF EVENTS. Ridiculous indeed was the help Egypt afforded to Judah. The strength of Egypt at this time was one of appearance only. Egypt never has been a country that could be relied on. It did not save Judah. Its alliance only hurried on the fate of Judah. The cracked reed broke, and pierced the hand. "Experience is a dear school, but fools will learn in no other." The logic of events soon shows up the folly of all confidences in man. Impress, in conclusion, from the figures of the very striking passage, Jer. xvii. 5—8.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Mistakes concerning him whom we trust.* The explanation of this taunt is well given by Sayce and Cheyne. "Sennacherib had heard of the reformation of worship undertaken by Hezekiah. This, from his heathen point of view, was an act of gross impiety towards Jehovah; for had not Jehovah from time immemorial been worshipped at most, if not all, of the 'high places'? The local sanctuaries designated by the latter phrase appear from the inscriptions to have been known in Assyria and Babylonia, as well as Palestine; indeed, they go back to Accadian—that is, pre-Semitic times." As he had passed through the country, the Rabshakeh had found the "high places" desecrated; so he assumed that the God of the country must be offended with Hezekiah. One of our gravest difficulties in witnessing for God in the world arises from men's mistakes concerning him. They do not understand us, or feel the force of our pleadings, because they do not apprehend God as we do. This subject may be very practically illustrated and enforced from three spheres of modern religious activity and service—missions, apologetics, preaching.

I. THE MISTAKES OF THE HEATHEN CONCERNING OUR GOD HINDER MISSIONS. They have notions of God, or the gods, and attach them to the God we reveal to them. Much missionary labour is necessarily expended in correcting the mistakes which prevent the acceptance of the way of salvation by Christ Jesus. God pure, God love, God hating sin, God a Spirit, God our Father, God in sacrifice that he might save,—these are all most strange and confusing to men who must think amidst heathen associations. It is eternal life to know the only true God.

II. THE MISTAKES OF THE OPPONENTS OF REVELATION HINDER OUR ARGUMENTS FROM PRODUCING DUE CONVICTIONS. The atheist, infidel, agnostic, sceptic, make as grave mistakes about our God as the Rabshakeh did about Jehovah. They have created figures and representations of him which we can join them in declaring make him unworthy of trust. Only those figures do not represent *our God*. We cannot acknowledge them. If the mistakes could but be corrected, and our God be known as he is, they would "preach the faith" who now "seek to destroy it." Grave, indeed, is the sin

of those who, professing to believe in God, nevertheless misrepresent him, and so give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

III. THE MISTAKES OF SECTS AND CREEDS HINDER RELIGIOUS WORK AMONG PROFESSORS. There is the Calvinistic God, and the Arminian God, the God who is exacting Judge, Moral Governor, august King. There are vague, repellent notions cherished in ignorant minds; and the preacher often speaks of a God who is really to the people an "unknown God." The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to bring the full, last, all-satisfying revelation of God to men. We are still making hindering mistakes about God, because we will not receive his revelation. He taught men to lift up holy hands, and say, "Our *Father*, which art in heaven."—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Claims to speak for God.* "The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it." The inscriptions of Sennacherib are remarkable for similar assertions to this. He delights, apparently, to claim a Divine sanction for the wars in which he was engaged. Some think that he may have heard of Isaiah's declaration, that Jehovah was using the King of Assyria as his instrument (see ch. vii. 17, 18). We are bound to receive the messages of God, in whatsoever form they may come to us; but we are bound also to test the credentials of every messenger who brings them. For testing the messengers, adequate provisions have been made. We can "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." A suggestive illustration may be found in the narrative of the disobedient prophet (1 Kings xiii.). The *old* prophet claimed to speak in the name of God, and so over-persuaded the younger man. But that young man might reasonably have argued thus: "I have my instructions direct from God; they are definite and clear, and I must have the most convincing evidence before I turn aside from fulfilling the instructions given me." It was right to doubt even Christ so far as to require satisfactory signs and proofs that he had come from God. Men may make claims, as fanatics and enthusiasts do in every age; we shall not heed until they prove the claim. Illustrate by Johanna Southcote, Swedenborg, Irving, etc. We suggest some tests for judging claims to speak for God.

I. REASONABLE PROBABILITY. We suspect many things because they are not likely. It was very suspicious to assume that Jehovah had given direct and audible commands to Sennacherib. Many of the visions and mysteries of Swedenborg are judged by their unreasonableness and improbability. God's ways may be *beyond* reason, but they are not foolish to the view of reason. The test of reason is carried too far when a full and accurate *understanding* is demanded, but it may fairly be applied to decide what is *probable*.

II. BOOK OF THE LAW. The Israelites were required to test all who claimed to be prophets by the harmony between their spoken word and the existing written Word. "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." The Scriptures have a tone and character which is even more important than their precise details. Apply these to claimants, and they will test, as do chemical solvents. All who know and love God's Word become sensitive to that which is in harmony with it.

III. RESPONSE OF CONSCIENCE. This test may be illustrated by Jonah's mission to Nineveh. Jonah had no credentials. He might have been treated as an impostor. But the conscience of Nineveh responded to his message, and conscience guaranteed faith. All messages from God that come as warnings, reproaches, awakenings, threatenings, can be tried by conscience, and its "accusings and excusings." So none of us need be uncertain whom to believe.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Security of stable government.* "The fig tree affords a thick shade, and is, on this account, a favourite resort of the family, where they may often be seen seated on mats, partaking of a meal or entertaining friends. The expression, 'to sit under one's own vine and fig tree,' denotes at once security, domestic enjoyment, and competence." The expression is either a common Eastern proverb, or the Rabshakeh takes up the language of the people he addresses, in his chaffing, taunting, satirical way. The sentence and figure are found also in 1 Kings iv. 25; Zech. iii. 10. Mr. Thomas Jenner, writing of a dwelling just outside Jerusalem, says, "Mr. Azam's house is approached through a gateway of considerable width, from which to the door a broad path leads

through the garden. This path is spanned by a wooden trellis, upon which a vine is trained, and at the time of our visit delicious grapes were hanging from it. As I contemplated this scene from within doors, or took the morning and evening air, sauntering between gate and door, I could but recall this striking figure of security and peace." The point before us is, that the Rabshakeh promises the people that safety which comes from the rule of a strong and stable government. He scarcely veils his taunts at the parties and political commotions which were destroying the sense of security, and making foreign complications, for the people of Judah. We too seldom realize the importance of strong, stable government in a country. It may be illustrated in the following directions.

I. STABLE GOVERNMENT CHECKS PARTY FEELING. If the government be weak, its enemies are active, public opinion is kept agitated, demagogues appear and exaggerate public disabilities and public claims. Men are diverted from their proper pursuits to engage in political wrangle; the relationships of life are embittered by party divisions; and valuable national time is lost in unprofitable contentions. If the government be strong, the anarchical forces subside. Blessed is the land that is generally free from political strife.

II. STABLE GOVERNMENT VIGOROUSLY REPRESSES EVIL-DOERS. And on this the security and prosperity of a country most directly depends. Business can only be carried on where there is security for property and security for rights. Illustrate from the condition of Israel when "there was no king in the land, and every one did that which was right in his own eyes."

III. STABLE GOVERNMENT CAN ENCOURAGE THE ARTS OF PEACE AND ACCOMPLISH JUDICIOUS REFORMS. It holds foreign relations with firm hand, and so preserves peace. It can crush the agitator and heed the reformer. Spared from contention, it has time and means for aiding internal development. And it can stand by and preserve the liberties of those who, in a thousand ways, would spread among the people the knowledge of the true God and the eternal life. Therefore every good Christian and good citizen should strengthen the government of his day. "The powers that be are ordained of God."—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Insult offered to our God.* It is an insult to class Jehovah with the idol-gods created by heathen imaginations and presented in heathen symbolic figures. Jehovah is like none else; he is God alone. The impertinence of this Rabshakeh is seen in that he sets Jehovah among the petty and inferior gods of small nations, and assumes that Asshur and Ishtar, the gods of Assyria, were supreme above them all. Cheyne says, "The Assyrian is inconsistent. In his first speech he had stated himself to be the obedient instrument of Jehovah. Here he represents the wars of the Assyrians as inspired by a religious hostility to all the gods of the nations." The point which may be illustrated is—What should be our attitude in the presence of such insults? For they are offered now. The scoffer still lives. The sceptic still flings over God the dark shadow of his doubtings. Literature, too, often thinly veils its insults. We should variously meet the occasions, adapting our response to the nature of the insult and the character of him who offers it. Three forms of response may be considered.

I. CALM INDIFFERENCE. Very many of the bravely uttered scepticisms of our time are only designed to draw attention to those who utter them. They are in the nature of personal advertisements. Leave them alone. They are nothing; we must take care not to swell them into something by directing attention to them. Sometimes these insults are petty and nagging, but continuous. Again, indifference is the best treatment. Those who have faith in God make grave mistakes when they too vigorously defend God against the arrows of mere children. To noisy antagonism we may calmly say, "It doesn't matter."

II. NOBLE TESTIMONY. There is a time to speak. When insults have grown to such power that the faith of the young, or the work of grace in the world, is imperilled, we must speak out. The Christian apologist has his time and his sphere, especially when a kind of mania of unbelief seems to seize upon a people. Illustrate from the three Hebrew youths; the apostles before the Sanhedrim; Paul before Agrippa; Luther at the Diet of Worms, etc. Firm testimony of our personal convictions will often silence the scoffer.

III. ACTIVE VINDICATION. By reasonable judgments on those who offer the insult. Blasphemy ought to be a crime. By withdrawal from association with those who thus walk disorderly. The man who has no reverence for God has no basis of character which makes friendship with him safe. And by using all available means for clearing the outraged name, and upholding the imperilled honour of him who is our "All and in all."—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The strength of silence.* "They held their peace, and answered him not a word." The readiest thing is to meet taunt with taunt, and rouse each other's worst passions with mutual recriminations. The noblest thing is to meet undeserved and unworthy reproach and insult with the dignified silence which is born of trust in God as our Vindicator. But worthy silence must be carefully distinguished from the dumbness of the sulky temperament, which is a sign of the uncultured and ungoverned nature. We should never confuse the silence of stupidity with the silence of self-restraint. Matthew Henry quaintly and wisely says, "It is sometimes prudent 'not to answer a fool according to his folly.' These Jews had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and, if they should fall a-railing like him, Rabshakeh would be much too hard for them at that weapon." Fixing attention on the two facts—that the people kept silence, and that they did so in obedience to Hezekiah, we get the following two points for illustration.

I. SILENCE IN AN EVIL TIME INDICATES SELF-MASTERY. Remember what the Apostle James says of the unruliness of the tongue. Observe how readily we are excited to answer again. Recall the anxiety of the psalmist about keeping the door of his lips. Notice how speakers are carried to the utterance of imprudent things by the heat of discussion. Estimate the mischief done by careless, cruel, or passionate words. And see the sublime example of our Lord when on his trial. "He answered nothing." "He held his peace." This last expression suggests that silence is a sign of strength of will; the man who can keep silence is master of his actions, and master of himself. Silence is oftentimes, in its effect, the truest and most powerful speech. It shames men; it quiets men; it reproaches men; it conquers the opposition of men; it shows the right to all bystanders and onlookers. It has been said that there is such a thing as a "Divine dumbness;" and Carlyle calls "speech silvern, silence golden." The sublime self-mastery of Heaven is suggested in the declaration that "there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

II. SILENCE IN A PUBLIC EVIL TIME SHOWS POWER OF COMMAND OVER OTHERS. It was a great thing for Hezekiah to keep silence himself; and it was a great thing also for him to command silence in the people. Only the man who can control himself can ever have the power to control others. Illustrations of the importance of this power of checking speech in others may be taken from family life and Church life. It is of special value in excited, irritating, quarrelsome times.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

This chapter is the sequel of the preceding, and is so closely connected with it that the two really constitute but one narrative. Ver. 22 of ch. xxxvi. is more closely connected with ch. xxxvii. than with the position of the narrative to which it is attached.

Ver. 1.—**When King Hezekiah heard it**; rather, *heard them*; i.e. the "words of Rabshakeh," which his officials reported to him. **He rent his clothes.** He did as they had done (ch. xxxvi. 22; see the comment on that verse). But he went further, showing a deeper sense of horror and affliction than the officials had shown by being **covered with sackcloth** (on the combination of the two modes of showing grief or horror, see Gen. xxxvii. 34; 2 Sam. iii. 31; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Esth. iv. 1, etc.). **And went into the house of the Lord.** The temple was not only a place for offering praise and sacrifice, but also a "house of prayer" (*infra*, ch. lvi. 7; comp. 1 Kings viii. 28—30). Hezekiah can, on this occasion, have gone up to the house of the Lord only to pray.

Ver. 2.—**He sent Eliakim . . . and Shebna . . . and the elders of the priests.** A dignified embassy, showing how much Isaiah was held in honour (comp. 2 Kings xxii. 14 and Jer. xxxviii. 3; and contrast, on the

other hand, the rudeness of Ahab in sending a single eunuch to bring Micaiah into his presence, 1 Kings xxii. 9). The prophets, as representatives of Jehovah, were entitled to respect and observance even from kings.

Ver. 3.—**A day . . . of rebuke**; rather, *of reproof*, or *punishment* (comp. Ps. cxlix. 7 and Hos. v. 9). That God should have allowed such an insulting embassy to come and go in safety was a mode of reproving his people, and to some extent punishing them for their sins. Even Hezekiah himself deserved reproof for having so long placed his reliance upon Egypt (ch. xx. 5, 6; xxx. 1—4; xxxvi. 6, 9), though now apparently he had turned to Jehovah, and relied on him only (ch. xxxvi. 7, 15). **Blasphemy.** So Delitzsch. Mr. Cheyne suggests "contumely," and Dr. Kay "contempt." But the meaning "blasphemy," which Mr. Cheyne confesses to "suit the context," is required in all the other passages where (substantially) the same word occurs (Neh. ix. 18, 26; Ezek. xxxv. 12). Hezekiah calls the day one "of blasphemy," on account of Rabshakeh's impious utterances (ch. xxxvi. 15, 18, 20). **The children are come to the birth**, etc. This was a proverbial phrase for a time of extreme difficulty (see Hos. xiii. 13), and is not to be pressed as embodying at all a close analogy. Judah was in sore trouble, and was expecting deliverance. It seemed now as if she would not have strength to go through the crisis, but would perish through weakness.

Ver. 4.—**It may be the Lord . . . will hear**; *i.e.* "will notice," or "will punish." If Isaiah laid the matter before God, and prayed earnestly, it was possible that God would intervene to save Judah, and punish the blasphemous words uttered. **The living God.** In opposition to the dead idols of the heathen, which had neither life, nor breath, nor perception (see Ps. cxv. 4—8; cxxxv. 15—18). **The remnant that is left.** It is usual to explain this of Judah generally, which still survived, although Israel had been carried away captive. But perhaps the contrast is rather between the numerous *Judæan* captives who had been taken and conveyed to Assyria by Sennacherib when he took the "fenced cities" (ch. xxxvi. 1), and the portion of the nation which still remained in the land. Sennacherib says, in his annals, that he took "forty-six" cities, and carried captive to Assyria above two hundred thousand persons ('Records of the Past,' vol. i. p. 38).

Ver. 6.—**The servants of the King of Assyria.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "the *minions* of the King of Assyria," remarking truly that the word used is not the ordinary one for "servants," but "a disparaging expression." Perhaps the best translation would be *lackeys*.

Ver. 7.—**Behold, I will send a blast upon him**; rather, *I will put a spirit within him*; i.e. I will take away from him the spirit of pride and arrogance by which he has been hitherto actuated, and I will infuse into his heart, instead, a spirit of hesitation and fear. **He shall hear a rumour**; literally, as Delitzsch translates, *he shall hear a hearsay*; i.e. "a report," or "tidings." It is uncertain what "tidings" are intended. Some suppose "tidings of the movements of Tirhakah;" others, "tidings of the destruction of his host;" a few, "tidings of an insurrection in some other part of the Assyrian empire." This last supposition is wholly gratuitous, since we have no indication, either in Scripture or in the inscriptions, of any such insurrection. The choice lies between the other two, or between one or other of them, and the two combined. The vagueness is owing, not to the time at which the present narrative took shape, but to the fact that a vague promise—quite sufficient for its purpose—was given at first, the filling in of the details being reserved for a later period (see vers. 22—35). **I will cause him to fall by the sword** (see ver. 38).

Ver. 8.—**Rabshakeh . . . found the King of Assyria warring against Libnah.** Libnah was a town at no great distance from Lachish (Josh. x. 31; xv. 39—42). It was also near Mareshah (Josh. xv. 42—44), and must therefore have belonged to the more southern portion of the Shefeleh, and probably to the eastern region, where the hills sink down into the plain. The exact site is very uncertain, and still remains to be discovered. Sennacherib's object in moving upon Libnah is doubtful; but it would seem, from his monuments, that he had captured Lachish (Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' pp. 149—152), and had gone on to Libnah, as the next stronghold on the way to Egypt.

Ver. 9.—**Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia.** Tirhakah is among the most famous of the monarchs belonging to this period. The Greeks called him "Tearchon," the Assyrians "Tarku" or "Tarqu." His name, as represented on his own monuments, is "Tahark" or "Tahrak." According to the Egyptian remains, he had a reign of at least twenty-six years in Egypt—from B.C. 693 to B.C. 667. He would seem, however, to have been King of Ethiopia, and lord paramount of the lower valley of the Nile, from about B.C. 700, Shabatok for some years ruling Egypt, or a portion of it, as his deputy (Rawlinson, 'Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 450). Hezekiah's negotiations had, it is probable, been with Tirhakah (ch. xix. 13; xx. 5; xxx. 1—6). This monarch, having engaged to help him, now put his

forces in motion, and began to descend the Nile valley to his relief. His movement rather provoked than alarmed Sennacherib, who, having defeated one Egyptian army in B.C. 701 ('Eponym Canon,' pp. 133, 134), was confident of success against another. **He sent messengers.** It is not very clear what advantage Sennacherib expected from this second embassy. He had no fresh argument to bring forward, unless it were a suggestion that Hezekiah's God was endeavouring to deceive him. In the main, vers. 10—13 are a mere expansion of ch. xxxvi. 18—20.

Ver. 10.—**Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee.** Sennacherib recognized Jehovah as *a* god, the God of the Jews, but put him on a par with the other "gods of the nations" (ver. 11), and did not believe in his being able to contend with Asshur. If he were really, through his priests or prophets, giving Hezekiah assurances of protection and deliverance, he could only be "deceiving" him.

Ver. 11.—**Thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands** (compare the Assyrian inscriptions, *passim*). Tiglath-Pileser I. calls himself "the conquering hero, the terror of whose name has overwhelmed *all regions*" ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 8); Asshur-izir-pal, "the king who subdued *all the races of men*" (ibid., vol. vii. p. 11); Shalmaneser II., "the marcher over *the whole world*" (ibid., vol. v. p. 29); Shamas-Vul, "the trampler on *the world*" (ibid., vol. i. 12). Sargon says that "the gods had granted him the exercise of his sovereignty over *all* kings" (ibid., vol. ix. p. 4), and that he "reigned from the two beginnings to the two ends of the four celestial points" (ibid., vol. xi. p. 33), *i.e.* from the furthest north to the furthest south, and from the extreme east to the extreme west. Sennacherib himself says, "Asshur, father of the gods, among *all* kings firmly has raised me, and *over all that dwell in the countries* he caused to increase my weapons" (ibid., vol. xi. p. 49). From first to last, in their inscriptions, the monarchs claim a universal dominion.

Ver. 12 — **My fathers.** The Assyrian monarchs call all those who have preceded them upon the throne their "fathers," without intending to claim any blood-relationship. Sargon, Sennacherib's father, though a usurper and the first king of a new dynasty, frequently speaks of "the kings his fathers" ('Records of the Past,' vol. vii. pp. 39, 51, etc.). **Gozan . . . Haran . . . Rezeph . . . Telassar.** "Gozan" is, beyond all doubt, the region known to the Greeks as Gauzanitis, which was the eastern portion of Upper Mesopotamia, or the country about the sources of the Khabour river. The Assyrian conquest of this tract is indicated by the settlement of the Israelites in the region (2 Kings xvii. 6; xviii. 11; 1 Chron. v. 26). "Haran" is the well-known "city of Nahor" (Gen. xxiv. 10), called in Acts vii. 2 "Charran," and by the Greeks and Romans, Carrhæ. It has now recovered its old designation, and is known as *Harran*. "Rezeph" was in the neighbouroood of Haran, and is mentioned as belonging to Assyria as early as B.C. 775 ('Eponym Canon,' p. 82). It had probably revolted and been reduced at a later date. "Telassar," "the Hill of Asshur," is not mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, but was probably the Assyrian name of a town on or near the Euphrates, in the country of the Beni-Eden, which was not far from Carchemish (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. iii. pp. 90—92). **The children of Eden.** The Assyrian inscriptions mention a "Bit-Adini" (comp. Amos i. 5), and a chief who is called "the son of Adini;" both belonging to the Middle Euphrates region. The "children of Eden" (Beni-Eden) were probably the people of the tract about Bit-Adini.

Ver. 13.—**Hamath . . . Arphad . . . Sepharvaim** (see the comment upon ch. xxxvi 19).

Ver. 14.—**Hezekiah received the letter.** Sennacherib sent his present message in a written form. The communications between kings were often carried on in this way (see 2 Kings v. 5; xx. 12). The Hebrews use the same word for "letter" and "book;" but, when a letter is intended, employ generally the plural number (compare the Greek ἐπιστολαί and the Latin *litteræ*). **And spread it before the Lord.** Not that God might see it and read it, in a material sense, but still that he might take note of it, and, if he saw fit, punish it. Compare the exhibition of the Books of the Law, painted with idolatrous emblems, at Maspha, "over against" the temple, by Judas Maccabæus and his companions (1 Macc. iii. 46—48). The act in both cases implied the referring of the whole matter to God for his consideration. It was, as Delitzsch, says, a sort of "prayer without words."

Ver. 16.—**O Lord . . . that dwellest between the cherubims;** literally, *that sittest upon the cherubim.* The allusion is scarcely to the poetic imagery of God ridiug on the cherubim in the heavens (Ps. xviii. 10), as Mr. Cheyne suggests; but rather to his dwelling between the two cherubic forms in the holy of holies, and there manifesting himself (comp. Numb. vii. 89; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; 1 Chron. xiii. 6; Ps. lxxx. 1; xcix. 1). **Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.** It has been questioned whether Hezekiah was really as pronounced a monotheist as these expressions would imply, and suggested that

his actual words received "a colouring" from a later writer. Hezekiah's contemporaries, it is said, Isaiah and Micah, make no such strong statements of their belief in one only God as this (Kuenen, Cheyne). But it is difficult to see what can be a clearer revelation of monotheism than ch. vi. 1—5, or what truth more absolutely underlies the whole of Isaiah's teaching than the unity of the Supreme Being. The same under-current is observable in Micah (i. 2, 3; iv. 5; vi. 6—9; vii. 17, 18). Sennacherib's belief, that each country has its own god (ch. xxxvi. 18—20), is not shared by the religious Jews of his time. They are well aware that the heathen gods are "vanity" (ch. lxvi. 3; Hos. iv. 15; Amos i. 5; Jonah ii. 8), "wind" and "confusion" (ch. xli. 29, etc.). **Thou hast made heaven and earth** (comp. Gen. i. 1; Ps. cii. 25; ch. xl. 26—28; xlii. 5, etc.).

Ver. 17.—**Incline thine ear . . . open thine eyes.** This is a conscious pleading of the promise made to Solomon (2 Chron. vii. 15).

Ver. 18.—**Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations.** This was a stubborn fact, which it was impossible to deny. From the time of Asshur-izirpal at any rate, about B.C. 880, Assyria had pursued for nearly two centuries a steady career of conquest, reducing the nations which were her neighbours, almost without exception, and gradually spreading her power from the tract immediately about Nineveh to the Persian Gulf on the south, the great plateau of Iran on the east, the Armenian Mountains (Niphates and Taurus) on the north, and on the west to Cilicia and the Mediterranean. Her progress towards the west alone is marked in Scripture, since there alone she came in contact with God's people. Under Pul (about B.C. 760) she attacked Samaria (2 Kings xv. 19); under Tiglath-Pileser II. she carried off a portion of the ten tribes (2 Kings xv. 29); under the same monarch she subjugated Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 9); under Shalmaneser she besieged (2 Kings xvii. 5), and under Sargon took, Samaria (2 Kings xvii. 6); under Sargon also she invaded Philistia and captured Ashdod (ch. xx. 1). Now she was bent on subduing Judæa, and so preparing the way for the reduction of Egypt. Humanly speaking, it was most unlikely that the small and weak state of Judæa would be able to resist her. But God was all-powerful, and might be pleased to cast down, as he had been pleased to exalt (ch. x. 5—19). Hence Hezekiah's appeal.

Ver. 19.—**And have cast their gods into the fire.** The more valuable of the foreign idols were usually carried off by the Assyrians, and placed in the shrines of their own gods as trophies of victory; but no doubt great numbers of the inferior idols, which were of wood, not even coated with metal—the *ξόανα* of the Greeks—were burnt. **For they were no gods** (comp. Jer. ii. 11; v. 7; xvi. 20, etc.). Isaiah's favourite word for "idols" is *elilim*, which is, etymologically, "not-gods" (ch. ii. 8, 18, 20; x. 10, 11; xix. 1, 3; xxxi. 7). **The work of men's hands** (see ch. ii. 8; xl. 19; xli. 7, etc.). The absurdity of men's worshipping as gods what their own hands had made is ever increasingly ridiculed by the religious Jews (comp. Ps. cxv. 4—8; ch. xliv. 9—20; Jer. x. 3—15; 'Ep. of Jeremy,' 8—73).

Ver. 20.—**Save us . . . that all the kingdoms . . . may know,** etc. God's true servants desire deliverance and triumph over enemies, not alone for their own sakes, not even for the sake of the country or people whose fate is bound up with their own, but for the glory of God, that his honour may be vindicated in the sight of the world at large. It is a large part of the satisfaction of Moses at the passage of the Red Sea, that "the peoples would hear . . . the dukes of Edom be amazed . . . the mighty men of Moab tremble," etc. (Exod. xv. 14, 15). David would have his foes "consumed" in order that they might know that "God ruled in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. lix. 13), and again, in order "that men may know that thou, whose Name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth" (Ps. lxxxiii. 18). It has been well said that "the object of all the judgments which the true prophet desires is to bring all nations into subjection to God."

Ver. 21.—**Then Isaiah . . . sent to Hezekiah, saying.** It seems most natural to understand that the prophet was at once supernaturally informed of Hezekiah's prayer, as Ananias was of Saul's (Acts ix. 11), and instructed what reply to make to it. But still, it is no doubt possible that some of the facts have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

Ver. 22.—**The virgin, the daughter of Zion;** *i.e.* Jerusalem (comp. ch. i. 8; x. 32; xvi. 1; lii. 2; lxii. 11). The expression, "virgin daughter," is used also by Isaiah of Zidon (ch. xxiii. 12) and of Babylon (ch. xlvii. 1). The personification here is very effective, since it represents Jerusalem as a tender maiden, weak and delicate, yet still bold enough to stand up against Sennacherib and all his host, and bid him defiance. Confident in Jehovah, her Protector, she **despises** him, and **laughs** him to scorn; nay, "shakes her head at him," or rather, "*after* him," pursuing him with scornful gestures as he retreats before her. (On shaking the head as a gesture of scorn, see Ps. xxii. 7; cix. 25; Matt. xxvii. 39.)

Ver. 23.—**Even against the Holy One of**

Israel. A specially Isaian phrase, employed by Isaiah twenty-eight times, and only five times in all the rest of Scripture. A strong proof, if any proof beyond the unmistakable Isaian spirit of the entire prophecy were needed, of the genuineness of the present passage.

Ver. 24.—**By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord** (see ch. xxxvi. 15—20). **And hast said.** Sennacherib had not actually uttered these words with his mouth; but the prophet clothes in his own highly poetic language the thoughts which the Assyrian king had cherished in his heart. He had regarded "the multitude of his chariots" as irresistible; he had considered that the mountains which guarded Palestine would be no obstacle to his advance; he had contemplated ravaging and despoiling of its timber the entire country; he had meant to penetrate into every region that was lovely and fertile. The emphatic "I" of the original—*ani*—twice repeated, marks the proud egotism of the monarch. **By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains;** rather, *with the multitude;* or, according to another reading, *with chariots upon chariots.* The Assyrian kings contrived to cross with their chariots mountain chains of great difficulty, and frequently boast of the achievement. Tiglath-Pileser I. says, "I assembled my chariots and warriors. I betook myself to carts of iron in order to overcome the rough mountains and their difficult marches. I made the wilderness thus practicable for the passage of my chariots and warriors" ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. pp. 9, 10). Asshur-izir-pal, "The rugged hill country, unfitted for the passage of chariots and armies, with instruments of iron I cut through, and with metal rollers I beat down; the chariots and troops I brought over" (ibid., vol. iii. p. 58). Shalmaneser II., "Trackless paths, difficult mountains, which like the point of an iron sword stood pointed to the sky, on wheels of iron and bronze I penetrated. My chariots and armies I transported over them" (ibid., p. 85). In the less rough parts, while the warriors dismounted, the horses drew the chariots, which were assisted over obstacles by attendants ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 74); but, in regions of greater difficulty, they were conveyed across the mountain ranges in waggons of rude and strong construction ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 13). The chariot-force was regarded as so important that the Assyrians never made any distant expedition without it. **To the sides of Lebanon.** It was not necessary to cross either Libanus or Anti-Libanus in order to invade Judæa, since the natural route was along the Cœle-Syrian valley and across the spurs of Hermon to the Jordan; but an Assyrian army was intent on plunder and devastation, no less than upon conquest, and would ascend mountain regions that did not lie on its direct line of march for either or both of these objects. It was customary for the soldiers to **cut down the tall cedars and choice fir trees** of Lebanon on their Syrian campaigns, in order to transport the timber to Nineveh and other great cities, where it was used for building (see the comment on ch. xiv. 8, and compare Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' pp. 356, 357, and 'Records of the Past,' vol. iii. pp. 40, 47, 83, 90; vol. v. p. 119; vol. ix. p. 16, etc.). It was also customary to destroy the trees in an enemy's country, simply in order to inflict injury upon the foe ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 84). **I will enter into the height of his border;** rather, *I will enter into its uttermost height;* i.e. I will penetrate through the entire mountain region of Palestine, called roughly "Lebanon," to the furthest height of any importance—that on which Jerusalem stood—and thus occupy the whole land. The parallel passage of 2 Kings has "lodging" for "height," in apparent allusion to the palace of Hezekiah. **And the forest of his Carmel;** or, *the forest of its pleasure-garden;* i.e. the rich plantation tracts, covered with vines, olives, and fig trees, which formed the special glory of Judæa (see ch. xxxvi. 16, 17).

Ver. 25.—**I have digged, and drunk water.** Sennacherib notes three natural obstacles to his advance—the forces of his opponents he does not appear to account an obstacle—viz. mountains, deserts, rivers. Mountains do not stop him—he crosses them even with his chariot-force (ver. 24). Deserts do not stop him—he digs wells there, and drinks their waters. Rivers will not stop him—he will dry them up, trample them into puddles. Note the contrast between the past tenses, "I have come up," "I have digged," "I have drunk," and the future, "I will dry up." He had crossed the mountain ranges Sinjar, Amanus, Lebanon; he had passed waterless tracts, where he had had to dig wells, in Mesopotamia and Northern Syria. He was about to find his chief obstacle, rivers, when he invaded Lower Egypt. **The rivers of the besieged places;** rather, *the rivers of Egypt. Mazor,* the singular form (compare Assyrian *Muzr,* and modern Arabic *Misr*), is used here (as in Micah vii. 12, and perhaps in ch. xix 6), instead of the ordinary dual form, *Mizraim,* probably because Lower Egypt is especially intended. Sennacherib was looking especially to the invasion of Lower Egypt, where the Nile had "seven branches" (Herod., ii. 17), and the country was also cut up by numerous canals, which would naturally constitute a great difficulty to a force depending mainly on its chariots. He

believed, however, in his heart, that he would find a way of "drying up" these "rivers."

Ver. 26.—**Hast thou not heard,** etc.? An abrupt transition, such as is common in Isaiah. From speaking in the person of Sennacherib, the prophet without warning breaks off, and returns to speaking in the person of Jehovah, as his mouthpiece. "Hast thou not heard," he says, long ago; or rather, "*that from* long ago I have done this?" Art thou so ignorant, so devoid of that light of nature, which should "lighten every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9), as not to know God's method of governing the world? How that "from long ago," in his eternal counsels, he designs the rise and fall of nations, and the mode in which their destruction is to be brought about? Art thou not aware that conquerors are mere instruments in God's hands—"the rods of his anger" (ch. x. 5)—to work his will, and then to have his will worked upon them in turn (see ch. x. 6—19)? Sennacherib seems to be really reproached for not knowing what he ought to have known, and might have known, if he had listened to the voice of conscience and reason. **Now have I brought it to pass,** etc. All that Sennacherib had done, he had done as God's instrument, by his permission—nay, by his aid. He had been the axe in the hand of the hewer (ch. x. 15), the saw, the rod, the staff, of God's indignation (ch. x. 5), the executer of his vengeance. The very purpose of his being was that he should "lay waste (certain) defenced cities into ruinous heaps."

Ver. 27.—**Therefore.** The original is not so emphatic, but still contains the idea, not merely of sequence, but of consequence. God, having decreed the successes of the Assyrians, effected them (in part) by infusing weakness into the nations that were their adversaries. **They were as the grass of the field** (comp. ch. xl. 6, 7). The comparison is one constantly used by the Hebrew psalmists (Ps. xxxvii. 2; xc. 5; xcii. 7; ciii. 15), and was not unknown to the Assyrians ('Records of the Past,' vol. iii. p. 41; vol. v. p. 14). The delicate grass of spring in the East withers within a few weeks, and the fresh and tender herbage becomes yellow, parched, and sapless. The grass that springs upon the earthen roofs of houses fails even more rapidly (comp. Ps. cxxix. 6). **As corn blasted before it be grown up;** literally, *like a field before the stalk.* Our translators seem to have rightly preferred the reading of 2 Kings xix. 26 (*sh'dêphah*, equivalent to "blasting") to that of Isaiah (*sh'dêmah*, equivalent to "field") in this place. Their rendering brings out the true sense.

Ver. 28.—**I know thy abode;** literally, *thy down-sitting* (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 2). The meaning is that God has, and has had, his eye on Sennacherib throughout all his career, seeing to and watching over his performance of his will. The phrase, **going out, and coming in,** is a Hebrew idiom for a man's doings (see Numb. xxvii. 17; Deut. xxviii. 6; xxxi. 2; 1 Sam. xviii. 13, 16; 2 Sam. iii. 25; 1 Kings iii. 7, etc.). **Thy rage against me.** As shown in the message sent by Rabshakeh (ch. xxxvi. 7), in Rabshakeh's speech to the "men on the wall" (ch. xxxvi. 15—20), and in the letter sent to Hezekiah from Lachish (ch. xxxvii. 10).

Ver. 29.—**Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose** (comp. Ezek. xxix. 4; xxxviii. 4; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11). The Assyrians were in the habit of passing "hooks" or "rings" through the noses or lips of their more distinguished prisoners, and attaching a thong to the hook or ring, by which they led the prisoners into the royal presence ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 304; vol. iii. p. 436). The expressions used derive their force from these practices, but are not in the present place to be understood literally. God "turned Sennacherib back" and reconducted him to Nineveh, not with an actual "hook" or "thong," but by the "bridle" of necessity.

Ver. 30.—**This shall be a sign unto thee;** rather, *the sign.* The prophet now turns to Hezekiah, and makes an address to him. "This," he says, "shall be the sign unto thee of Sennacherib's being effectually 'bridled,' and the danger from Assyria over. In the third year from the present the land shall have returned to its normal condition, and you shall enjoy its fruits as formerly. Meanwhile you shall obtain sufficient nourishment from the grain which has sown itself." The "third year," according to Hebrew reckoning, might be little more than one year from the date of the delivery of the prophecy. The entire withdrawal of all the Assyrian garrisons from the country, which no doubt followed on Sennacherib's retreat, might well have occupied the greater part of a year. Till they were withdrawn, the Jews could not venture to till their territory. **Plant vineyards.** The Assyrians had, no doubt, cut down the vines (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. iii. pp. 40, 62, 79; vol. vii. p. 43, etc.; Layard, 'Monuments of Nineveh,' second series, pl. 40).

Ver. 31.—**The remnant that is escaped** (see the comment on ver. 4). **Take root downward, and bear fruit upward;** *i.e.* "spread over the land, and became firmly rooted in it, and flourish as in the former time." We must conceive of the Assyrians having, in their two recent invasions, completely depopulated the country districts. Numbers had, no doubt, been slain; more than two hundred thousand had been carried into captivity; a portion had found refuge in the capital. On the withdrawal of the As-

syrians, these last "went forth," reoccupied their lands, and rebuilt their towns and villages. The blessing of God was upon them, and in a short time Judæa recovered her ancient vigour, so that, under Josiah, she was able to extend her dominion over almost the whole of the old Israelite territory (2 Chron. xxxiv. 6, 18).

Ver. 32.—**The zeal**, etc. (comp. ch. ix. 7). The phrase is very emphatic, marking the greatness of the thing to be done, and at the same time bringing the strophe to an end with an asseveration beyond which nothing could go.

Ver. 33.—**Therefore**, etc. A new clause is commenced—the concluding clause of the prophecy. For Hezekiah's satisfaction and consolation something more definite is needed than the vague assurances that "the daughter of Jerusalem shook her head at Sennacherib" (ver. 22), and that God would "put a bridle in Sennacherib's mouth" (ver. 29). Accordingly, it is now declared, in the plainest terms, that he shall not even lay siege to the city, but shall return by the way by which he came—the coast route—leaving Jerusalem untouched, nay, unattempted. **He shall not come into this city**; rather, *unto the city*. He was at Libnah, in the Shefelah, thirty or forty miles from Jerusalem, when we last heard of him (ver. 8); and, having then been just informed of the advance of Tirhakah, he is likely to have proceeded on towards Egypt. There is, at any rate, not the slightest intimation of his having made a retrograde movement towards the Jewish capital. **Nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.** The main points of an Assyrian siege are happily seized. The first assailants were the archers. They boldly approached in large bodies, and strove to clear the battlements of the defenders. Then shields were brought into play. Under their cover the archers drew nearer; the scaling parties brought up their ladders; the miners attacked the foundations of the walls; and the torch-bearers endeavoured to fire the gates. Finally, if these tactics did not avail, banks were raised against the walls, which were then assailed with battering-rams till they were breached and the assailants could enter. God promises that Jerusalem shall experience none of these things at Sennacherib's hands.

Ver. 34.—**By the way that he came.** It is clear that Sennacherib on this occasion had marched by the usual coast route, through Sharon and the Shefelah, upon Lachish, leaving Jerusalem far to his left. From Lachish he sent Rabshakeh to Hezekiah with a threatening message, and (as our version has it) "with a great army;" rather, "with a strong force." Rabshakeh, having delivered his message, returned to his master (ch. xxxvii. 8), doubtless with his escort. Sennacherib then sent a letter by messengers, but without an army, so far as we are told, to renew his threats. Meanwhile from Lachish he went to Libnah, after which we know nothing of his movements, unless we accept the Egyptian account, which was, that he advanced to Pelusium. The declaration, "By the way that he came, by the same shall he return" (comp. ver. 29) was the most comforting that Hezekiah could possibly receive. It assured him that he would not even be confronted with his enemy. **Into this city**; rather, *unto this city* (as in ver. 32).

Ver. 35.—**I will defend this city . . . for mine own sake**; literally, *I will cover over this city*, as a bird covers its young with its wings (comp. ch. xxxi. 5; Matt. xxiii. 37). God would do this "for his own sake;" *i.e.* because his own honour was concerned in the defence of his people. He would also do it for his **servant David's sake**; *i.e.* because of the promises made to David, that his children should sit upon his throne (2 Sam. vii. 16; Ps. lxxxix. 29—37; cxxxii. 11—14, etc.), which involved the continued independence of Judæa and Jerusalem.

Ver. 36.—**Then the angel of the Lord went forth.** The parallel passage of Kings (2 Kings xix. 35) has, "It came to pass *that night*, that the angel of the Lord went out." The word of Isaiah had its accomplishment within a few hours. On the **camp of the Assyrians**, wherever it was, whether at Libnah, or at Pelusium (Herod., ii. 141), or between the two, in the dead of night, the destroying angel swooped down, and silently, without disturbance, took the lives of a hundred and eighty-five thousand men. The camp was no doubt that in which Sennacherib commanded. It is contrary to the whole tenor of the Assyrian inscriptions to imagine that a mere *corps d'armée*, detached to threaten, not to besiege, Jerusalem, could have been one-half, or one-quarter, so numerous. It was Sennacherib's host, not the Tartan's, that was visited. So the Egyptian tradition; so ver. 37, by implication. That in later times the Jews should have transferred the scene of the slaughter to the vicinity of their own capital, as Josephus does ('Ant. Jud.,' x. 2, § 5), is not surprising, especially as the Egyptians claimed the glory of the discomfiture for their own gods, and the completion of the victory for their own soldiers. The nature of the destruction is not, perhaps, very important, if it be allowed to have been supernatural; but the "simoom" of Prideaux and Milman, the "storm" of Vitringa and Stanley, the "nocturnal attack by Tirhakah" of Usher, Preiss, and Michaelis, and the "pesti-

lence" of most other commentators, seem to be alike precluded by the terms of the narrative, which imply the silent death in one night of a hundred and eighty-five thousand persons by what English juries call "the visitation of God." The nearest parallel which Holy Scripture offers is the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt; but that was not, as this, without disturbance (see Exod. xii. 30). There a "great cry" broke the silence of the night; here it was not till morning, when men woke from their peaceful slumbers, that the discovery was made that "they were all dead corpses."

Ver. 37.—**So Sennacherib . . . departed**; rather, *broke up his camp*. The word used for all the removals of the children of Israel in the wilderness (Numb. xxxiii. 3—48). The loss of even an entire *corps d'armée* would not have caused an Assyrian king, at the head of an intact main army, to break up his camp and abandon his enterprise. **And dwelt at Nineveh.** Sennacherib lived some eighteen or twenty years from the probable date of his discomfiture, dying in B.C. 681. His ordinary residence was at Nineveh, which he greatly adorned and beautified ('Records of the Past,' vol. xi. pp. 55—57). His father, Sargon, on the contrary, dwelt commonly at Khorsabad (Dur-Sargina), and his son, Esarhaddon, dwelt, during the latter part of his reign, at Babylon. We must not suppose, however, that Sennacherib was shut up in Nineveh during the remainder of his life. On the contrary, he made frequent expeditions towards the south, the east, and the north. But he made no further expedition to the south-west, no further attack on Jerusalem, or attempt on Egypt. The Jews had peace, so far as the Assyrians were concerned, from the event related in ver. 36 to a late date in the reign of Esarhaddon.

Ver. 38.—**Nisroch his god.** The name Nisroch has not been found in the Assyrian inscriptions, and is, in fact, read only in this place and the parallel passage of Kings (2 Kings xix. 37). It has been supposed to represent Nusku, an Assyrian god of a somewhat low position, who, however, does not obtain mention in the historical inscriptions until the time of Asshur-bani-pal. Probably the name has suffered corruption. Asshur was, in fact, Sennacherib's favourite deity, and it is remarkable that the LXX. give in this place, not Nisroch, but *Asarach*. "Asarach" would seem to be "Asshur" with a guttural suffix. **Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him.** The murder of Sennacherib by a son, whom he called "Ardumazanes," was related by Polyhistor (ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' i. 5, § 1). Esarhaddon's annals are imperfect at the commencement, but show that his authority was at first contested, and that he had to establish it by force of arms ('Records of the Past,' vol. iii. pp. 103, 104). Adrammelech seems to have assumed the title of king (Abyden. ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' i. 9, § 1), and to have been put to death by his brother. Sharezer is not elsewhere mentioned. The name is Assyrian, as far as it goes, but is incomplete. Its full form was probably Nabu-sar-uzur or Nergal-sar-uzur (see 'Eponym Canon,' p. 63, B.C. 682 and 678). **And escaped into the land of Armenia.** So Moses of Chorene ('Hist. Armen.,' i. 22). The Hebrew word is *Ararat* (Assyrian *Urardu* or *Urartu*), which was the more eastern portion of Armenia, and lay beyond the sphere of Assyrian influence. **Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.** Esarhaddon (Asshur-akh-iddina) appears to have ascended the throne in B.C. 681. It is highly improbable that Isaiah was then living, and therefore the verse can scarcely be from his pen. It has probably been transferred from 2 Kings (xix. 37) in order to finish off the narrative. Esarhaddon outlived Hezekiah many years, and was brought into contact with Manasseh ('Eponym Canon,' p. 139), whom he reckoned among his tributaries (comp. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Spiritual advice in time of need not to be despised even by great kings.* The great of the earth—kings, princes, nobles, statesmen, generals—are too apt to rest upon their own internal gifts of wisdom, talent, sagacity, cleverness, and to place little reliance upon others. Especially are they apt to feel a jealousy towards "the spiritualty," and to hold themselves above the necessity of seeking aid from persons whom they view as unpractical, ignorant of worldly business, flighty, enthusiastic, fanatical. Ahab, when he determined to renew the Syrian war, and to attempt the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead, took no counsel, so far as appears, with any one but himself, and certainly neglected to ask the advice of the only true prophet of Jehovah living within reach (1 Kings xxii. 3—8). Josiah failed to take the advice of Jeremiah before going out to meet Necho (2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24); Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah went against his advice in resisting Nebuchadnezzar. It has become almost a principle of modern politics that the spiritualty are not to advise except on matters closely con-

nected with religion or morals, and even on such matters their advice is looked upon with suspicion. The cuckoo-cry of "priestcraft" is raised, and the spiritualty is bidden to confine itself strictly to its own sphere, and not to intermeddle in the ordinary politics of a nation. Hezekiah's conduct suggests a contrary lesson, seeming to teach—

I. THAT THE SPIRITUALTY ARE THE BEST ADVISERS EVEN IN TEMPORAL MATTERS. For, first, they have a less direct interest in such matters, and so are likely to give more unbiased counsel. Secondly, they are accustomed to take into account remoter eventualities, as well as immediate results, and are therefore likely to entertain broader views than others. Thirdly, they are more keenly alive than laics to the moral aspect of political questions, which is often a most important aspect, and one that deserves to have a preponderating weight in determining action.

II. THAT IN CONSULTING THEM IT IS WELL TO SHOW THEM DUE RESPECT. Disrespect is the ordinary rule when the politicians of the world condescend to make any reference at all to the spiritualty. "Hasten hither Micaiah, the son of Imlah," strikes the key-note of their utterances (1 Kings xxii. 9). It is not uncommon for them even to dictate what the spiritualty shall say (1 Kings xxii. 13). Hezekiah was more respectful, and more wise. He sent his highest officers of state to the house of the prophet, and humbly asked his prayers and his advice. No doubt there is a wide difference between such a prophet as Isaiah and a modern bishop, or archbishop, or conclave of bishops. Still, if there is to be consultation of these last, a show of respect for them should at least be maintained. It cannot be expected that otherwise they will regard their advice as of importance, or apply their minds very carefully to give the best advice in their power.

III. THAT IN THE WORST STRAITS THEY CAN GIVE VALUABLE HELP, IF NOT BY ADVICE, YET BY PRAYER. "Wherefore lift up thy prayer," said Hezekiah, "for the remnant that is left" (ver. 4). God might not have thought fit to "reprove the words of Sennacherib." His patience might have been exhausted, and he might have been about to allow the conquest of Judæa by Sennacherib, as he afterwards allowed its conquest by Nebuchadnezzar. Hezekiah could not be sure that there was any escape. But in the worst case, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man would avail much." It would avail to mitigate, if not to prevent, the sufferings of the people, to support them under misfortune, if not to save them from it. In times of national need and distress, wise kings and governments do well to ask the prayers of the Church, not that God will not hear them if they address themselves directly to him, but that he may be besieged, as it were, on all sides by prayer, and so prevailed upon to have mercy. The force of prayer is greatly augmented by the prayer being multiplied. "Where two," or more, "agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19).

Vers. 14—20.—*Taking our cross to God, and casting all our care upon him.* Deep afflictions seem to pass beyond the reach of human aid. Whether it be bereavement, or sense of sin, or coming trouble of any heavy kind, the profoundly afflicted soul for the most part feels human help vain, human sympathy impertinent, and finds no refuge, no consolation, except in pouring itself out before God. We know that "he careth for us" (1 Pet. vi. 7); we know that he can understand us. It is true wisdom to fly to him, and put our griefs before him. Only let us be sure that, like Hezekiah, we "spread" the whole before the Lord (ver. 14), that we keep nothing back—no dark corner of our heart, no "secret place" of our complex nature, no hidden act of our life. Unless we be honest with God, we have no claim to his help. He hates such as "dissemble in their hearts" (Jer. xlii. 20) before him. The best human counsellor can give us little aid unless we "make a clean breast" of our difficulties to him. So God will have us "make a clean breast"—not for his information, since he "understandeth our thoughts long before" (Ps. cxxxix. 2), but that we may be fit recipients of his grace—that his healing balms may have power to work on us and comfort us and effect our cure.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Faith neither blind to seemingly adverse facts, nor chary of admitting them.* Sennacherib thought to destroy Hezekiah's trust in Jehovah by an array of facts which he regarded as having the force of an induction. Hezekiah fully admitted the facts ("Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries"), but did not suffer his faith to be shaken by them. His faith rested upon

another distinct set of facts, which Sennacherib's did not and could not invalidate. The truth is that inductions, being never complete, are never demonstrative—they do but establish a probability, and the first adverse fact that can be adduced against them upsets them, or rather upsets the general conclusion that has been drawn from them. Faith, therefore, has no need to be afraid of any amount of seemingly adverse facts, drawn from the region of the sensible. For faith's facts lie mainly in a different sphere, and are untouched by the facts of sense, however numerous. The miracle of our Lord's resurrection rests, for instance, first upon prophecy, secondly upon testimony, thirdly upon vision (Rev. i. 18). No amount of ascertained facts that others have not risen, can touch the sufficiently established fact that our Lord did rise. There is no even seeming clashing or contradiction, until the physicist proceeds to draw from his array of facts the general conclusion: "Therefore no men rise." But this conclusion is one that he has no right to draw; it is illogical; the data do not entitle him to infer more than that "Most men do not rise," or rather, "have not yet risen." And so generally with the facts that are adduced against the dicta of faith. They are no disproof of that which they are alleged to disprove. Faith, real faith, is always ready to admit the facts, when once they are established as facts. It disputes the illogical conclusions drawn from the facts, and the ingenious hypotheses projected from the brains of scientists to account for them.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—18.—*Hezekiah's resources.* The conduct of the king on hearing the haughty message of the Assyrian is that of a man of habitually religious mind and religious practice. 1. *He rends his garments and covers himself with sackcloth.* This was significant of sorrow and of self-humiliation: "Humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time." Instead of searching far and wide for the causes of our distress, it were well to look first into our own hearts, and that closely. There, where the mischief has begun, the remedy and the hope may be revealed. 2. *He sends a deputation to the minister of God;* also clothed in sackcloth. They give the king's message to Isaiah, "This day is a day of trouble, punishment, and contumely." The outward forms and shows of grief could not denote them truly. They had

> "That within which passed show,
> Beneath the trappings and the suits of woe."

The mourning garb expresses the need of the rending of the heart, and the bowing down of its pride before the judgments of God. Human extremity is confessed: "There is no strength to bring forth." The toil over insoluble problems—the matching of one's strength against a superhuman enterprise, the comparison of one's idea of what should be with one's sense of the absence of resources for its accomplishment, brings utter exhaustion. It is under such conditions that men learn that whatever strength they had at any time is from God, that whatever help is needed must come from him now. In the house of God, in the attitude of humility and penitence, in communion with men of God, let us be found in the day of distress.

I. THE HUMAN INTERCESSOR. In common life we recognize the principle of intercession. We shelter ourselves behind the worth of another; we seek to gain *interest* with the powerful and the good. To carry things by personal interest and partiality doubtless opens the door to abuses; but after all it is founded itself upon love. Logic says, "Let every case be judged by its merits, every man stand or fall by merit or demerit of his person." Love, softening down the hard lines of logical principle, or concealing them with flowing ornament, says, "Let fellow-feeling and pity, kinship of blood or of mind, have their influence on the decision." The great truth of the mediation of Christ is reflected in a weaker but still emphatic way in the office of an Abraham, a Moses, a Samuel. Scripture expressly recognizes: "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (cf. Jer. xv. 1). Our objection to the Romish doctrine of the intercession of saints should not carry us too far. It might lead us to a cold denial of the influence of loving thought upon one another's weal. What limit is there to the far-reaching influences of love? Because some assume to know too much of those influences and the

manner in which they may be secured, that is no reason why we should ignore them. "An interest in the prayers of good men," it is natural to seek, and blessed to have secured. The belief in the intercession of good men rests on the belief that some men stand nearer to God than others. They have a firmer faith, a steadier insight into the methods of Providence, and therefore a clearer outlook into the future, and a courage which is inspiring to others. On this occasion Isaiah is found to be calm and undisturbed by the revilings of the Assyrian. He can speak of his officers with contempt as the "minions of the King of Assyria." He can foretell that a "spirit" will be put in the enemy—an impulse quite contrary to that now animating him; he will hear ill news, will return to his own land, and will fall by the sword. The prophet sustains the king; Hezekiah leans on Isaiah; true policy finds its inspiration in religion. The ministers of state, if wise, will own the worth of the service of the ministers of God.

II. BUSINESS LAID BEFORE GOD. The threat of the Assyrian, the taunting arguments on which he had before relied, are repeated. Let Hezekiah beware of trusting in Jehovah, for he may prove no better resource than the "gods of the nations" which have been subdued by the Assyrians. Hezekiah takes the letter, goes up into the house of Jehovah, and spreads it open before Jehovah. We may be reminded, as we read, of the prayer-machines of the Buddhists; or of the waxen tablets hung upon the statues of the gods by the Romans, inscribed with prayers, as alluded to by Juvenal in his tenth Satire. But where the outward act is similar, the intention may be widely different. If we look to the *essence* of the act, there is nothing in itself more superstitious in laying open a written letter before God, than in addressing him orally on its contents. If the spreading out is a "prayer without words," the prayer with words follows. There is no external form which we may not fill out with the life of our spirit and make vital and real; none from which we may not withdraw that life, and so leave dead and cold. It is idle to suppose that the mere abandonment of certain forms will remove the foundations of superstition, which is certain to spring up in a mechanical and lifeless state of mind.

III. HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER. *His thoughts of God.* He is revealed in nature and in human life. He is enthroned upon the cherubim—those mysterious creatures of poetic and plastic fancy, representing spiritual power revealed in strong wind and cloud, and figured in the ark. Analogous figures are common in Oriental art. Jehovah is the God of nature, the Creator of heavens and earth. He is the only true Ruler of the kingdoms of the earth. The heathen believed that their gods swayed in the sphere both of nature and of human life—that their glory and power was revealed, not only in sun, and moon, and stars, and wind, but in the might of warriors and the ascendency of kings. But the contrast is that these pretensions were unreal, that of Jehovah alone founded on truth and facts. Those "gods of the nations" who had been put into the fire by the Assyrian were no gennine gods, as the result has proved. When the idol was destroyed, the visible image of the god, the faith of the worshipper lost its visible support, and his hope fled. There was no Saviour here. True faith is not dependent on such visible props; they may fail—it remains. The symbols of religion may change; old sanctuaries may fall into decay; Jerusalem may be taken; the Shechinah-glory may fade from the hallowed spot; but Jehovah remains. In superstition, when the idols are broken, the false faith dies; in true religion, when the idols are broken, the true faith rises into new life. Adversity, fatal to imposture, brings the genuine tradition to light. The true God is bound by his very nature to be the Saviour, the Deliverer of men. The cry for salvation must sooner or later, in one or another way, be answered from him. If the cry be not answered, it is a proof that we have not directed it to the true Object—not to Jehovah, the Alone, the Eternal, but to some creature, the fabrication, if not of our hands, of our sensuous and unspiritual fancy.—J.

Ver. 6.—*Caution against fear.* "Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard." We are often afraid of whispers; we often suffer severely through *words.* It is not surprising. Words are *winged,* and fly across oceans. Words are penetrating, and enter into the secret places of the heart. Words are *indestructible,* and, once uttered, who but God can restrain their power?

I. THESE WERE WORDS AGAINST GOD. Alas! there have been many such in every age. This is part of the perils of moral government, which leaves the creature "free." But God

has set in order a universe of men, and not of machines, and he is too wise not to have ordered all things wisely and well. Man is evidently a being born to the perils which beset all freedom. Thus he can speak against the Most High. "I am equal to the sad occasion," says in effect Jehovah to Isaiah. "The servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed me, but I will send a blast upon them." No more solemn thought can occupy our minds than the consideration how every day blasphemous, false, and base words are spoken against our Father in heaven.

II. THESE WORDS ARE OFTEN DESIGNED TO HURT HIS CHILDREN. "Fear them not," says God; "they cannot hurt you." We are thankful for this revelation of the impotence of evil. If your character is falsely traduced, God can "bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." If your influence is injured for a time, God has so ordered the world that evil men reveal their true character. They are not good, and they know it; "and they that be otherwise cannot be hid." Let not the friends of God tremble in the presence of infidel insinuation or sceptical scorn. God's nature has been revealed. His wonderful works attest his power and goodness. Christ and the cross are the revelation of his love.

III. THESE WORDS ARE SURE TO BE HEARD. We cannot at times help the entrance of evil, but we *can* help the entertainment of it. We must treat all the evil surmises of wicked men with the disdain that they deserve. We can, as Solomon suggests, "turn from it and pass away." Besides, just as there is in love what Dr. Chalmers calls "the expulsive power of a new affection," so there is in love to God a power to banish all that old love of the world which makes men mingle with the irreverent and undevout. The syren voice of evil whisperings will have no charm for us when we hide God's Word in our heart. The great lesson is not to be afraid of the wickedness of the wicked, or to make their words of account by taking too great note of them. Many malignant words would have perished at their birth if they had not been made much of by argument and reply. The best answer is to trust in God and do the right.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*Our highest solicitude.* A very graphic scene is here sketched. The highest personages in the realm are moved to the strongest feelings of indignation and concern. Dignity is entirely forgotten; the profound agitations which have stirred their souls are expressed in actions which, to less excitable and imaginative people, seem violent and unbecoming. But the rent garments and the coarse sackcloth best uttered, for them, the distracted heart and a deep sense of shame. It was eloquence in action, and was more forcible than the most impassioned speech. Doubtless many feelings mingled in this strong emotion, but we prefer to think (and by the fourth verse are justified in thinking) that what most kindled the indignation of king, of statesman, and of priest, was the "blasphemy" which had been spoken against the Lord; the earnest solicitude on their part that the Name of Jehovah should not be shamefully dishonoured among men. There are—

I. SOLICITUDES WHICH ARE GOOD, BUT NOT HIGH. We do well to be solicitous to discharge our pecuniary obligations, to take and to hold an honourable position among our fellows, to enjoy a good reputation among men, to see that which is most beautiful, to hear that which is most harmonious, and to read that which is most delightful. But this appeals to those instincts and ambitions which are common to all but the lowest among men; they are desires or anxieties which are good but not high.

II. SOLICITUDES WHICH ARE HIGH, BUT NOT THE HIGHEST. It is in a very high degree desirable, it is indeed urgent, that we should show a patient, practical solicitude (1) to gain the forgiveness of our sin, and acceptance with God; (2) to maintain our Christian consistency and conformity of conduct to the will of Christ; (3) to attain to the nobler ranges of Christian excellency, to reach the goal which is set before us; (4) to serve our generation to the height of our ability and opportunity; (5) to be ready for the last hour of life and the first hour of immortality. These are high and worthy aspirations, but they are not—

III. THE SOLICITUDE WHICH IS THE HIGHEST OF ALL. It is that commanding and consuming desire for the glory of God which filled the hearts of Hezekiah and his people, and which called forth such powerful and even passionate emotion when his Name was blasphemed. 1. *The evidence* that this is the highest solicitude is found in: (1) The fact that it is our supreme obligation. We are bound, first and most of all

things, to be concerned for the honour of our heavenly Father, for the glory of our Divine Redeemer: that he is revered, and that his will is done on earth should be our first consideration. (2) The fact that it is an unselfish, and therefore pre-eminently Christian and Divine inspiration. (3) The fact that it is an enlarging and ennobling sentiment. They whose hearts are filled and whose lives are fashioned by this pure and holy solicitude will be lifted up in soul by its elevating influence; they will rise above all that is mean and small; they will attain to loftiness of view and dignity of character. 2. *The manifestations* which it will assume are (1) great pain and shame when the Name of God is dishonoured (text); (2) great joy when his kingdom is seen to be advancing and himself being honoured in the world; (3) earnest and lifelong effort to bear witness to his presence, his power, his holiness, his love, and the blessedness of his great salvation.—C.

Ver. 10.—*The God in whom we trust.* To trust in God—

I. OUGHT TO SEEM TO US THE MOST SIMPLE AND NATURAL THING. 1. *All power is his.* We shrink from weakness as a support, but we lean our whole weight on strength with perfect willingness and readiness: and it is Almighty God; it is he to whom "all power is given in heaven and on earth," who invites our confidence. 2. *All wisdom is his.* Power without wisdom may lead astray, may work more harm than help: it is the only wise God "who asks us to put our trust in him. 3. *All kindness is his.* Power with wisdom but without love might be arrayed against us, might overwhelm us with confusion: it is the God whose "new, best Name is love," that offers us the shelter of his wing. 4. *All faithfulness is his.* Love that might last but a little while is of little worth; it might change into indifference or even into hatred and hostility: it is the "Father of lights with whom is no variableness," it is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," who says to us, "Come unto me," "Trust in me," "Abide in me," "Cast all your care on me." Surely it should be the simplest, the most natural, thing to yield instant and eager response to the Divine invitation, and to put our heart's whole trust in "the Lord our God." Yet to trust in him—

II. IS MUCH MORE RARE THAN IT SHOULD BE. Do we find men leaning on God, and *so* leaning on him that their hearts are full of peace, of spiritual rest, of hope, of heavenly joy? Is "the God in whom we trust" a phrase that has as large and full a meaning to our minds as it should have? Is not a living, sustaining, rejoicing trust in God a comparatively rare, rather than a constant and universal thing, even in Christian hearts? And why is it so, if so it be? Is it not because we allow ourselves to be so *sadly imposed upon* by the temporal and the superficial? We persist in representing to ourselves that the visible, the audible, the tangible, the material, is the real, the true, and the substantial. We, who walk by faith and not by sight, whose life is spiritual, who are citizens of heaven, ought to understand that it is this which is illusive, evanescent, unreal, and that the invisible, the intangible, the eternal, is the real and the reliable; we ought to know and to realize that he, whom not having seen we love, the invisible but ever-present, the almighty and never-failing Saviour, is the One who is worthy of our confidence, and in the deepest and fullest sense it should be true that it is the Lord *in whom we trust.*

III. IS A PRIVILEGE OF WHICH WE NEED TO AVAIL OURSELVES CONTINUALLY. 1. *In prosperity, for God's sake.* For God wills that we should be ever trusting in him, "in whom are all our springs," and from whom we derive everything we enjoy. To trace our well-being to ourselves, and to trust in the arm of flesh instead of referring all to the living God, brings down his deep displeasure (see Deut. x. 8—18). 2. *In adversity, for our own sake.* For then God alone can help and save us. We ourselves shall have failed; misfortune, disaster, will have baffled and beaten us; our friends will fail us; human sympathy and succour will avail somewhat, but it will leave much more undone than it will do. Divine interposition alone will supply our need—the pity of the Divine Friend; the help of the heavenly Father; the ministry of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and the Sanctifier of the hearts of men.—C.

Vers. 14—20.—*Righteousness in prayer.* Hezekiah's was the effectual prayer of a righteous man. It was effectual because it was right-minded. Had he gone to the Lord in an unacceptable spirit, he would have met with a very different response. Our

prayers may be unexceptionable, so far as time, place, demeanour, and even language are concerned, and yet they may be fruitless, because our mind is not attuned to the true spirit of devotion. We have here five features which should always characterize our approach to God.

I. A DEEP SENSE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. "That dwellest between the cherubim;" *i.e.* the God that has come down and has taken up his abode in the midst of us—a God at hand and not afar off. Hezekiah spread the letter *before the Lord* (ver. 14), before the Present One. It is a point of the first importance that we should feel, in prayer, that God is with us in very deed and truth; that we stand in his near presence; that the angels who inhabit the heavenly kingdom are not more truly, though they may be more consciously, before him than are we as we take his Name on our lips and breathe our petitions into his ear.

II. A REVERENTIAL REMEMBRANCE OF HIS MAJESTY. "Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth." Our boldness in prayer (Heb. iv. 16) must stop short of anything like irreverence. Our Lord himself was "heard *in that he feared*" (Heb. v. 7); much more does it become us to think and to speak with holy awe when we address the Majesty of heaven; we must ever have in mind that it is the one only God, the Lord of hosts, the Infinite and Eternal One, to whom we are addressing ourselves (see Gen. xviii. 23—32).

III. FULL CONFIDENCE IN HIS DIVINE POWER. "Thou hast made heaven and earth." To doubt God's power to interpose on our behalf, by whatever restraints we imagine that power to be limited, must be painful to him, and must invalidate our prayer. To have a firm assurance that God is able to sustain, to supply, to deliver us; to feel that no obstacles of any kind can prevent his interposition on our behalf, if he only sees it to be wise and right to intervene, is to be right-minded in devotion.

IV. A HOLY CONFIDENCE IN HIS DIVINE INTEREST IN US. Hezekiah addressed Jehovah as the "God of Israel" (ver. 16); *i.e.* the God who had a peculiar interest in Israel, "the chosen people," his own "inheritance," "a people near unto him" (Ps. cxlviii. 14). We place ourselves in accord with God's will concerning us, not when we presuppose that the most urgent entreaties have to be made to secure his interest in us and in our affairs, but rather when we assume the fact that we are the objects of his deep solicitude, that we are near to his heart, and that he is disposed to do all that is needful for our present well-being and future blessedness.

V. UNSELFISHNESS OF SPIRIT. Hezekiah pleaded with the Lord, not his own and his people's extremities, but the dishonour which had been cast on the Name of Jehovah, and the need there was for that Name to be glorified before the nations (vers. 17—20). We *may* plead with God our own necessities, both temporal and spiritual; but we are in the true mood, in the right spirit, when we rise above all selfish considerations. 1. We do well to pray for our suffering and necessitous friends. 2. We do better to pray for our lost and perishing race. 3. We do best to pray for the extension of our Saviour's kingdom and the exaltation of his holy Name. The prayer which the Lord taught his disciples may teach us the "order of merit" in regard to our desires when we bow down at the throne of grace.—C.

Vers. 21—29.—*The intoxication of success, etc.* The first thing of which this passage speaks, and of that it speaks very forcibly, is—

I. THE INTOXICATION OF UNHOLY SUCCESS. The tone of this Assyrian monarch was one of insolent arrogance. His military achievements had implanted in his mind the notion that he had done much greater things than he had actually accomplished, and had exerted the idea that he could achieve other things which were wholly out of his power. He magnifies his victories and over-estimates his capacity (vers. 23—25). This is the common consequence of success—even of success which is not unholy, which is not obtained regardless of the power and will of God; it is sometimes the unhappy result of success in sacred ministries; how much more so must it be, and is it found to be, the result in the case of those who "fear not God, nor regard man"! Unholy success intoxicates. It makes men imagine that they have done far greater things than they have achieved, and that they have become far greater people than they are. It often rears its head so high that, as with Sennacherib, arrogance passes into blasphemy (ver. 23) or into presumptuous impiety. 1. Shrink from all success that is not gained

by righteous means and in the fear of the Lord. 2. Take earnest heed that honourable and even sacred success does not delude and corrupt the soul.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF GOD TOWARDS ARROGANT MEN. 1. *Continual regard.* (Ver. 28.) "I know thy abode," etc. God's presence, his observant eye, is in the dwelling, is in the chamber of the guilty; it follows their steps whithersoever they go; it witnesses their actions with whatsoever cunning they may be hidden from human eyes. 2. *Keen displeasure.* The entire passage, particularly ver. 23, is indicative of stern disapproval. Undevout and godless men, still more impious and flagrantly wicked men, should be made to understand that, though they may be congratulating themselves, and though like-minded neighbours may be approving and even applauding them, the God in whose hand their breath is, and to whom they are accountable for everything they do, regards them with deep, Divine displeasure. His awful anger rests upon them—that righteous resentment which the Divine Ruler *must* feel towards those who are spoiling and degrading the subjects of his rule. 3. *The infliction of appropriate penalty.* (Ver. 29.) Jehovah would make the arrogant conqueror "go back by the way by which he came." God always visits those whom he has to punish with penalties *suited to their sins.* The haughty are humbled to the dust; those who partake of unlawful pleasure will suffer corresponding pain; they who rob others of their reputation will fall into utter disrepute; the rogue that preys on society will be impoverished, etc. 4. *A Divine use of their lives and actions.* (Vers. 26, 27.) Little as it imagined it, the Assyrian power was an instrument in Jehovah's hand. God will make sinful men's lives serve as beacons to warn others if they cannot be used in a worthier and more acceptable way.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF HOLY TRUSTFULNESS. The virgin daughter of Jerusalem had been greatly despised, but she trusted in the Divine Deliverer, and her hour of rescue and of triumph was at hand (ver. 22). The children of God may have to pass through a period of sore trial, of bitter anguish; their redemption may be long delayed; it may seem as if God's hand *were* shortened (ch. l. 2; Rev. vi. 10); but the time of deliverance will certainly arrive: whether it be from distracting anxieties, or consuming doubt, or protracted pain, or weary loneliness, or cruel oppression, or the shadow of death, the days of darkness are numbered, and the hour of triumph is drawing near.—C.

Ver. 31.—*Root and fruit, or character in its completeness.* The text speaks of two necessities for the plant in its perfection—root and fruit; it may speak to us of the complete human character.

I. CHARACTER IS OFTEN FOUND IN MANIFEST INCOMPLETENESS. 1. We have character *deficient in fruitfulness.* Some men are intelligent, acquisitive, contemplative; they have solid knowledge; they have reached clear and strong convictions; they have formed admirable private and domestic habits. But they bring forth very little fruit; they exert very little influence; they are incommunicative; they have nothing to say when something needs to be said; they have no tact or courage for action when something demands to be done. These men contribute little, or nothing appreciable, to the advancement of truth and righteousness; they are not the forcible factors they have had the means of becoming in the society in which they move. 2. We have, also, character *deficient in root.* Some men are exuberant in expression; they communicate freely; they are forward to speak and to act on every possible occasion; they are constantly efflorescent. But they lack knowledge, judgment, wisdom; they have not trained their minds; they have not compared their thoughts with those of others, and come to sound and settled conclusions; they have not acquired fixed habits of mind and of life; they are uncertain and unreliable quantities, on whom you cannot safely reckon in the day of trial. Of these two orders of human character neither is without excellency, but both are manifestly incomplete.

II. INCOMPLETENESS OF CHARACTER IS REGRETTABLE IN GOD'S SIGHT AND IN OURS. 1. *It is unbeautiful.* For it lacks symmetry; it is one-sided, and therefore offensive to the spiritual eye. 2. *It is a state of insecurity.* The man that has root without fruit, knowledge and experience without action and influence, is a man who "has not" his own possessions (see Matt. xxv. 29), for he is making no serious practical use of them, and from him who "hath not" will be taken away, by the constant penalty which attends neglect, "even that which he hath"—viz. his unused capacity. And the man who has fruit without corresponding root will find that his influence will soon wane,

his power soon wither away. Speech without knowledge, action without thought, outward activity without inward growth, will soon reach its limit and disappear. 3. *It leaves a large part of sacred duty undone.* (1) To the meditative man who has exhausted his time and strength in self-culture, and left his brethren's state uncared for, will be presented the solemn and startling question—*What have you done?* And he will have to confess that he has hidden his talent in the earth. (2) Of the man who allowed his powers of usefulness to run out and be lost in precocious activities, or exhausting excitements, it will be required—*Why did you neglect yourself?* And he will have to lament that he was content with being a short-lived gourd instead of a long-lived tree in the garden of the Lord.

III. COMPLETENESS OF CHARACTER MAY BE AND SHOULD BE ATTAINED. Assuming that we are bound to employ our powers in the direction in which our own preferences lead us, and granting that it is well for human character to partake of much variety, it remains true that we should make an earnest effort to attain to some completeness of character by attention to those elements which we are tempted to neglect. In every department of human action we recognize the duty of bestowing special care on the weakest point—the candidate for literary honours on the subject with which he is least familiar; the builder on that part of the ground where the foundation is least substantial; the general on that outpost which is least defensible, etc. The defects of character are subject to repair; earnest effort is sure to be rewarded. They who have "the root of the matter in them" *can* bring forth fruits of usefulness by patient, prayerful endeavour. They who are quick to bear fruit upward can strike their root downward and enrich their spiritual resources by study, by thought, by painstaking acquisition, by prayer.—C.

Ver. 34.—*Returning on our way.* "By the way that he came, by the same shall he return."

I. THE RETURN WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE. Our departure from this world is often spoken of as a return. We "return to the grave." We ascend and descend the hill of life; but we go down that hill *on the other side.* Old age is indeed "a second childhood;" but how different a childhood it is!—*with* the experience, and the carefulness, and the sad consciousness of failure which childhood *has not*, but *without* the eager-heartedness, buoyancy, simplicity, trustfulness, which childhood *has.* It may be said of every part and passage of our human experience, "Thou hast not gone this way heretofore." We never live over again even a single day of our life.

II. THE RETURN WITH WHICH WE ARE THREATENED. God, in his holy and wise providence, may defeat our purpose, as he did that of Sennacherib, and in this sense may cause us to return on our way. Again and again is this the case with: 1. *Unrighteous aggression,* or some other design which is positively sinful. 2. *Unhallowed ambition;* when men set themselves to achieve some great thing for their own enrichment or aggrandizement, and God breaks their schemes. He sends them back to the starting-point of emptiness or poverty from which they set out. When God thus interposes, men may well ask what it is that he means them to learn. 3. *Unwise endeavour;* as when men offer themselves for the work of teaching, or preaching, or labouring in the field of foreign missions, when they are unfitted for the post.

III. THE RETURN WHICH IS OUR DUTY. 1. That which awaits the Christian man, (1) when he has entered on a business which he finds he cannot conduct with a clear conscience; (2) when he has adopted a course of training his family or directing his establishment which he finds inefficient and disappointing; (3) when he has associated himself with a company of men, or with a Church of Christ, which he finds ungenial and unsatisfactory. 2. That which belongs to the unchristian man. To him, in the "far country" of estrangement, comes ever the commanding, but yet the entreating voice of the heavenly Father, saying, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." Well is it, indeed, when the heart's response is found in the heaven-gladdening words, "I will arise, and go to my Father."—C.

Ver. 1.—*Carrying troubles to God.* The silence which Hezekiah kept, and commanded, represents only the negative side of his dealing with the Assyrian insults and threatenings. The earnest man can seldom be satisfied with the weak policy of

"doing nothing." It may be one side of meeting difficulty, but it needs to be matched with another and a positive side. The earnest man wants to *do* something. Yet his circumstances may make personal action questionable and almost impossible; but this, at least, he can always do, and this he would be wise always to do first—he can carry his trouble to God; he can "cast his care on God." There is a positiveness and a definiteness of action about so doing, which meets the anxiety of the earnest man; there is a sense of propriety in so doing which satisfies the higher feeling of the pious man. From the conduct of Hezekiah on this occasion we learn four ways in which our troubles may be carried to God.

I. BY CHERISHED MOODS OF MIND. There is a thought of God; a dependence on God; a heart-appeal to God; a purposed meditating on the Divine relations with the troubled; a recalling of God's ways in past experience; and an assuring of the heart,—which are all voiceless cryings after God, which he knows and heeds. Tennyson gives this view exquisite expression when, describing Mary of Bethany, he says—

"Her eyes were homes of silent prayer."

There are times when we are "so troubled that we cannot speak," but at such times the trouble speaks, the afflicted soul lies open to God.

II. BY ATTITUDES AND BODILY STATES. The appearance of a man may be a prayer. This is more developed in Eastern than in Western lands. Rent clothes, neglected hair and beard, rough sackcloth, ashes cast on the person,—were signs of distress, and mute appeals for comfort and help. But we often say of persons, "His face was a prayer;" "The miserable neglected state was an appeal." The widow's crape is a casting of trouble on God. Attitudes of body naturally express moods of mind; and dress follows suit. Even thus we can pray.

III. BY SEEKING AUDIENCE OF GOD. Hezekiah made the effort to go to the place where God revealed himself. It is carrying our trouble to God simply to resolve that we will go to God's house. A psalmist, with a burdened heart, says, "I went into the sanctuary of God." The worshippers are really this—companies of men and women who are rolling their burdens off upon God.

IV. BY UNBURDENING THE SOUL. It is often thought strange, and called foolish, for men to tell God in prayer what he well knows. But the free unburdening is the best, and often the only, relief a soul can find. Child to mother, friend to friend, creature to God,—nothing helps us so much as being permitted to tell out all that is in our souls, bad and good, worthy and unworthy.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Responsibility of prayer-leaders.* The message sent to Isaiah, the prophet of God, was this: "Pray for us; be our leader, our intercessor." "Wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left." Scripture singles out Samuel and Moses as great prayer-leaders, or intercessors, but we can add Joshua, David, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Paul, drawing further illustrations from each of these. The Prophet Jeremiah has a very striking sentence, which indicates the power that prayer-leaders have with God: "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people" (Jer. xv. 1). Isaiah, in our text, was sought by Hezekiah in his trouble, because he was a prayer-leader, an intercessor. We note that the things about men which are really most important are not the things which most readily attract attention. We need to get the view of men which God takes, if we would get the true view. Some of the best gifts bestowed on the Christian Church are undervalued; the endowments which give men public prominence are thought much more of than those spiritual powers which are men's best possessions. To some men God gives, in unusual measure, *the power of prayer.* There is a remarkable difference between good men in this gift and power of prayer. We see the difference in our children. Some of them are able to move and persuade us so that we find it most difficult to refuse them anything. And men and women seem to have a like power in their relations with God—a most responsible power. Some of us can never rise above the orderly habit of prayer, and treat it as a matter of duty; but others have such praying frames of mind that, at any moment, they seem able to go in to God. There are men among us who are true prayer-leaders—whose utterance is full of petition, who are able to seize the souls of their fellow-worshippers,

be their mouthpiece, and carry their desires within the veil; while other good men can only pray before us, and fail to awaken responsive prayer-feelings in our hearts.

I. THE GREATNESS OF PRAYER THAT RISES TO BE INTERCESSION. Man's power of prayer is a faculty full of high possibilities. It may rise even to this—it may go beyond all self-spheres, and become intercessory. While prayer keeps in the self-sphere there is a certain narrowness and even meanness about it. It is all concerned with what *we* want, and what *we* feel, and we are greatly comforted if we have any fervour of emotion in such prayer. But we feel that a course of daily prayer from which the interceding element is removed would be most injurious to the spiritual life. It lacks the generous, sympathetic, unselfish element, and it will very soon lack fervour and faith. No one can long keep up a prayerful life, and persist in praying altogether about himself. Power comes, love grows, when prayer includes intercession. Limitations of earnestness and importunity pass away; the soul is free to urge its pleas with persevering instancy; we can ask for another what we dare not fashion into a prayer for ourselves. The prayers of Scripture are, for the most part, intercessory. Illustrate—Abraham's for Sodom; Moses', Joshua's, Samuel's, for the people of Israel in their distresses. Daniel prays with his window open towards desolate Jerusalem, that he may be reminded of the captive people. Our last sight of Job finds him in the attitude of the mediator, praying for God's mercy on his mistaken and cruel friends. And the Apostle Paul writes again and again of the constancy of his intercessions. We may learn the secret of the poverty and formality of much Christian praying. It has so little *intercession* in it. When some beloved friend is smitten down with imperilling sickness, our prayer suddenly gains strength, and becomes a thing full of fervour and pathos. All our souls then go out in strong crying and tears. But this power might be in our praying always. We might be not only prayerful men, but also prayer-leaders, carrying the burdens of others to the throne of grace, and ourselves sanctified through the carrying.

II. THE POWER OF INTERCESSION THAT MAY BE IN A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL. Any one of us may have the gift of intercession. One man, one woman, even one child, may bring down the Divine benedictions as refreshing rains upon us. We may kneel for others before God. We may win the blessing, prevailing with God, for men. Illustrate from the life of Moses. Note three great interceding-times: (1) at Rephidim; (2) matter of golden calf; (3) return of spies. Or from the life of Samuel, who may be regarded as the most consistently beautiful character in the Bible. Note two cases: (1) battle with Philistines; (2) matter of asking for a king. But what responsibilities rest on such men! On such men living amongst us now! Who can tell what the Church of God would become, if interceders would but intercede? Plead that, in these times, we need to be often recalled to the power of prayer. "We have not, because we ask not." The Prophet Isaiah has a wonderful conception. He represents God as looking out upon men in their sin and sorrow and shame, and saying, "I saw that there was no man, and I wondered that there was no intercessor." It may be so still. God may look into our family lives, and wonder that there is no intercessor. He may look at our Churches, and wonder that there is no intercessor. Oh for a multiplying of men and women who say, "I can pray. I can intercede. I can plead for Jerusalem"! —R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*God's message to the troubled.* "Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid." We have here the Divine response, through Isaiah, as the national intercessor. The circumstances, the boastings, the threatenings, were eminently calculated to produce fear, both in Isaiah and in the people. There was such a show of material strength as Elisha's servant saw at Dothan, which sent him to his master full of fears. The answer is such as Elisha gave when he made the servant see what it was to have God on their side. God in the city was abundant security against Assyria outside the city, and Hezekiah need not be afraid. God's message to those who seek him in their troubles is always this: "Be not afraid;" "I am with you." Our fears only stay with us when our eyes are so dim that we cannot see God. Fear goes when he "lifts the light of his countenance upon us." Matthew Henry says, "Those who have made God their enemy we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may hiss, they cannot hurt." Dr. A. Raleigh remarks that every creature

is liable to fear; there can only be one Being in the universe absolutely and for ever free from that liability—he who knows everything and controls everything. 1. The great mysteries of existence have a tendency to produce fear. There are few thoughtful persons who do not feel the shadow of them on their path. They are such things as the existence of evil, sin, misery in the universe, under the government of an infinitely powerful and infinitely benevolent Being. There is great mystery about the plan of Divine providence in the world. Job, David, Jeremiah, were all perplexed and appalled by the sight of the afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked. 2. There are certain *possibilities*, the thought of which has a tendency to darken the spirit with fear. The most sanguine and cheerful can hardly ever imagine, far less expect, a wholly uncheckered future. The worst of all earthly calamities is the possibility of spiritual failure, ending in a final exclusion from the presence of God and the joys of the blessed. Whatsoever form our fear may take, whatsoever may be the trouble or the alarm out of which it grows, if the fear drives us to God, we shall always be sure of getting this response, "Be not afraid." The one answer to all mysteries is this: "God is, God lives; and I can trust him." The one strength with which to meet all the possibilities, and bear all the calamities, of life is this, "He maketh all things work together for good." Fully unfolded, the response of God is given in ch. xli. 10. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The God of all kingdoms.* This expression indicates Hezekiah's conviction of the uniqueness of God. He is the one great *Over-Lord.* He cannot be classed with other gods or other kings. But Hezekiah surely went beyond himself in this hour of pressure and anxiety. The Jewish idea of the supremacy of Jehovah included the speciality of his relation to the Abrahamic race, and the Jew was in danger of making God to be a mere local deity. And we, in these latter days, find it difficult to admit that God's rule over all kingdoms involves the moral training and even the redemption of all the races. We limit all the best of God to ourselves, in just the spirit of exclusive Jews. Only our great thought-leaders seem able to see what is involved in recognizing God as the God of all the kingdoms of the earth.

I. IF GOD IS GOD OF ALL KINGDOMS, HE HAS SUPREME CLAIMS ON US. Most distressing to men who can create an ideal, and want to put trust in one who is absolutely good, must be the division of their confidences among gods many and lords many. The unrest of pagan intellect and heart was unspeakably painful. With gods in every street, Athenians pined for something more, and more satisfying; so raised an altar to the "Unknown God." Here is rest from all rival claims—we yield to one will; all who would command us must express *that will.*

II. IF GOD IS GOD OF ALL KINGDOMS, HE MUST REVEAL HIMSELF TO ALL. To be unrevealed, in adapted relations to each kingdom, is *not to be* so far as each kingdom is concerned. St. Paul is firm in declaring God has revealed himself to all, at least in "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons." And we have yet to recognize that he has spoken in gracious adaptations, differing, it may be, from the voices that we have heard, in every age and every clime. Very probably on this point there is "yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word."

III. IF GOD IS GOD OF ALL KINGDOMS, HE OVERRULES THEM. Their magistracies, and their so-called divinities, when they do not rival him, are his agencies, everywhere they are the "powers that be ordained of God"—under-rulers practically carrying out the will of the great *Over-Ruler*, who fits in together man's obediences and wilfulnesses, guiding all towards the fulfilment of his gracious ends for the whole race.

IV. IF GOD IS GOD OF ALL KINGDOMS, HE PRESIDES OVER THE RELATIONS OF THE NATIONS TO EACH OTHER. This brings us to the case of Hezekiah. If God is the God of Assyria, he knows all the schemings and the ambitions of that nation. Assyria is not acting in any self-strength, or in the inspirations of any rival god. Jehovah presides over the relations between Israel and Assyria. For nations, as for individuals, it is true, but it is most perplexing truth, difficult to grasp; our God is working alike in what we call evil and what we call good.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—"*Holy One of Israel.*" It is singular to find the *holiness* of God introduced here rather than his *majesty* or his *power.* Yet it is significant. The

sublime greatness of God is his *character*, and this is expressed in the word "Holy One." The insults of Assyria are not levelled so much against God's throne, or God's rule, as against God himself. It is the insult offered to the Divine Name. The contrast between Jehovah and the gods created by heathen imaginations is very striking in this particular—they are embodiments of powers; he is a moral Being. They imply force; his Name involves character. Our security lies in this. The possibility of a reasonable trust lies in this. Our conviction of Jehovah's sensitiveness to what troubles us lies in this. The full suggestions of this most suggestive name for God may be drawn out under these divisions.

I. THE GOD WHO ALWAYS DOES THE MORALLY RIGHT.

II. THE GOD WHO ALWAYS RESPONDS TO TRUST.

III. THE GOD WHO IS EVER FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISE.

IV. THE GOD WHO IS JEALOUS OF HIS PERSONAL HONOUR.

V. THE GOD WHO REQUIRES TO BE SERVED WITH OUR GOODNESS.

On the jealousy of the Divine Name, see Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23; and show how the views of God, thus unfolded, become the basis for the great atonement, whereby the world is redeemed. The "just God" is also the "Saviour."—R. T.

Vers. 28, 29.—*God's agents are never beyond his restrainings.* He used Assyria, but he holds Assyria in with bit and bridle. The horse may plunge, and rear, and trample, and seem to be beyond all restraint; but God never looses the rein, and draws it in when he pleases. The figures used are even more striking. He puts "a hook in the nose," which Michaelis explains in this way: "The Orientals make use of a contrivance for curbing their work-beasts, which is not adopted among us. They bore the nose through both sides, and put a ring through it, to which they fasten two cords. When a beast becomes unruly, they have only to draw the cord on one side, which, by stopping his breath, punishes him so effectually that, after a few repetitions, he fails not to become quite tractable, whenever he begins to feel it. To this contrivance the Arabian poets often allude." It illustrates two points.

I. THE ANXIETIES WE SUFFER WHEN WE FIX OUR GAZE ON SECOND CAUSES.

II. THE RESTFULNESS WE GAIN WHEN WE LOOK, BEHIND AND WITHIN, TO THE GREAT, OVERRULING FIRST CAUSE.—R. T.

Ver. 32.—*"The zeal of the Lord."* Cheyne renders, "The jealousy of Jehovah-Sabáoth shall perform this;" and he suggestively says, "'Jealousy,' being the affectional manifestation of the Divine holiness, is a 'two-edged word,' implying the destruction of all that opposes the Divine covenant, and the furtherance of all that promotes it." Zeal also expresses "earnest desire," and that vigorous and persistent activity in which such desire finds expression. In this sense we may treat Jehu's boast of his "zeal for the Lord." This word seems a favourite one with Isaiah, as applied to Jehovah. He employs it in ch. ix. 7; lix. 17; lxiii. 15 (see also Ezek. v. 13). The two sides of it may be illustrated from the narrative of the chapter.

I. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD REGARDED AS A SACRED JEALOUSY OF THE DIVINE NAME AND HONOUR.

II. THE ZEAL OF THE LORD REGARDED AS AN EARNESTNESS OF PURPOSE AND ENDEAVOUR, WHICH ASSURES THE DISCOMFITURE OF THE ENEMIES OF HIS PEOPLE.

It is an incentive to trust that we are thus assured that our God wants no rousing to action on our behalf, as does the heathen Baal on Mount Carmel. This is our confidence—he is jealous for himself and his Word, and therefore is ever working for us.—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*Humiliating judgments.* After such boastings and threatenings as the Rabshakeh had uttered, it was utterly humiliating to lose his army without fighting a battle, to be compelled to take a miserable remnant home, as a circumvented, disgraced general. It was all the more humiliating if Sennacherib himself headed the army at the later stage. "The greatest men cannot stand before God. The great King of Assyria looks very little when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look still less when his own sons, who should have guarded him, killed him."

I. GOD'S JUDGMENTS OFTEN TAKE SURPRISING FORMS. Anything so overwhelming as this even his people, with all their experience, could not have imagined. God's ways of judgment are never exhausted.

II. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ALWAYS HAVE A PRECISE FITNESS. This humiliation was exactly the thing for a people so proud, boastful, and over-confident as the Assyrians. The high looks of the proud God will abase.

III. GOD'S JUDGMENTS CARRY SOLEMN WARNINGS TO THOSE WHO HEAR OF THEM. They say, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—R. T.

SECTION II. HEZEKIAH'S ILLNESS, AND THE EMBASSY OF MERODACH-BALADAN (CH. XXXVIII., XXXIX.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The present chapter is parallel with 2 Kings xx. 1—11, but contains some marked differences from that passage, both in what it omits and in what it inserts. The general narrative (vers. 1—8, and 21, 22) is greatly condensed, and in part disarranged, vers. 21, 22 being added, as it would seem, by an after-thought. On the other hand, the psalm of Hezekiah (vers. 9—20) is additional, having nothing corresponding to it in the Book of Kings. There is every appearance of 2 Kings xx. 1—11 having been composed previously to the present chapter, and of the present chapter having been, in its narrative portion, abridged from 2 Kings.

Ver. 1.—**In those days.** The illness of Hezekiah is fixed by ver. 5 (and 2 Kings xx. 6) to the fourteenth year of his reign, or B.C. 714. The entire narrative of this chapter and the next is therefore thirteen or fourteen years earlier than that of ch. xxxvi., xxxvii., which belongs to Hezekiah's closing years, B.C. 701—698 (see the comment on ch. xxxvi. 1, 2). **Sick unto death**; *i.e.* attacked by a malady which, if it had run its natural course, would have been fatal. **Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.** This double designation of Isaiah, by his office and by his descent, marks the original independence of this narrative, which was not intended for a continuation of ch. xxxvii. **Thou shalt die, and not live.** Prophecies were often threats, and, when such, were conditional, announcing results which would follow unless averted by prayer or repentance (compare Jonah's prophecy, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," Jonah iii. 4).

Ver. 2.—**Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall.** The action resembles that of Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 4); but the spirit is wholly different. Ahab turned away in sullenness, Hezekiah that he might pray undisturbed. Beds seem to have been placed in the corners of rooms, with the head against one wall of the room, and one side against another.

Ver. 3.—**Remember now, O Lord.** Hezekiah was in the full vigour of life—thirty-nine years old only. He had probably as yet no son, since Manasseh, who succeeded him, was but twelve (2 Kings xxi. 1; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 1) when Hezekiah died at the age of fifty-four. It was a grievous thing to a Jew to leave no male offspring; it was viewed as a mark of the Divine displeasure to be cut off in the midst of one's days (Job xv. 32; xxii. 15, 16; Ps. lv. 23; Prov. x. 27; Eccles. vii. 17). Hezekiah asked himself—Had he deserved such a sentence? He thought that he had not. He knew that, with whatever shortcomings, he had endeavoured to serve God, had trusted in him (2 Kings xviii. 5), cleaved to him (2 Kings xviii. 6), "departed not from following him, but kept his commandments" (2 Kings xviii. 6). He therefore ventured upon an expostulation and an earnest prayer; and God was pleased to hear the prayer and to grant it. **I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart.** Compare the unbiassed testimony of the authors of Kings and Chronicles (2 Kings xviii. 3—6; 2 Chron. xxix. 2; xxxi. 20, 21). Under the old dispensation, there was nothing to prevent men from pleading their righteousness before God (comp. Job xxxi. 4—40; Ps. vii. 3—8; xviii. 20—24; xxvi. 1—8, etc.). Hezekiah, however, does not really regard himself as sinless (comp. ver. 17). **And Hezekiah wept sore.** In the East feelings are but little restrained. Joy shows itself in laughter and shouting, grief in tears and shrill cries. Xerxes wept when he thought of the shortness of human life (Herod., vii. 46); the Persians rent the air with loud cries at the funeral of Masistius (ibid., ix. 24); on the news of the defeat at Salamis all Susa "cried aloud, and wept

and wailed without stint" (ibid., viii. 99). So David wept for Jonathan (2 Sam. i. 12) and again for Absalom (2 Sam. xix. 1); Joash wept when he heard the words of the Law (2 Kings xxii. 19); Nehemiah wept at the desolation of Jerusalem (Neh. i. 4); the ambassadors of Hezekiah, when disappointed of the object of their embassy, "wept bitterly" (ch. xxxiii. 7). No king in the East puts himself under any restraint, if he has an inclination for either tears or laughter.

Ver. 4.—**Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying.** The author of Kings describes graphically how Isaiah, after delivering his message, had gone out, but had not reached the middle court of the palace, when his footsteps were arrested, and the Divine voice bade him "turn again and relieve Hezekiah's fears by a fresh announcement" (2 Kings xx. 4). So swiftly does God answer "the prayer of faith."

Ver. 5.—**Thus saith the Lord, . . . I have heard thy prayer.** According to the author of Kings, the full message sent to Hezekiah was, "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: *behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord.* And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of Assyria; and I will defend this city *for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake*" (2 Kings xx. 5, 6). The words in italics are additional to those here reported by Isaiah. **Fifteen years.** This was doubling, or rather more than doubling, the length of Hezekiah's reign, and allowing him a length of life exceeding that of the great majority of the kings of Judah, who seldom attained the age of fifty. Hezekiah lived to be fifty-four.

Ver. 7.—**And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord.** It was the day of the free offering of "signs" by God to those whom his providence had placed at the head of his people. Ahaz had been offered a sign (ch. vii. 11), but had refused the offer made him (ch. vii. 12); the Lord had then "himself given him a sign." Hezekiah received a sign to assure him of the complete discomfiture of Sennacherib (ch. xxxvii. 30); an offer was here made him of a sign of a peculiar kind, and it was offered under peculiar conditions. We learn from 2 Kings that a choice was submitted to him —he was to determine whether time, as measured by a certain timepiece or clock, which was known as "the dial of Ahaz," should make a sudden leap forward—the shadow advancing ten degrees upon the dial (2 Kings xx. 9), or whether it should retire backwards, the shadow upon the same dial receding ten degrees. Hezekiah determined in favour of the latter sign, from its appearing to him the more difficult of accomplishment; and on his declaring his decision, the shadow receded to the prescribed distance. Time was rolled backward, or at any rate appeared to be rolled backward; and the king, seeing so great a miracle, accepted without hesitation the further predictions that had been made to him. **The Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken.** By the *nexus* of this verse with the preceding, it would naturally be concluded that "the thing" to be done was the defence of Jerusalem; but ver. 22, which belongs properly to this part of the narrative, shows the contrary. Hezekiah had asked for a sign "that he should go up to the house of the Lord."

Ver. 8.—**The sun-dial of Ahaz.** We are informed by Herodotus that the sun-dial was an invention of the Babylonians (Herod., ii. 109), from whom it would readily pass to the Assyrians. Ahaz may have obtained a knowledge of it, or an actual specimen, when he visited Tiglath-Pileser at Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 10), and, on his return to his capital, have caused one to be erected there. Sun-dials are of several kinds. The one here spoken of seems to have consisted of a set of steps, with a perpendicular gnomon or pole at the top, the shadow of which receded up the steps as the sun rose in the heavens, and descended down them as the sun declined. We must suppose that the sign was given in the forenoon, when the shadow was gradually creeping up the steps. Hezekiah thought that a sudden jump in the same direction would be as nothing compared with a reversal of the motion, and therefore required that the shadow should go back, which it did. How the effect was produced, whether by an eclipse as argued by Mr. Bosanquet ('Transactions of Society of Bibl. Archæology,' vol. iii. pp. 34—40), or by refraction, or by an actual alteration of the earth's motion, we are not told; but there is reason to believe that the cause, whatever it was, was local, not general, since the King of Babylon subsequently sent ambassadors, to inquire concerning "the wonder *that was done in the land*" (2 Chron. xxxii. 31). **The sun returned ten degrees.** We must not press this expression as indicating a real alteration of the sun's place in the heavens. The meaning is that *the shadow cast by the sun* returned.

Ver. 9.—**The writing of Hezekiah**; rather, *a writing*. After he had recovered from his illness, Hezekiah, it would seem, retraced his feelings as he lay upon his sick-bed, and embodied them in this monody. It has been well termed, "a peculiarly sweet and plaintive specimen of Hebrew psalmody" (Cheyne). Four stanzas or strophes of unequal length are thought to be discernible: (1) from the beginning of ver. 10 to the end of ver. 12;

(2) from the beginning of ver. 13 to the end of ver. 14; (3) from the beginning of ver. 15 to the end of ver. 17; (4) from the beginning of ver. 18 to the end of ver. 20. In the first two the monarch is looking forward to death, and his strain is mournful; in the last two he has received the promise of recovery, and pours out his thankfulness.

Ver. 10.—**In the cutting off of my days**; literally, *in the pausing of my days*—which is taken by some to mean "the noon-tide of my life"—when my sun had reached its zenith, and might have been expected to begin to decline; by others to signify "the still tranquillity of my life," when it was gliding quietly and peacefully along without anything to disturb it. Ver. 6 is against this latter view. **I shall go to the gates of the grave**; rather, *I shall enter in at the gates of hell* (or, *Hades*)—the place of departed spirits (see the comment on ch. xiv. 9). Hezekiah bewails his fate somewhat as Antigone: Ἀλλ' ἔμ' ὁ παγκοίτας Ἀΐδης ζῶσαν ἄγει τὰν Ἀχέροντος ἀκτάν (Soph., 'Ant.,' ll. 810—813).

Ver. 11.—**I shall not see the Lord** (comp. Ps. vi. 5, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave (*Sheôl*) who shall give thee thanks?" and see also Ps. xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10—12; cxv. 17). The Jews had not yet attained the conception of a blissful region in Hades, where God manifested himself, and the saints, who were awaiting the resurrection, saw him and praised him. Even the Lord. (For examples of repetition for the sake of emphasis, see ch. xxix. 1; xxxiii. 22; xxxviii. 19; xl. 1; li. 17, etc.) **In the land of the living**; *i.e.* "*as I do now* in the land of the living" (comp. Ps. xxvii. 13; cxvi. 9).

Ver. 12.—**Mine age is departed**; rather, *my dwelling is plucked up*. The body seems to be viewed as the dwelling-place of the soul. Hezekiah's is to be taken from him, and carried far away, like a shepherd's tent, while he, his true self, *i.e.* his soul, is left bare and naked (comp. 2 Cor. v. 1—4). **I have cut off like a weaver my life**; rather, *I have rolled up, like a weaver, my life*. The careful weaver rolls up the web, as it advances, to keep it clean and free from dust. Hezekiah had been equally careful of his life; he had about half finished it, when lo! "Jehovah takes up the fatal scissors" (Cheyne), and severs the unfinished cloth from the loom (compare the Greek myth of Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos). **With pining sickness**; rather, as in the margin, *from the thrum*. The "thrum" is the portion of the warp which adjoins the upper bar of the loom.

Ver. 13.—**I reckoned till morning**, etc.; *i.e.* "I lay thinking till the morning, that God would crush me as a lion crushes his prey—I expected him all day long to make an end of me."

Ver. 14.—**Like a crane or a swallow**. The *sûs*, here translated "crane," is probably "the swift," which has a loud, shrill note. The *'âgûr* is, perhaps, "the crane;" but this is very uncertain. The two words occur as the names of birds only here and in Jer. viii. 7. **So did I chatter**; rather, *so did I scream* (Cheyne). **I did mourn**; rather, *I did moan*. **Mine eyes fail** with looking upward; rather, *mine eyes are weak to look upward*; i.e. I have scarcely the courage or the strength to look to Jehovah; yet still I do look to him falteringly, and make my appeal: **O Lord, I am oppressed**; **undertake for me** (comp. Job xvii. 3); literally, *be Surety for me*. "The image," as Mr. Cheyne says, "is that of a debtor, who is being dragged to prison" at the suit of an exacting creditor, and for whom there is but one hope of relief, viz. if he can obtain a sufficient surety. Hezekiah calls on God to be the Surety; but God is the Creditor! Still, there is an appeal from God's justice to God's mercy—from Jehovah who punishes to Jehovah who forgives sin; and this appeal Hezekiah seems to intend to make when he beseeches God to "undertake for him."

Ver. 15.—**What shall I say?** The strain is suddenly changed. Hezekiah's prayer has been answered, and he has received the answer (vers. 5—8). He is "at a loss to express his wonder and his gratitude" (Cheyne); comp. 2 Sam. vii. 20. God has both **spoken unto him**—*i.e.* given him a promise of recovery—and also **himself hath done it**; *i.e.* has performed his promise. Already he feels in himself the beginnings of amendment—he is conscious that the worst is past, and that the malady has taken a turn for the better. **I shall go softly all my years**. Delitzsch renders, "I shall walk quietly;" Mr. Cheyne, "I shall walk at ease;" both apparently understanding the expression of a quiet, easy life, made the more pleasant by contrast with past pain. But it seems better to understand the "soft going," with Dr. Kay, of a hushed and subdued spirit, consequent upon the crisis past, and thenceforth continuing—the king walking, as it were, perpetually in God's presence. **In the bitterness**; rather, *after the bitterness* (Delitzsch), when it has departed; and "*because of* it" (Nagelsbach), through its remembrance.

Ver. 16.—**By these things**; *i.e.* "the things which thou speakest and doest" (ver. 15). Man does not "live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. viii. 3). **And in all these things**. This rendering is against the laws of grammar. Translate, *and wholly in them*.

Ver. 17.—**Behold, for peace I had great bitterness**; rather, *behold, it was for my*

peace that I had such bitterness, such bitterness. The pain that I underwent was for the true peace and comfort of my soul (comp. Ps. xciv. 12; cxix. 75; Prov. iii. 12; Heb. xii. 5—11). **Thou hast in love**, etc.; literally, *thou hast loved my soul back from the pit of destruction*—as if God's love, beaming on the monarch's soul, had drawn it back from the edge of the pit (comp. Hos. xi. 4, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love"). **For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.** Where they could be no more seen, and therefore would be no more remembered (comp. Micah vii. 19; Ps. xxv. 7; lxxix. 8; ch. xliii. 25; lxiv. 9, etc.). Hezekiah, though lately he protested his integrity (ver. 3), did not mean to say that he was sinless. He knew that he had sinned; he regarded his sins as having brought down upon him the sentence of death; as God has revoked the sentence, he knows that he has pardoned his sins and put them away from his remembrance.

Ver. 18.—**The grave cannot praise thee** (compare the comment on ver. 11). It is avoiding the plain force of these passages to say that Hezekiah *only means* that those who go to Hades in a state of condemnation cannot be expected there to praise God (Kay). He speaks broadly and generally of all: "The living, the living, shall praise thee; *Sheôl* cannot praise thee; Death cannot celebrate thee." Manifestly, though he believes in a future state, it is one in which there is either no energy at all, or at any rate no devotional energy. He may think, with Isaiah, that "the righteous man," when he is "taken away," will "enter into peace" (ch. lvii. 1, 2); but absolute "peace" precludes energy (see Arist., 'Eth. Nic.,' i. x. § 2). Hezekiah shrinks from losing all his activities, including his sense of personal communion with God. He does not, perhaps, "look on the condition of the faithful departed as one of *comfortless gloom*;" but he views it as one of deprivation, and is unwilling to enter into it. It was by the coming of Christ and the preaching of his gospel that "life and immortality" were first truly "brought to light" (2 Tim. i. 10).

Ver. 19.—**The living.** Those who still enjoy the light of day. The repetition is emphatic, and has the force of "the living, and the living *only*." **The father to the children.** Hezekiah may, or may not, have had children himself at the time. Manasseh was not born; but he may have had daughters, or even other sons, who did not survive him. He is not, however, perhaps, thinking of his own case.

Ver. 20.—**The Lord was ready to save me**; rather, *came to my rescue; came and saved me.* **Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments**; rather, *therefore will we play my stringed instruments.* Hezekiah calls the stringed instruments his, because he had recalled their use, and re-established them as a part of the temple service after the suspension of that service by Ahaz (2 Chron. xxix. 30). His intention now is to take continual part with the Levites in the choral praises of God, which were a part of the daily worship of the temple. This is to him the natural mode of expressing his thankfulness to God for the mercy vouchsafed him.

Ver. 21.—**For Isaiah had said**; literally, *and Isaiah said.* It seems as if this verse and the next had been *accidentally* omitted from their proper place in the narrative, which was between vers. 6 and 7, and had then been appended by an after-thought. They reproduce nearly, but not exactly, the words of 2 Kings xix. 7, 8. **Let them take a lump of figs.** This remedy is said to be one still employed in the East for the cure of ordinary boils; but it must have been quite insufficient for the cure of such a dangerous tumour, or carbuncle, as that from which Hezekiah was suffering. In miraculous cures, both the Old Testament prophets and our Lord himself frequently employed a means, insufficient in itself, but supernaturally rendered sufficient, to effect the intended purpose (see 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 34, 41; v. 14; John ix. 6; Mark vii. 33; viii. 23, etc.) **Upon the boil.** The term here translated "boil" is used in Exodus (ix. 9—11) for the affliction which constituted the sixth plague, in Leviticus (xiii. 18—23) for an ulcer accompanying one of the worst forms of leprosy, in Deuteronomy (xxviii. 27, 35) for "the botch of Egypt," and in Job (ii. 7) for the last of the visitations from which he suffered. It is not unlikely that it was of a leprous character.

Ver. 22.—**Hezekiah also had said**; literally, *and Hezekiah said.* Our translators, both in this verse and at the commencement of ver. 21, have endeavoured to conceal the awkwardness of the *nexus*, or rather want of *nexus*, with what precedes, by a modification of the rendering. The true sense is brought out by the proceeding, which is, however, a little arbitrary.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The duty of men, in view of death, to set their house in order.* Nothing is more manifest than the duty of all men, in view of that departure which they know to impend over them as an absolute certainty, only doubtful in respect of its date, to arrange their worldly affairs as prudence requires, and not leave them in confusion. In complicated societies, and in states where civilization is advanced, the duty presses more especially, since the greatest care constantly requires to be taken lest, if affairs are not arranged, the most undesirable results should arise.

I. IT IS MOST CONVENIENT THAT THE HOUSE SHOULD BE SET IN ORDER BEFORE ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF DEATH APPEARS. The circumstances of a dangerous illness are generally such as to render it extremely inexpedient that the arrangement of a man's worldly affairs should be put off to such a time. The time is, for the most part, all too short for the consideration of a man's spiritual affairs—for repentance, confession, restitution, exchange of forgiveness, and the like, which often occupy a considerable space, and need much thought and attention. Worldly affairs distract the mind from the things which most vitally concern it, and, if they are not arranged until the last illness sets in, the result too commonly is that "to the mercy of a moment" are left "the vast concerns of an eternal scene." Further, in sickness the mind is far less fit to make judicious arrangements than in health; it is soon fatigued, often not clear, sometimes altogether confused and incapable of sound judgment—not to mention that it may wholly fail, or be quite unequal to any exertion. Men need to be reminded continually, while they are in health, of the duty of arranging their worldly affairs at once, and not waiting till the fiat has gone forth—till their hours are numbered, and whatever has to be done must be done in haste.

II. STILL, IF THE DUTY HAS BEEN NEGLECTED IN HEALTH, THE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF DEATH IS A PEREMPTORY CALL ON US TO DISCHARGE IT. "Set thine house in order," is Isaiah's first, nay, his sole, charge to Hezekiah, when he warns him that he is to die shortly. The interests of others are involved; and our neglect of them hitherto gives them a claim on us which is more binding than any interests of our own. "If a man provide not for . . . those of his own house, . . . he is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8). The neglected duty must first be attended to; the rights, interests, fair claims of others must be considered, and, so far as possible, secured; and *then* our own advantage may occupy us, but not before. No man, we may be sure, will be made to suffer in another world for having postponed his own advantage to that of others in this.

Vers. 2—6.—*The power of prayer.* The story of these chapters (XXXVI.—XXXVIII.) is remarkably illustrative of the power of "effectual fervent prayer." Four points may be noted.

I. PRAYER IS POTENT TO DESTROY THE ADVERSARIES OF GOD AT THE GREATEST HEIGHT OF THEIR GLORY AND BOASTING. Assyria had reached the acme of her might. She had destroyed nation after nation; she had "gone up and overflowed." All Western Asia was hers, and now she threatened to effect a lodgment in Northern Africa, and to add the rich lands of the Nile valley to the productive regions along the Tigris and the Euphrates. She had measured her strength against that of every military power existing at that day, and in all her struggles had come off victorious. What was to stop her, or prevent her colossal form from dominating the whole earth? A short prayer offered by a petty potentate in a distant city. It is the prayer of Hezekiah "against Sennacherib" that overthrows him. "*Whereas* thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, King of Assyria: this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn" (ch. XXXVII. 21, 22).

II. PRAYER IS POTENT TO SAVE A NATION AT THE LAST EXTREMITY. It may well have seemed to Sennacherib ridiculous that the Jews should think to withstand him. He or his predecessors had conquered every other country of Western Asia—Babylonia and Media, Armenia and Gozan, Syria, Phœnicia, Damascus, Samaria, Philistia, Edom; they had contended with the hosts of Egypt and overcome them; how should a petty nation, forty-six of whose towns they had taken in one campaign, and two hundred

thousand of whose inhabitants they had carried into captivity ('Eponym Canon,' p. 134), conceive it possible to resist for long an enemy so vastly superior to them? They were open to invasion on every side. Tiglath-Pileser had subdued the trans-Jordanic region, Sargon had reduced Philistia and Samaria, Sennacherib himself had for tributaries the kings of Zidon, Arvad, Gebal, Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom (ibid., p. 132). How was Hezekiah, cooped up in Jerusalem "as a bird in a cage"—how were his people, a mere "remnant" (ch. xxxvii. 4)—to escape the subjection that had come on all their neighbours? The last extremity seemed to be reached. Humanly speaking, there was no prospect of deliverance; the jaws of the monster that had swallowed all the other countries must crush Judæa also. There was, however, still the resort to prayer. Hezekiah, Isaiah, doubtless the faithful Israelites generally, betook themselves to God, besought his aid, besieged him with their supplications, and the nation was saved—saved from extinction—saved, for a long term, even from invasion—allowed a century more of independent life and a recovery under Josiah of almost pristine glory. Such power has prayer at the extremity of a nation's need—a power the force of which, measured against ordinary mundane forces, is quite incalculable.

III. PRAYER IS POTENT TO OBTAIN FROM GOD LENGTH OF DAYS AND EVERY TEMPORAL BLESSING. Hezekiah's prayer for himself prolonged his life for fifteen years. Christians, under sentence of death, given up by their physicians and their friends, are entitled to pray, if they so choose, for an extension of the term of their probation, a respite from the doom pronounced on them. In God's hands, and in his hands only, are the issues of life and death. He can, if he will, prolong our life, and restore us to health, even when we seem at the last gasp. It may not be often suitable that we should ask this boon for ourselves; we have not the reasons to wish for long life that the Jews had. But for others we do well to ask, when they are in danger, that God will spare them to us; and "the prayer of faith" will often "save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up" (Jas. v. 15), and give them back to us, as from the very edge of the pit, if our prayer be faithful and fervent.

IV. PRAYER IS POTENT TO OBTAIN FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AND REMISSION OF THE PENALTIES OF SIN. Hezekiah felt that, in revoking the sentence of death which he had passed upon him, God had also forgiven the sins which had provoked that sentence (ver. 17). He had been sensible of those sins, even while he had pleaded his general faithfulness (ver. 3). He had doubtless begged to be forgiven them. Such prayer God will in no wise cast out. It is his high prerogative to pardon sin (Mark ii. 7), and it is also his delight. He bids us ask his forgiveness daily (Matt. vi. 12); he promises his forgiveness to all but the unforgiving (Mark xi. 25, 26); he assures us that, if we will return to him, he will "abundantly pardon" (ch. lv. 7). And his pardon includes within it remission of the true penalty of sin, which is his displeasure, his alienation, and its consequence—eternal death. The pardoned sinner has his sins "blotted out." He "enters into the joy of his Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Sickness and recovery of Hezekiah.* All pathos ultimately turns upon contrast, and the greatest of all contrasts is that between death and life. All who have passed through a dangerous illness, and have been brought nigh unto the gates of death, will feel touched by this narrative, which hints meanings that lie below the surface.

I. THE WARNING. The king falls into deadly sickness; and the prophet's voice assures him that his days are numbered. "Thou shalt die, and not live." The king, under the weight of his grief, turns his face to the wall. So Ahab, under the influence of another consuming passion (1 Kings xxi. 4). It is a sign of sorrow that admits not of society. How seldom do men receive such a warning with calmness! How true is it—

> "Oh our life's sweetness!
> That we the pain of death would hourly die
> Rather than die at once"!

'What are pains and aches, and the torments of the gout and the stone, which lie

pulling at our earthly tabernacle, but so many ministers and under-agents of death? What are catarrhs and ulcers, coughs and dropsies, but so many mementoes of a hastening dissolution, so many foretastes of the grave? Add to these the consuming cares and troubles of the mind; the toil and labour and racking intention of the brain, which as really, though not as sensibly, impair and exhaust the vitals as the most visible bodily diseases can do, and let death into the body, though by another door." But there is an instinct within us which refuses to listen to these argumentations. Some noted lines of the Roman noble Mæcenas have come down to us, in which he depicts himself as shaken with palsy, attacked from head to foot with disease, still *Vita dum superest, bene est.* Such experiences put to rout the fallacies of the pessimist, and convince us of the love we bear to life.

> "Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No soul that breathes with human breath
> Hath ever truly longed for death.
> 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant;
> For life, and not for death, we pant;
> More life and fuller that we want."

The experience of such a deadly sickness may be the needed lesson to teach us the worth of our days, to stir us up to the useful employment of them.

II. THE PRAYER. We must bear in mind that in antiquity generally death is viewed as the effect of Divine visitation, especially sudden and untimely death. The belief was that the days of the good would be prolonged, the years of the wicked would be shortened (Prov. x. 27); that men of deceit and blood would not live out half their days (Ps. lv. 23). Hezekiah, conscious of his integrity and faithfulness, appeals to the justice of God. His heart had been "perfect" with Jehovah, in the sense in which David's had been, and Solomon's had not been (1 Kings xi. 4). He had not divided his affections with the gods of idolaters. He had been a reformer—he had done what was good in the eyes of Jehovah. After the manner of Oriental lamentation, he loudly weeps (cf. Judg. xx. 23; 1 Sam. xiii. 16). There is a childlike simplicity in the scene. What are we all but children in the great hours of life's trials? But we see here that *calm conscience which is the result of a pious life*, and which *gives confidence in prayer.* "Conscience is the great repository and magazine of all those pleasures that can afford any solid refreshment to the soul;" and of that solace which is needed in the moments of weakness. "When this is calm and serene and absolving, then properly a man enjoys all things, and, what is more, himself; for that he must do before he can enjoy anything else. It is only a pious life, led by the rules of religion, that can authorize a man's conscience to speak comfortably to him; it is this that must word the sentence before the conscience can pronounce it, and then it will do it with majesty and authority; it will not whisper, but proclaim, a *jubilee* to the mind; it will not drop, but pour in, oil upon the wounded heart. The pleasure of conscience is not only greater than all other pleasures, but may also serve instead of them. They only please and affect the mind *in transitu*, in the pitiful narrow compass of actual fruition; whereas that of conscience entertains and feeds it a long time after with durable, lasting reflections" (South).

III. THE DEATH-WARRANT CANCELLED. "And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again" (2 Kings xx. 4). The doom of death is recalled; a respite of fifteen years granted. Deliverance is promised from the Assyrian, and Jehovah will throw his protecting shield over the city; and a physical phenomenon is to occur as a sign or guarantee of the fulfilment. Prophecy, then, is conditional; Divine judgments are conditional. "It does not always follow," says Jerome, "that because the prophet predicts, that which he has predicted shall come to pass. For he predicted, not that it should come to pass, but that it might not come to pass." Here repentance or prayer may "avail much." We should hesitate, therefore, to speak of absolute decrees, and of irreversible judgments, in connection with human life. Always there is an "if" or an "unless" to break the fall of the severest sentence; and, in *fact*, the dealings of the merciful God with men are more lenient than they can ever be represented in words. How often has the opinion of the physician doomed the invalid, who has nevertheless recovered!

And the like disappointment of expectations occurs in spiritual things. All combine to remind us of the cheering saying, "While there is life, there is hope!" So long as we entrust ourselves in the hands of a gracious God, we need never despair.—J.

Vers. 9—22.—*The song of Hezekiah.* It is a song of peculiar sweetness—from a literary point of view, characterized by great elegance; from a spiritual point of view, unfolding some deepest elements of Hebrew and of human pathos.

I. THE CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH. It was *in middle life*, in the "noon-tide of his days," that he had to face the dark gates of *Sheôl*. "Midway in life, as to Dante, came his peril of death." It has been said that there is a peculiar melancholy in middle life. Perhaps so; every age has its peculiar melancholy. It is the contrast between the "noon-tide of consciousness," and the sudden sunset which seems at hand, that shocks the imagination. It is the very acme of the lifelong struggle of will and necessity. Here, the glow of intellectual vigour, the full fruit of ripened knowledge, the educated and matured taste for life; yonder, pale nothingness, decay, disappointment. A *sense of injustice* seems here to shock the mind. The man feels as if he were being robbed of his property, "mulcted of the residue of his days." That life which nature has kindly nourished, which manifold experience has enriched and adorned, around which law has thrown its protection, for which all else has been willingly foregone, must now itself become a sacrifice to stern, unreasoning, unpitying destiny. Death appears to the natural man in the light of a *bondage*, an *imprisonment*. He is going down to the *gates of Sheôl* (Ps. ix. 13; cviii. 18; Job xxxviii. 19). In the lore of ancient nations similar ideas appear: the place of the departed is a strong fortress, a Tartaros, an Acheron, surrounded by strong walls and a moat; or an inaccessible island. In the house and folk lore of the peoples abundance of such ideas are to be found. Everywhere the like pathos and the like ideas meet us; and death remains the "standing dire discouragement of human nature."

II. LIFE INSEPARABLE FROM THE GOODNESS OF GOD. To *see* Jehovah is to *see* Jehovah's goodness—it is, in the best and richest sense, to *enjoy life* (Ps. xxvii. 13). And with this is connected the joy of society—the beholding of the face of one's fellow-man—communion with the inhabitants of the world. To die is to be uprooted from all these sweet associations, to have one's habitation plucked up, like the tent of the nomad shepherd (Job iv. 21; Ps. lii. 5; 2 Cor. v. 1, 4; 2 Pet. i. 13, 14). It is to depart into exile. It is to have the life-web cut and left unfinished. It is to be cut off and made an end of. These melancholy strains depict one side of human feeling. They are paralleled in the Psalms (vi. 5; xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10—12; xciv. 17; cxv. 17) and Job (xiv.). Nevertheless, the representation of the effect of death, hopeless as it seems, does not exclude those vague hopes, those implicit beliefs, which mingle with such lamentations, in a better side to the future, which found not distinct expression in words. The connection is strong in Hebrew thought between life on the earth and the goodness of Jehovah. But the goodness of God, however lenient, is learned once for all; and it is impossible to believe in it as manifested in the gift of life without the rise of hope in the *continuance* of life. The belief in the continuance of life is here expressed; only the sensuous imaginations overpower the mind with sadness. Hope cannot conquer it upon its own ground; but hope nevertheless remains what it is—an anchor of the soul, and it enters, though gropingly, into that within the veil.

III. PRAYER AND HOPE. "The sick man appeals against the fate which threatens him to God—to God against himself; to the essential mercy against the apparent cruelty of Jehovah." It is "the characteristic irony of faith." He is in hourly expectation of death. His cries are like the plaintive notes of birds. He looks up with languid and half-despairing expression to the height where Jehovah dwells. He is like a debtor being carried to prison, and prays Jehovah to become Surety for him. But Jehovah is at the same time the Creditor. It is the "irony of the believer" (Cheyne). "The apparent doubt only expresses the more strongly the real faith—the protest against injustice and harshness, the sense of absolute goodness and ineffable mercy" (Mozley). Prayer may be, in moments of the sorest agony, nothing but a child's cry—which has "no language but a cry." Yet that cry must "knock against the heart" of the Father of all. It is God himself who wrings the cry from the distressed heart; God himself who loves to be called upon, and to make his children feel their need of him.

IV. THE ANSWER OF PEACE. It has come suddenly, swiftly, unexpectedly. And the restored one is at a loss how to render thanks. His night has been turned into morning; and against the dark background of remembered grief, the picture of a serene future shines. He looks forward to a "walk at ease" through all his future years. And not in vain has he suffered, for lasting lessons have been wrought into his spirit. He has learned *his need of God* and of God's Word. By that Word men really live (Deut. viii. 3). Altogether in them is the life of his spirit. God is the Source of existence and of salvation. He brings to the gates of death; he recovers and makes alive. He has been brought near to God by the very experience which seemed to remove him so far. He has learned that *affliction* was *for his good*. The bitter medicine has been swallowed once for all. He has looked death in the face, has trembled at its terrors; but has seen that there is a greater fact than death, namely, the life and love of the eternal God. "The sting of death is sin," and this has been taken out. He has learned the secret of the Divine forgiveness, the immense possibilities in the heart of God. His sins have been flung behind the back of God—have been banished into oblivion. Lastly, he has learned anew, and in a deeper way, what the *blessing of life* is. All is contrast. And the contrast of death and the under-world, its pale and cold existence, throws into relief the consciousness of life, in its full conscious richness in body, soul, and spirit. "The dismay with which he contemplates departure from the world is a measure of the value he sets on personal communion with God." Life, then, should be one long act of praise. From father to child the pure tradition should go down: "God is good; his mercy endureth for ever." He is constant, faithful; and that constancy is revealed, not only in the course of nature's laws, but in the laws of human nature—the life of heart and conscience. And the music of each spirit shall swell into a magnificent harmony in the house of Jehovah. He is "ready to deliver" in the future as he has actually delivered in the past. "Glory to thee for all the grace I have not seen as yet."—J.

Ver. 5.—*Hezekiah's prayer heard.* "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." These words were spoken to a heart riven with grief, and a life seemingly "sick unto death." At such times this man wants, above all else, to feel that he has been *sincere*. He says, not boastingly at all, but with real humility, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Words must be judged by the circumstances of the life. There is no self-righteousness in them, but simple, guileless heart-speech.

I. GOD'S SPEEDY CONSOLATION. "Go, and say to Hezekiah." For the Divine heart meets the human heart according to its moods. And there was no need to intensify Hezekiah's sorrow or to test its sincerity. Just as our Saviour, remembering Peter's tears after his denial, and knowing that the memory of his unfaithfulness and falsehood was a burning shame in his heart, said immediately after his resurrection, by the mouth of the angel, "Go your way, tell his disciples, *and Peter*" (Mark xvi. 7), that Peter might know that the "look" which struck out the fountain of tears, was turned into the look of forgiving grace and mercy. So here God would comfort Hezekiah at once in his true-hearted contrition.

II. GOD'S TENDER REMEMBRANCE. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father." What music is that! Then there *is* something in a pious ancestry—more than we think of at times. *Your* father was a man of God, perhaps. Then there are prayers treasured up for you in the greater Father's memory. When we think of our Saviour, we remember his own words, "For my sake." So God remembers also the sake of others: "For Zion's sake;" "For Jerusalem's sake." And as concerning Solomon God says, "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not rend the kingdom from thee, for David thy father's sake." We read also in Genesis, "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." This is as touching as it is comforting. "The God of David thy father."

III. GOD'S GRACIOUS SPEECH. "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." The prayer that is heard is the prayer that is heartfelt. None need be ashamed of tears. They are not unmanly. "Jesus wept." When a man weeps we are accustomed to wonder, nay, sometimes to scorn. The world prefers the sternness of endurance and

the courage of despair. God hears heavenly eloquence in sighs, and beautiful liturgies in tears. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And the answer came: "I will add unto thy days fifteen years. . . . I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the King of Assyria." So God will save nations because of righteous souls, and will deliver us from worse Assyrians than those that imperilled Israel.—W. M. S.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The grief of old age.* "I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed." Then it is not so strange an experience to love the busy city or the rural quietude. "Life, we've been long together." This is what, at Hezekiah's time of life, we most of us feel. There is an old familiar friendship betwixt us and the world. We scarcely think things can go on well without us. The old village stream seems to look up and know us when we visit it in the after-years. Yet the reflection in it of our face and figure is very changed.

I. THE SIGHT HE WOULD MISS. Not nature, but nature's King and Lord. This always characterizes a living religion. We see God in all—God in Christ. For by him God made the worlds. He is the Archetype of all beauty. His is the thought which has been fulfilled in creation's glory and beauty. His the harmony which has found voice in the music of the woods and streams. And to rise to higher, even to human spheres—all the loves of espousal and home—these speak of him who ordered their joys and uses, and made them parables of his own love and care. "I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." Then this is cheerful and pleasant. So wrote Charles Lamb, when, in view of death, he said he should miss "the safe security of the streets," as well as the sweet rural scenes. And apart from revelation of the rest that remaineth, it *would be* sad indeed to lie down in a City of Sleepers, who will never know an awakening voice, whilst above the tomb there is busy life in the mart, the senate, and the field.

II. THE MISTAKE HE MADE. "Mine age is departed." Not quite so yet, even in relation to this life. He was to continue amongst those of whom he said, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." But *then* would surely come the time when (ver. 18) he would go down into the pit. The light on immortality burned dimly then. Here and there we trace it, like light that lingers on the higher mountains, in David and Isaiah; but to the mass of minds it was not, to say the least, a very potent influence or a very living faith. "Christ has brought light and immortality to light" by the gospel, and we need never say, "Mine age is departed;" but rather, "Mine age is transmuted" into immortal youth, and unending revelation of the Redeemer's power and glory.—W. M. S.

Ver. 20.—*Music in the heart.* "The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord." The graver question is—Are we ready to be saved? God's arm is not shortened, that he cannot save. And his love to us is the same through all the long centuries. Christ touched the real cause of distance: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

I. THE READINESS OF GOD. "All things are now ready," said Christ; and in view of the Redeemer's great work in all the ages, God was a Saviour. God makes affirmation concerning this. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). This reveals the gracious disposition of God. We must ever remember that it is the beautiful nature of God that is revealed in the parables and in the passion of our Lord. Like the fountain ever ready to leap forth, he is *ready* to forgive.

II. THE MINSTRELSY OF THE CHURCH. Music has accompanied devotion in all ages. It awakens the slumbering sensibilities of the soul. It is not only an expression of feeling, it is a quickener of it. "Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments." These songs are the glorious heritage of the Church. They are heard every sabbath day in cathedral and church, in city, village, and hamlet. The great revelation of God is *one*, alike in the old and the new dispensations. In all ages God is a Saviour. Therefore there is nothing out of date in the inspired psalms. They belong

to all ages of history, all eras of time. When we have passed away, our children will still lift up to God their praises and thanksgivings in the strains of the sweet singers of Israel.

III. THE PERPETUITY OF PRAISE. "All the days of our life." For that would be a strange day on which there was nothing to praise God for—no new mercy, no fresh deliverance, no special bounty. "Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy Name for ever and ever." Yes; on life's last day it may be like the venerable Dr. Guthrie, as he lay a-dying, we shall say, "Sing me a bairn's hymn." The days of our life may be few or many, but in them all we shall have occasion to realize the fatherhood of God, and the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.

IV. THE PLACE OF DEVOTION. "In the house of the Lord." This will ever be sacred to the true Christian. What memories of sacred vision and of spiritual emotion are connected with the sanctuary! What fellowship we have had there with each other and with God! The best part of our nature has been developed there—the part which, like God himself, "no man hath seen at any time, or indeed can see." For, apart from the associations of place, there is the inspiration of mutual faith, mutual hope, mutual service, and mutual love. Thus we meet and mingle in the house of the Lord, till, clothed with white robes and with palms in our hands, we join the victors who utter their hallelujahs around the throne of the Lamb, in the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—W. M. S.

VERS. 1—3.—*A vision of death.* The scene is one of true pathos; it is one of those touches of nature which "make the whole world kin." We have—

I. DEATH SUDDENLY PRESENTING ITSELF TO MAN IN HIS PRIME. (Ver. 1.) Death is very common in infancy; it *must* be near in old age. It occasions no surprise, and brings comparatively little pain or grief when it occurs at either of these extremes. Infancy does not understand it, and age accepts or even welcomes it. But occasionally, man in the prime of his powers, woman in the glory of her days, is called upon to look death in the face when life seems to stretch out far into the future. The outbreaking of latent disease, the mysterious and totally unanticipated collapse, the fearful and fatal accident,—these or other things are at work, saying in stern tones to one and another of our race, "Thou shalt die, and not live."

II. THE PROFOUND HUMAN REGRET WHICH IT THEN OCCASIONS. "Hezekiah wept sore." We differ, according to our individual temperament and our national habits, as to the exhibition of our feelings. The Jewish king gave vent to his sorrow in hot tears and sore lamentation. An Englishman will probably command both voice and feature when he learns that he must die, and may not live. But no one, suddenly taken away from the midst of beloved relations and friends, unexpectedly torn from the activities and enjoyments on which he has set his heart and spent his energy and centred his hopes, can be unmoved, untroubled. It is a transcendently solemn moment when the human heart first learns that, instead of blessed communion and of joyous activity, there must be hopeless separation and the silence of the grave. Sudden death in prime is a wrench sorer and sadder than any which life has known.

III. THE REFUGE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN THE LAST RESORT. "Then Hezekiah . . . prayed unto the Lord." There are some things which, when everything else fails, lead us to God—the extremities of joy and sorrow, a crisis in our career, the near presence of death. When human art has failed, and man can do no more for us, then we turn our thought to Heaven—we lift up our face unto God. God can intervene, we know, in the very greatest exigency; it may be that he will; we will "pray unto the Lord." And if we do so *reverently* and *resignedly*, we do so *rightly*; for who can tell how or when he may be pleased to act on our behalf, to "see our tears, to hear our prayers," and to "add unto our days" (ver. 5)? Or, if we do not have recourse to God in prayer for deliverance, we can fall back on that which may be better still—on a cheerful submission to his holy will.

IV. A CONSOLATION AT THE CLOSE OF LIFE. If we do not make it a *plea* with God, as Hezekiah thought it right to do, viz. that we "have walked before God in truth and with a perfect heart," etc. (ver. 3), we may find in such a fact a very precious *consolation* to our own spirit. To have to look back from the dying hour on a course of folly, guilt, and mischief, must be bitterness itself. To be able to survey, from that last

scene, a life of sincere devotion to God and faithful service of mankind, must be a source of unspeakable thankfulness and serenity.

V. A DUTY IN DEATH WHICH IT IS THE DUTY OF LIFE TO REDUCE TO ITS LOWEST POINT. "Set thine house in order" (ver. 1); do the necessary things that remain undone—that which is unfinished in the sanctuary of the soul, in the inner circle of the family, in the relationships which are outside. But how excellent it is to live with all these things preserved in such order that, when the end comes, there will be the least possible left to do, and the mind can turn, untroubled, to rest in the presence of the Saviour, and to look for the rest that is so soon to be enjoyed!—C.

Vers. 4—6.—*Human life; the kindness of God and the wisdom of man.* In the providential ordering and in the human direction of this our mortal life, we see—

I. THE KINDNESS OF GOD. 1. *The strong links* by which God has connected us together. "The God of David thy father;" for David's sake, in part, he would render deliverance. Human life is so ordered that we are all of us immeasurably the better for the piety, the virtue, the patient and faithful labours of those who came before us. 2. *His sensitiveness to our suffering.* "I have seen thy tears." "Like as a father pitieth his children," etc.; "When he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion." 3. *His attention to our appeal.* "I have heard thy prayer." God's ear is open, not only to the prayers of "the great congregation," but to the faintest breath of one believing soul; though he may sometimes seem to be deaf, yet is he always "inclining his ear" unto us. 4. *His multiplication of our days.* "I will add unto thy days." With the morning light, as it continually returns, we should say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made," etc.; it is a new gift from his gracious hand. We take it too much for granted, as if he were under some obligation to add it to those he has given us before. But it is all "of grace"—so much more than we deserve or have any right to expect at his hand. To the

> "Lord of our time, whose hand has set
> New time upon our score,"

we should render heartfelt praise for his daily gift. 5. *His compounding our cup of hope and of uncertainty.* God told Hezekiah he would add to his "days fifteen years." Is it not a yet kinder act of our Father that he holds out to us the hope of future years, *without letting us know* how far he will fulfil our wishes! Without the *hope*, we should lose all the inspiration which urges us to fruitful action; without the *uncertainty*, we should presume on the continuance of our life, and be bereft of one of the most potent checks on folly and on sin. A strong hope, with an element of uncertainty, is the most favourable condition for the cultivation of wisdom and virtue.

II. THE WISDOM OF MAN. Our wisdom, under those conditions in which we find ourselves, is: 1. *To prepare for length of days.* By patient diligence, by prudent forethought, to be ready for long life, in case God should give us that blessing. 2. *To prepare for sudden death and the long future.* By faith in Jesus Christ and by fidelity in the "few things" of time, to be ready at any hour to stand at the judgment-seat, to pass to the "many things" of eternity.—C.

Vers. 9—15.—*Health and sickness.* This touching psalm of Hezekiah, written in the day of returning strength, when mental effort became possible and perhaps enjoyable to him, may teach us many things.

I. THAT OUR HEALTH IS NOT IN OUR OWN HANDS. There is a distinct note of disappointment here. The king had evidently set his heart on a long life, and was hurt in his soul that his days were cut in twain. It seemed an abrupt, unnatural termination. He was deprived of that which he might have expected to enjoy (vers. 10, 12). Though we know well it is not so, yet we harbour the thought that we can measure our days—can reckon on a large period of time in which to work out our plans; we are apt to be surprised and even hurt in our heart if our health be removed and our life be threatened. But we ought to learn that God is the length of our days (Deut. xxx. 20), and that it rests with him to say when our strength shall decline and when our spirit shall return.

II. THAT THE TIME MAY COME WHEN LIFE WILL BE WITHOUT VALUE TO US; when we shall be ready to speak in the strain of the king (vers. 14, 17). Instead of song is

silence or complaint; for peace is bitterness of soul. Among the living, at any time, there will be found a large proportion of those to whom life is without any value, and who would gladly lay it down. 1. Do we appreciate the value of our health while we have it? 2. Are we laying up resources on which we can draw when the enjoyments of life will be gone, and the season of privation and infirmity has arrived?

III. THAT IT IS RIGHT TO ASK GOD FOR RESTORATION FROM SICKNESS. "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me" (see 2 Cor. xii. 8; Jas. v. 14). We should do so, (1) believing that God hears our prayer, and that, if it be to our real and highest interest, he will grant our request; (2) leaving it with him to determine how much of bodily evil it is good for us to suffer. Distrust of God's promise and dictation to his will are the two opposite evils we should avoid. A living faith and a filial submission are the two perfectly consistent graces we should exhibit.

IV. THAT THE PERIOD OF CONVALESCENCE IS A TIME FOR THANKFULNESS AND CONSECRATION. 1. *Thankfulness.* "Himself hath done it" (ver. 15). Whatever the number or the nature of the measures we adopt (ver. 21), we trace the happy issue ultimately to the hand of the Lord. All remedial agencies are of him. 2. *Consecration.* "I shall go softly [reverently] all my years, [remembering] the bitterness of my soul." When God gives back his life to any one of his children, it is surely a time when that soul should form a profound and prayerful resolution that, if past days have been godless, future years shall be devout; that, whatever has been the measure of piety in the time that has been spent, there shall be deeper devotedness and more faithful service in the span that may remain.—C.

Vers. 11, 18, 19.—*The great disclosure.* "If a man die, shall he live again?" asks the anxious, hopeful, human spirit. This composition of Hezekiah either indicates or suggests—

I. THE LIGHT WHICH THE HEBREW SAINTS POSSESSED. They believed that death did not terminate man's existence; that, after death, he dwelt in *Sheôl* with the spirits of the departed, with "the inhabitants of the land of stillness;" in a region, deep, dark, shut up within impassable gates through which they that have entered may never more return (ver. 10).

II. THE PAINFUL FEEBLENESS OF THEIR LIGHT. This abode of the dead was dismal in a high degree to their imagination; it was "the pit of corruption" (ver. 7); it was the place where God was unapproachable (ver. 11), where his praises were untold and unsung (ver. 18), where the delights of human fellowship were unknown (ver. 11), where the opportunities of gaining the highest wisdom were closed against the soul, where men "cannot hope for thy truth" (ver. 18). Such life as there was in those sepulchral regions would hardly be worth having, where privations like these prevailed.

III. THE GREAT DISCLOSURE BY JESUS CHRIST. He did not, indeed, for the first time announce that there was a life beyond death for men. But he did reveal such a life of blessedness and glory as gave a new meaning to immortality. As his disciples, we look for a life which will be characterized, *not* by the *removal*, but by the renewal and the immeasurable enlargement, of all the higher blessings of the present time. As exactly opposed to the privations here lamented, we look for: 1. *The near presence of God.* (Ver. 11.) To depart is to "be with Christ," is to "be with him that we may behold his glory," is to be at home in "the Father's house." 2. *A life of holiest, happiest worship.* (Ver. 18.) Where the praises of God will never tire the tongue. Heaven is, to our hope, the very home of praise: "The living, they that live indeed,"—they will praise God in accents to which our fainter and feebler life is unequal now. 3. *Communion with the perfected spirits of men.* (Ver. 11.) We hope to behold and to have ennobling fellowship with men at their very best, when they and we shall be purged of all that hinders or lowers our intercourse on earth. 4. *Access to Divine truth.* (Ver. 18.) "Then shall we know even as also we are known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12); then shall we look "face to face" on many truths which here we have only dimly espied; then shall we grasp with firm, rejoicing hold what now we can but delicately touch, or are ineffectually pursuing. 5. *Life in its large and blessed fulness.* (Ver. 19.) It is they who dwell in the light of God of whom we rightly speak as "the living, the living;" it is they who "have life more abundantly." We conclude that: (1) This language of lamentation does not suit Christian lips. (2) We have no need to think of death as

Hezekiah thought. (3) We who have such high hopes in us as these should live lives of purity, and so of preparation (1 John iii. 3).—C.

Ver. 16.—*The life of our life.* This verse is pregnant with suggestive truth, and finds fulfilment in Christian as well as in Jewish experience.

I. THAT THE LIFE OF OUR SPIRIT IS THE VERY LIFE OF OURSELVES. It is no uncommon thing for ungodly men, when they are pressed to give attention to the claims of their spirit, to excuse their negligence by contending that "they must live." By this they mean that the necessities of the body will excuse their want of concern for the state of their spirit. On what a hollow and vain assumption do these thus build! "As if to breathe were life!" As if to eat, and drink, and sleep, and clothe the body and minister to its cravings constituted *the life of man!* No; "man does not live by bread alone," and, when he has supplied himself with abundance of such things, *he* has not begun to live. The life of man is in the life of his spirit; it is that life in which he (1) apprehends and appreciates Divine truth; (2) approaches unto and communes with the Divine Father; (3) engages voluntarily and happily in his holy service; (4) grows into his likeness as he manifests his spirit and illustrates his principles; (5) serves the creatures he has made and the children he has fashioned in his own image. By these things, and in such things as these, does the life of his life consist.

II. THAT DIVINE ACTS AND WORDS ARE THE SUSTENANCE OF OUR SPIRIT'S LIFE. "These things" refer primarily to the promise and the providential agency of God (see ver. 15); the Divine word and deed. For us, we find this in: 1. *The truth spoken by Jesus Christ.* All that he has told us concerning God, ourselves, human life, the way back to the heavenly Father and the heavenly home. 2. *The life and death of the Saviour.* His life devout, courageous, generous, sympathetic; his sorrows borne in patience and resignation; his death undergone for us. "In all these things," in their apprehension, in their study, in their appropriation, is the life of our spirit.—C.

Ver. 19.—*Parental obligation.* "The father to the children shall make known thy truth."

I. THAT TRUTH IS THE COMMON HERITAGE OF THE RACE. Of all open and common things truth is that to which our right is most indisputable. The air, the light, the sea, the sky, the beauty of the landscape, etc., are open to us all; but truth, above all these things, is common property.

II. THAT REVEALED TRUTH IS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS TO MANKIND. All truth may be said to be "thine"—to be God's. For it would never find illustration or apprehension without his action. But the truth which he has specially revealed is more peculiarly his—the truth which is contained in his Word, and, most especially, that which was revealed in (and by) his Son. This is the truth which is our very life (ver. 16), raising the fallen, bringing peace to the penitent, calling man into fellowship with God, comforting the afflicted, arming against temptation, preparing for the battle of life and for the hour of death and the requirements of the eternal world.

III. THAT IT IS THE PART OF EVERY PARENT TO COMMUNICATE AND TO ENFORCE THIS TRUTH OF GOD. "The father to the children shall make known," etc. 1. To communicate Divine truth to the young is the parent's work; for (1) he has access to his children which no one else can gain, in the time when they are docile and responsive; (2) he can exert an influence upon them which no one else can acquire; (3) he has a responsibility laid upon him by God of which no one else can relieve him; (4) he has an interest in their well-being which no one else possesses,—the joy or the sorrow of his later years will depend very largely on the choices they make and the courses they pursue. 2. To instil Divine truth into their minds should be his daily effort. This is to be effected by instruction, by example, by prayer.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The strain of notice to die.* Satan is represented in the Book of Job as poetically describing man's clinging to life thus: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Usually death creeps on us with so slow and silent a tread that we grow familiar with it; our powers fade, and passing becomes easy. But sometimes the arrest comes in the very midst of life, when hope smiles, when the future makes large promises, and the claims upon us seem so great that we cannot

be spared. Then death is at his worst; and it is beyond man's power, it is the triumph of Divine grace, to say, "Thy will be done." This is seen in the case of Hezekiah, to whom death seemed an expression of Divine dissatisfaction; a terrible family affliction, seeing he had as yet no heir; and nothing short of a national calamity. Compare the announcement of approaching death made to Aaron and to Moses. But in their cases life-work was done. The strain on Hezekiah was that "his purposes were broken off." We think this to be the severest test under which God puts his people. We are searched through and through by the questions, "Can you die?" "Can you die now?" Physicians' work is often, nowadays, most difficult and trying. They must *break*, as it is called, to their patients the news of the hopeless character of their disease. What makes this strain?

I. NATURAL DREAD OF DEATH. For all creatures on his earth God has made life to be the supreme treasure which they dread to lose. The incentive to all enterprise is our love of life, and passionate clinging to life. The fear of death is the common instinct of humanity. The Christian cannot fix his thoughts quietly on dying; he shrinks as much as any one from putting his foot down into the cold stream. Divine grace alone can overcome this natural fear, which is implanted for the sake of the due preservation of the race.

II. DISAPPOINTMENT OF OUR HOPES. It is so hard for death to come just as we have "Canaan's goodly land in view." It may be that we have toiled, denied ourselves, persevered, overcome difficulties, and see life's ambition just within reach, when the message comes that we must die. We have pulled down our barns and built greater; we are just ready for the harvest; and "this night we must die."

III. UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE. For the disclosures and revelations concerning it are made in such large poetical figures, rather than in such plain statements, that even in the best men faith and fear mingle; and often they hardly know whether faith or fear prevails. From the future, the other world, no traveller has ever returned with a report. It is to us all a *terra incognita*, a step into the dark.

IV. WANT OF FULL SUBMISSION TO GOD. We may think we have this, but news of speedy death searches us, and shows our submission to have been only good, but weak, sentiment. Many a man finds that the true submission has to be won when he stands face to face with death.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Private and personal prayer.* It should be noticed that Hezekiah was a man who so believed in prayer as to immediately resort to it in every new emergency of life. It was his first way of relief. He sought God at once. In a time of great national distress, he went into the house of the Lord, and spread the insulting letter of his enemies before the Lord. In a time of personal peril, when disease was gaining ground and vitality was failing, and it was made evident that he must die, he sought privacy that he might pray, wrestling with God, if so be he could win restoring mercies. Too ill to go to the sanctuary, he could make a secret place of the corner of the room where his royal couch was laid, turn his face to the wall, and pray to the "Father who seeth in secret, and rewardeth openly." Only certain points of so large a subject as "private prayer" can be dealt with in one discourse. The points suggested by this action of Hezekiah are—

I. WHAT ARE ITS APPROPRIATE CONDITIONS? Absolutely necessary are privacy, the sense of privacy, quiet-mindedness, and continuance in the prayer-exercise. It is the most serious evil affecting modern religious life, that household arrangements and business claims make privacy, quietness, and continuance for personal devotions so nearly impossible. The only hopeful revival will begin with the home place of prayer. Christian parents, by example and skilful management of family life, must make private prayer possible for all members of the family. They cannot make others prayerful; but they can make suitable prayer-conditions. Christ says we must "shut to the door."

II. WHAT SHOULD IT CONCERN? Everything, small or great, that is of direct personal interest, whether it concerns body, mind, or soul. Efforts are made to limit the spheres of prayer to matters of religious life and feeling. The godly man cannot be so limited. Fathers care for children's bodies and minds and relations, as well as for their characters. And our heavenly Father surely concerns himself about our sicknesses, our anxieties,

our material circumstances. We may pray for *life*, restored bodily life and health; then we may pray for everything less than that, but included in it.

III. WHAT SHOULD BE ITS SPIRIT? We may specially dwell on: 1. *Openness;* frankness; removal of reserve; tone that convinces of sincerity. Most grieving to God is our "keeping back anything." Worthy parents gladly listen to both the bad and the good in their children's requests. 2. *Trustfulness;* the spirit of confidence in God as Hearer and Answerer. 3. *Importunity;* the sign of really earnest desire. Parents often delay answering children's requests because they have asked half-heartedly, as if answering did not much matter.

IV. WHAT WILL BE THE RESPONSE? Something always. No sincere cry ever rose to God unheeded or unanswered. The answer may be: 1. Refusal. 2. The call to wait. 3. The gift of what is asked. 4. The gift of something better. 5. The quieting down of our desire for the thing.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Man's fair estimate of his own life.* Hezekiah ventures to say before God, "Ah, Jehovah, remember, I pray, how I have walked before thee in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done that which is good in thine eyes." Can a good man rightly appeal to his conscious integrity? David did. Hezekiah may. It is not pious work to get up a case against ourselves. Confessions are too often utterly insincere things. It is right to keenly criticize self, and to recognize, and humble ourselves before God on account of, our sins and frailties; but it magnifies the grace of God to recognize the good in our lives, the established will, the earnest purpose, the persistent endeavour. We must be true to see the good, as well as the evil, and seek to appraise our life as God appraises it. David may speak of his "integrity." Hezekiah may speak of his "perfect walk," his firm resolve to obey and please God. But can such terms as "righteousness" be properly applied to any man? It has been pressed upon us from our childhood, as if it were a self-evident truth, and needed no argument or proof, and contained the whole of the truth, that man has no righteousness of his own. The best things in man are bad. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we are all as an unclean thing." Yet there must be some sense in which man has a personal righteousness. We have known men and women of integrity, right-hearted, sincere, and righteous. David may say, before the heart-searching God, "Judge me according to my righteousness that is in me;" and our Lord distinctly assumed that there is a sense in which man can have a righteousness, when he said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees." Such a term will not stiffen into *one* rigid meaning. Sometimes it means right-heartedness, sincerity, and describes the man who is at heart centred on God and virtue. A man may be right at heart, though there may be twists and stains in the conduct. We have a way of speaking of men as being "good at bottom." If we say that as any excuse for men's sins, we are miserably and shamefully wrong. If we say it in recognition of human frailty, and with discernment of life as the conflict of the human will over the weakness of our bodies, and the disabilities of our circumstances, then it is a true and worthy speech. Many men around us, and even we ourselves, are like David, "good at bottom." The desire of our soul is to the Divine Name. We are pilgrims, indeed, though men may find us wandered away into By-path Meadows, sleeping in arbours, and losing our rolls. Illustrate by the difference between King Saul and King David. Saul failed utterly, because his were sins of *will*. David failed only temporarily, because his were sins of frailty. David failed in the body-sphere, but Saul in the soul-sphere. Learn to judge your life fairly, and be willing to see, to rejoice in, and to thank God for, what has been and is good.—R. T.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Signs for the help of faith.* In this case, as in that of Gideon, God granted signs. For the people of Palestine, and for his disciples, our Lord wrought miracles, which were signs; but he utterly refused to meet the demand of the Pharisees. "There shall no sign be given you." Our Lord, however, reproved the desire for signs as showing some weakness of character in those who desired them. "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Exactly what the sign granted to Hezekiah was cannot certainly be ascertained. The shadow passing back on the dial may have suggested God's putting back the death-angel for a while. Probably a shadow cast on a

staircase by a column showed the height of the sun in the heavens. This shadow would travel upward as the day advanced, and its return down ten steps, beheld from Hezekiah's sick-chamber, would be the most impressive emblem of the new lease of life bestowed. Miracles are never spoken of as mere wonders; they are signs, and have for their object to manifest forth God's glory. They have been wrought in every age of the world. They would cease to do their work if they became ordinary Divine operations. We note that—

I. DIVINE SIGNS ARE NOT FOR THE CONVINCEMENT OF SCEPTICS. This our Lord declared in his refusal to do mighty works for the Pharisees, and illustrated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Dives wanted one from the dead to go and warn his brethren. Christ plainly intimated that the man who can put away ordinary influences will find out how to resist special ones. No miracle could be wrought which a man of sceptical disposition could not explain away. We should speak very guardedly of miracles as Christian evidences. They are to those in right moods of mind.

II. DIVINE SIGNS ARE FOR THE PERSUASION OF THE WILLING AND OBEDIENT. "If a man is *willing*, he shall know of the doctrine." In some places our Lord "could not do many mighty works because of the unbelief." There are proper relations in which creatures should stand to their Creator, children to their parents, and men to God. Out of relations man's wilfulness may resist anything and everything. The teacher demands a teachable spirit in the scholars; the master expects a willingness to learn in his apprentice; and God asks for "willingness and obedience," proper attitudes of mind and feeling, in those to whom he reveals himself. There is a proper "receptive mood."

III. DIVINE SIGNS ARE FOR THE STRENGTHENING AND CHEERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE. They are the Divine response to those who unite firmness of will with frailty of body and mind, who are set on God, but battle hard with flesh and blood. "To will is present with them, but how to perform they find not." Gideon wanted to trust God and serve him, but circumstances made the commission entrusted to him most perilous; therefore God encouraged him with a sign. Hezekiah wanted to accept the Divine assurance, but the pain and depression of disease made trust nearly impossible, so God strengthened him with a sign.—R. T.

Vers. 10—12.—*Figures of life and death.* Some of the Scripture figures of death are full of the sweetest poetry for sensitive souls. Illustrating Hezekiah's figure, an Eastern traveller says, "It was in the bleak season of a cold autumn, by the side of a large moor, that I one day saw a shepherd's tent. It was composed of straw and fern, and secured under the warmer side of a hedge, with a few briars and stakes. Thither, for about a week, he took shelter, until the herbage failed his flock, and he removed I knew not whither. His tent was, however, left behind. A few days after I rode that way, and looked for the shepherd's tent, but it was all gone. The stormy winds had scattered its frail materials, and only a few fragments strewed the ground, to mark out that once, for a brief day, the tent had its residence, and the shepherd his solace, there. And such is this life, and such are all the airy expectations, and imaginary felicities, and hoped-for ports and places beneath the sun. Time scatters them, as the storm did the fern and straw of the shepherd's tent." "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;" "My days are swifter than the post;" "They are passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle hasting to the prey;" "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle;" "Oh, remember, that my life is wind." With what exquisite pathos it is said of wrestling, crafty, managing Jacob, "He gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people"! In view of his long and passionate affection for Rachel the beautiful, how tender is that last expression! Death for us is but passing from the fellowship of one company of beloved ones to join the other company that has gone on before. David speaks of the dead as "going down into silence." Is not that also most expressive? The man who has been so full of anxious cares and worldly troubles just steps aside to rest—passes from the bustle of life to the stillness, the silence, of death. The Apostle Paul says, "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved," broken up, the pins removed, the ropes loosened, the canvas folded, "we have a building of God," no mere tent, a substantial building, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." So the decay of our body is only our removal to a new house, built for us, fitted for us,

and, as we pass into it, the old tent-body is taken down, folded up, and put away. Dr. A. Raleigh dwells very beautifully on one of the most familiar figures of the grave, "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." "This is man's long home. Other homes are but calling-places, in which a wayfaring man tarries for a few days and nights in pursuing a great journey; but in this long home 'man lieth down and riseth not, till the heavens be no more.' There is no earth quite so profound as that of a quiet country churchyard. The hills stand in silence watching. The river, as it flows by, seems to hush its waters in passing; and the trees make soft and melancholy music with the evening wind, or stand in calm, voiceless grief, lest they should disturb the sleepers. Quiet is the dust below—quiet the scarcely moving grass of the graves—quiet the shadows of the tombstones—quiet the overarching sky. It is, indeed, a quiet resting-place, where we may lie in stillness for a while, until Christ shall bring us to another home, the last, the best of all—in heaven, the quietest resting-place of all." And Jesus our Lord said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." That is all. Death is only the sleep of God's beloved ones; over it he watches with more than motherly care, and, one wondrous day, the sweet morning light of the great glory shall stream in at the windows, and wake the sleeping children. After showing thus the mingling of sadness with hope in the Bible figures of hurrying life and masterful death, illustrate the things which help to make dying and death seem to us a foe so greatly to be dreaded. It is a foe—

I. BECAUSE OF THE BREAKING DOWN AND CORRUPTION OF THE BODY WHICH IT INVOLVES. There is something humiliating and revolting even in the change through which our bodies must pass. We turn away from the sight of the dead, and cannot bear to think that we must be even as they.

II. BECAUSE IT INVOLVES THE ENDING OF ALL OUR EARTHLY PLEASURES. And there are pleasures and friendships and scenes which make life very dear to us all—rightly dear. It is no way of honouring God to call this earth and life that he has given us a "desert land, which yields us no supplies." But death takes the cup right away from our lips, and bids us leave all the playthings on the board, and come away.

III. BECAUSE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING IT. As Bacon long ago reminded us, it is the suffering body, the darkened chamber, the weeping friends, the pangs of separation, the trappings of woe, that make so much of the bitterness of death.

IV. BECAUSE OF THE UNTIMELINESS OF ITS COMING. And it is almost always untimely; oftentimes painfully so. He plucks young buds. He takes opening flowers. He cuts down bearded grain. He delays until the grain is shed, and the straw is trembling to its winter fall. Always coming; almost never wanted. Yet, for true and trustful hearts, changed into an angel of light, the Father's messenger calling his children home. They are quiet even from the fear of death who can pray with McCheyne—

"In whatsoever form death comes to me—
In midnight storm, whelming my bark, or in my nest
Gently dismissing me to rest;
Oh, give me in thy Word to see
A risen Saviour beckoning me.
My Lamp and Light
In the dark night."

R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Life a burden.* "Jehovah, I am hard pressed; be Surety for me" (Cheyne). Life has its shadow as well as its sunshine; and in our depressed times we fancy that the shadow almost blots out the shine. There is a poem which, with the touch of genius, pictures the shadow that, since the failure of our race-parents in Eden, lies close against everything for man. Go where he may, do what he will, man cannot get away from his shadow. It tracks his feet. This side or that it is found, whichever way he may stand to the light. It lies down with him; it rises with him; it goes forth with him; it comes back with him; until he even gets to fear it, and, seeing it flung everywhere, says, "Life is dark, and life is hard." This sentence of the text is an utterance of genuine feeling. It is Old Testament feeling rather than Christian feeling; but the poetical form of it gives it largeness enough to cover and include the very best Christian

thoughts. Hezekiah expresses what he felt when he lay on the "border-land." His idea is that death is his creditor, and pressing for immediate payment, and he calls on God to be Surety for him, and release him from the clutch of this death. Some, oppressed, cry against advancing death. Others, as Tennyson's "Mariana," cry for it, saying—

"I'm aweary, I'm aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

Can it be profitable for us to dwell on this despairing mood of Hezekiah? Perhaps, as we meditate, the clouds may part a little, and glints of glory may break through. Our soul may take wing and fly to God, and find rest in him.

I. LIFE A BURDEN. It is such (1) in view of the responsibilities under which we come; it is (2) as a matter of feeling and sentiment oftentimes. No man, indeed, ever comes to use life aright until he regards it as a sacred burden. It will be heavy or light, it will crush or it will ennoble, according to the spirit in which we accept it, and deal with it. Too readily we say that life always looks bright to youth and maiden. Is it so? We could find some of the saddest poetry ever written which had been composed by the young. Every right-hearted youth loosens the home ties, stands free, and stoops to lift up his own life-burden with a great sigh of anxiety and fear. What does the man of middle age say? However brightly and bravely a man may take up his daily care, still he feels that each new child, and each lengthening year with its new claims, adds to his burden. Business life, in modern times, seems a heavier burden than it ever was—a daily bearing and struggling to win daily bread, because we, and those related to us, want so much more than bread. Ask the old men what they think of life. The very best among them will reply, "I thank God for life, but he only knows what a burden it has been to me. His grace has enabled me to carry it, but sometimes —oftentimes—it has crushed me down on my knees." Or take the faculties with which we are endowed, and the spheres in which those faculties find expression and operation. This *body*: what a constant care to keep it in health, and to get it fed, clothed, and wisely ruled! And sometimes it lies like a heavy log upon our souls, and from under it we can scarcely get our breath! This mind. The infinite realms of knowledge stretch out on either side, and it is our agony that life will only let us touch, with a passing foot, the mere skirts and edges of one or two of them. The soul—our very selves—what a prison-house for *us* this body is! Wherever we go we must carry the body. Our souls can "neither fly nor go." Quaintly, but effectively, our fathers drew an emblem. The skeleton was represented as the cage within which the living man was imprisoned. At some time in our lives we all have thanked God for the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is precisely this—a man who felt life as a burden, letting his heart out. But turn to consider—

II. GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE BURDEN-BEARER. If the three words, "Undertake for me," could be put into a Christian form of speech, they would be found to express that "full surrender," that "perfect submission," that "rest of faith," which is the secret of the "higher life," the true beginning and proper foundation of Scripture holiness. But, practically, how can the man who feels life to be a burden commit that burden to the Lord? If you do not believe in a living God, in the living Christ-God, actually present, ruling and overruling, you will never find out how. If God is away in the heavens, and Christ back in the centuries, our text has no real meaning; it is a vague sentiment. But if God is here, and Christ is with us—in us; if the Father does see in secret, and the Son abide with us always;—then it will be easy to unfold the secret of the rolled burden. One idea at least we can give. If we have a heart-sorrow we can relieve it by *making a confidant*. Robert Alfred Vaughan had long been ill, but one morning his wife saw signs which struck her with hopelessness. In her grief she thought of going to unbosom *her* trouble to her friend Mrs. George Dawson. Ere she could leave her house, that friend came in, she had come to open a new sorrow to her friend—her only girl had been seized with fits of a kind which put in peril intellect and life. Those women lifted each others' burdens by opening them in the confidences of friendship. We lose our burdens by freely telling God all about them. There is another way of rolling burdens on God, which is less easy to put into words—which is a matter of soul-feeling. We can give up the self-management of our lives. It can become a conscious ruling thought with us that we live, not for self, but for God; we can inwardly realize

that God takes our life-rule into his hands; we go where he sends, we do what he bids. Come to the simplicities of life. How does a wearied child roll his burden on his mother? How does the husband lighten his life-care by rolling it upon a loving wife? Verily, the little things of man will help us to understand the great things of God.—R. T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Going softly after sickness.* We usually notice in persons who have passed through serious illness which has brought them to the "border-land," and made the things of the other and eternal world familiar, a gracious loosening from this world, a maturing of character, a mellowness, a sacred seriousness, which may well gain poetical form in the expression of Hezekiah, "going softly." We ought to regard all life as a gift, a trust, from God; but in a very special sense it comes home to us that the years of renewed life, after a severe illness, are a gracious permission, a special favour, of our God. His hand has been upon us; we have felt it, and the touch makes us other men, new men. The Rev. James Hervey wrote to a friend shortly before his death in this way: "Were I to enjoy Hezekiah's grant, and had fifteen years added to my life, I would be most frequent in my application to the throne of grace; for we sustain a mighty loss by reading too much, and praying too little: were I to renew my studies, I would take my leave of those accomplished trifiers, the historians, the orators, the poets of antiquity, and devote my attention to the Scriptures of truth; I would sit with much greater assiduity at my Divine Master's feet, and desire to know nothing but 'Jesus Christ and him crucified.' To have this wisdom, whose fruit is everlasting salvation, after death, I would explore through the spacious and delightful field of the Old and New Testaments." The verse may be more precisely read, "That I should walk at ease in spite of the trouble of my soul." It implies that Hezekiah was resolved to walk the rest of the journey of life with calm and considerate steps. The several meanings that can attach to "going softly" may be illustrated.

I. I WILL GO SOFTLY, AS ONE WHO REMEMBERS THE DISTRUST AND SINFUL REPININGS OF MY TIME OF AFFLICTION. It must always be a regret to the good man, a shadow on his life, that even suffering made him *doubt God.*

II. I WILL GO SOFTLY, AS ONE WHO CHERISHES THE MEMORY OF GOD'S RESTORING MERCY. God's special grace to the good man deepens his humility.

III. I WILL GO SOFTLY, AS ONE WHO HAS LEARNT A NEW LESSON OF THE BREVITY AND SERIOUSNESS OF LIFE. Hezekiah's sickness was a warning.

IV. I WILL GO SOFTLY, OR PLEASANTLY, AS ONE WHO HAS BEEN BROUGHT SO NEAR TO GOD THAT HE CANNOT FIND REST AWAY FROM HIM. Walking with God in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious.

V. I WILL GO SOFTLY, AS ONE WHO, AFTER A TIME OF TROUBLE, STRIVES TO RETAIN THE IMPRESSION OF IT, AND TO CARRY OUT THE RESOLVES THEN MADE, AND SHOW THAT HE HAS WELL LEARNED THE LESSONS OF AFFLICTION. Compare "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now will I keep thy Word."—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*God's way with sin.* "For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." To cast behind one's back, in Hebrew and Arabic, is a figure of speech meaning "to forget, to lose sight of, to exclude from view." Roberts, writing of Hindoo life, says, "This metaphor is in common use, and has sometimes a very offensive signification. The expression is used to denote the most complete and contemptuous rejection of a person or thing. 'The king has cast his minister behind his back,' that is, fully removed him, treated him with sovereign contempt. 'Yes, man, I have forgiven you; all your crimes are behind my back; but take care not to offend me again.'" What Hezekiah realized was that, in responding to his prayer for renewed life, God had graciously removed from consideration the just judgments for which transgressions called. He put them aside, out of sight. Matthew Henry sententiously says, "When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face, in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back." Two other very striking figures of God's ways with sin may be recalled. 1. He casts them into the depths of the sea, where they are lost, out of sight, and out of reach, for ever. Lost, as a jewel dropped in mid-ocean. 2. He puts them from us far as east is from

west—a figure whose fulness of suggestion only unfolds to meditation. There is a north pole and a south pole, giving limits to our conception of north and south. There is no east pole or west pole. East is on everywhere one way, and west is on everywhere the other way. God's way with sin is—

I. To KEEP STRICTEST ACCOUNT OF IT. God "besets us behind and before." "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." There is a record. Illustrate by the idea that all our actions are photographed on the waves of air, and wafted on to God's keeping, against the judgment-day. This is sure—God is never indifferent to sin. He is strict to behold iniquity.

II. To APPORTION DUE, CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENTS OF IT. Some coming in the way of ordinary and natural results, and some as special Divine judgments. Thank God, his judgments wait close on our sins.

III. To PARDON. In a royal, gracious way, whensoever the sinner humbles himself, and with penitence and confession seeks grace. "Though your sins be as . . . crimson, they shall be whiter than snow."

IV. To PUT IT FROM CONSIDERATION IN MEETING THE DESIRES AND PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE. This is the case before us. This is the marvel of grace. God treats his people as if they were not sinners. He treats them as if standing in the goodness and the rights of his ever-obedient and acceptable Son, Christ Jesus.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter is parallel with 2 Kings xx. 12—19, and scarcely differs from it at all. Ver. 1 has the additional words, "and was recovered;" ver. 2, the phrase, "was glad of them," for "hearkened unto them;" ver. 5, "Lord of hosts," for "Lord" simply; and ver. 8 makes Hezekiah's last utterance an observation instead of a question. Otherwise the two accounts are almost word for word the same. Both relate the novel and important fact of ambassadors being sent to Hezekiah by the King of Babylon, shortly after his illness, and tell of the reception which he gave them, of the message which Isaiah was commissioned to deliver to him from God in consequence, and of Hezekiah's acquiescence in the terms of the message when it was conveyed to him. The Isaianic authorship of the chapter is much disputed, but solely from reluctance to admit that a prophet could predict the subjugation of Judæa by Babylon more than a century before the event.

Ver. 1.—**At that time** (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, where it appears that a part of the business of the ambassadors was to inquire concerning the astronomical marvel which had recently occurred in the land). The embassy probably followed the illness of Hezekiah within a year. **Merodach-Baladan.** This is a more correct form than the "Berodach-Baladan" of 2 Kings xx. 12. The name is one common to several Babylonian kings, as to one who reigned about B.C. 1325, to a second who is placed about B.C. 900, and to a third who was contemporary with the Assyrian kings Sargon and Sennacherib. It is this last of whom we have a notice in the present passage. He appears first in the Assyrian inscriptions as a petty prince, ruling a small tract upon the sea-coast, about the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates. Tiglath-Pileser takes tribute from him about B.C. 744. In B.C. 721 we find him advanced to a more prominent position. Taking advantage of the troubles of the time, he shakes off the Assyrian yoke, and makes himself King of Babylon, where he has a reign of twelve years—from B.C. 721 to B.C. 709. This reign is recognized by Sargon in his inscriptions ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 14), and by the Greek chronologist, Ptolemy, in his 'Canon.' In B.C. 709 Sargon leads an expedition against him, and drives him out of Babylonia into the coast-tract, Chaldea, where he besieges him in his ancestral town Bit-Yakin, takes the city, and makes him prisoner (ibid., p. 15). On the death of Sargon, in B.C. 705, Merodach-Baladan escapes from confinement, and hastens once more to Babylon, where he is acknowledged as king, and has a second reign, which lasts six months (Alex. Polyhist. ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' i. v. § 1). He is then driven from the country by Sennacherib, and, after various vicissitudes, obliged to become a refugee in Elam (G. Smith, 'Hist. of Babylonia,' pp. 125—128). The name of Merodach-Baladan is composed of the three elements, *Merodach* (equivalent to "Marduk"), the god, *bal* or *pal*, "son," and *iddina*, "has given," and thus signifies "Merodach

has given (me) a son." **The son of Baladan.** "Baladan" is scarcely a possible Babylonian name. "Beladan" would, however, be quite possible, being a name formed on the model of Ishtar-iddin ('Eponym Canon,' p. 30), Ninip-iddin (p. 35), Ilu-iddin (p. 57), etc. And the corruption of Beladan into Baladan would be easy. Merodach-Baladan III. is called by Sargon "the son of Yakin;" but this is perhaps a tribal or local rather than a personal name. Compare Jehu's appellation of "son of Omri" (ibid., p. 114). **Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah.** Hezekiah's fourteenth year was B.C. 714. Merodach-Baladan had then been King of Babylon for eight years, and, knowing that he might at any time be attacked by Sargon, was naturally looking out for alliances with other powers, which Assyria equally threatened. He had recently concluded a treaty with Khumbanigas, King of Elam ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 14), and had obtained the support of several of the Aramæan tribes on the Euphrates. He now apparently thought that Judæa, which Sargon was also threatening (ch. xxxviii. 6), might be induced to join him. Hezekiah's illness and "the wonder done in the land" (2 Chron. xxxii. 31) furnished him with pretexts for an embassy, which probably had more serious objects than either congratulation or scientific inquiry.

Ver. 2.—**Hezekiah was glad of them.** A more pregnant phrase than that which replaces it in 2 Kings, "hearkened unto them." Hezekiah, like Merodach-Baladan, was looking out for allies, and "was glad," thinking that in Babylon he had found one which might render him important service. Sargon's promptness, however, frustrated his hopes. In B.C. 709 that prince, regarding Merodach-Baladan's proceedings as constituting a real danger to his kingdom, made a great expedition into Babylonia, defeated Merodach-Baladan, and took him prisoner, after which he had himself crowned King of Babylon, and during the remainder of his life (B.C. 709 to 705) ruled both countries. **Showed them the house of his precious things;** *i.e.* his treasury, or store-house. The treasuries of ancient monarchs were actual store-chambers, in which large quantities of the precious metals and valuable objects of various kinds were deposited (see Herod., ii. 121; Arrian, 'Exp. Alex.,' iii. 16, 18, etc.). The flourishing state of the treasury is an indication that the events here narrated are anterior to the great surrender of treasure to Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 15; 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135). **All the house of his armour** (comp. ch. xxii. 8). If a warlike alliance was contemplated, it was as important to show the possession of arms as of treasures. **There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.** We must allow for Oriental hyperbole. The meaning is, that, without any reserve, Hezekiah showed all that he could show.

Ver. 3.—**Then came Isaiah the prophet.** Isaiah comes, unsent for, to rebuke the king (comp. 2 Sam. xii. 1—12; xxiv. 11—14; 1 Kings xii. 22—24; xiii. 2—5; 2 Chron. xii. 5—8; xvi. 7—9; xix. 2, 3, etc.). This bold attitude was one which prophets were entitled to take by virtue of their office, which called upon them to bear testimony, even before kings, and to have no respect of persons. A similar fearlessness is apparent in ch. vii. 1—17, where the king with whom Isaiah has to deal was the wicked Ahaz. **What said these men?** "These men" is contemptuous. The demand to know what they said is almost without parallel. Diplomacy, if it is to be successful, must be secret; and Isaiah can scarcely have been surprised that his searching question received no answer. But he was zealous of God's honour, and anxious that Hezekiah should rely on no "arm of flesh," whether it were Egypt or Babylon. Such dependence would straiten God's arm, and prevent him from giving the aid that he was otherwise prepared to give. The desire of the prophet is to warn the king of the danger which he runs by coquetting with human helpers. **From whence came they?** Isaiah does not ask this question for the sake of information, Doubtless all Jerusalem was agog to see the strange envoys "from a far country," who had now for the first time penetrated to the city of David. All knew whence they had come, and suspected why. Isaiah asks, to force the king to a confession, on which he may base a prophecy and a warning. **And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country.** Embassies from distant lands to their courts are made a constant subject of boasting by the Assyrian monarchs (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. pp. 28, 68, 95; vol. vii. pp. 49, 51, etc.). Hezekiah, perhaps, is "lifted up" (2 Chron. xxxii. 25) by the honour paid him, and intends to impress Isaiah with a sense of his greatness—"The men are come all the way from Babylon to see *me!*"

Ver. 4.—**What have they seen?** Isaiah had, no doubt, heard of what Hezekiah had done (ver. 2); but he wished to have the confession of it from his own mouth before delivering his sentence. Hezekiah tells him the truth, since he is not ashamed of his act, but rather glories in it. He has shown the ambassadors everything, and has thereby made them eager to secure his alliance.

Ver. 5.—**Hear the word of the Lord of hosts.** Either the prophet had been specially charged with a Divine message to

the king before he sought his presence, or the prophetic afflatus now came on him suddenly. The former is, on the whole, more probable.

Ver. 6.—**Behold, the days come**; literally, *the days* [*are*] *coming, or* [*are*] *approaching.* Of the exact "times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts i. 7), the prophets generally knew nothing. They were mouth-pieces, to declare the Divine will, not keen-witted politicians, forecasting results by the exercise of sharp-sightedness and sagacity. To suppose that Isaiah foresaw by mere human wisdom the Babylonian conquest of Judæa, as Charles the Great did the ravages of the Northmen (R. Williams, 'Hebrew Prophets,' vol. i. p. 429), is to give him credit for a sagacity quite unexampled and psychologically impossible. The kingdom of Babylon was one among many that were struggling hard to maintain independence against the grasping and encroaching Assyria. From the time of Tiglath-Pileser II. she had been continually losing ground. Both Sargon and Sennacherib trampled her underfoot, overran her territory, captured her towns, and reduced her under direct Assyrian government. Till Assyria should be swept away, a Babylonian conquest of Palestine was impossible. To suppose it was like supposing a Russian conquest of Holland, while Germany bars the way. Nothing short of the true prophetic afflatus, which is God the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of his servants, could have made such an anticipation. And with Isaiah, as Mr. Cheyne says, it is "not a mere presentiment; it is a calm and settled conviction, based on a direct revelation, and confirmed by a deep insight into the laws of the Divine government." **All that is in thine house.** Not, of course, exactly all that was there when Isaiah spoke, but all the wealth that should be in the royal palace when the time of the Babylonian captivity arrived. (For the fulfilment, see 2 Chron. xxxvi. 18.) **That which thy fathers have laid up in store.** A portion of this was carried off by Sennacherib in his first expedition (2 Kings xviii. 14—16); but the bulk of the temple treasures—the gifts of many kings—remained untouched until they were removed to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. i. 2; v. 2; 2 Kings xxiv. 13; xxv. 13—17).

Ver. 7.—**Of thy sons that shall issue from thee.** Hezekiah had at the time, probably, no son, since Manasseh, who succeeded him upon the throne, was not born till two years later. Besides Manasseh, he appears to have had a son, Amariah, who was an ancestor of the Prophet Zephaniah (Zeph. i. 1). He may, of course, have also had others. His descendants, rather than his actual sons, seem to be here intended; and the fulfilment of the prophecy is to be found in Dan. i. 3, where certain "of the king's seed" are mentioned among the Israelites who served as eunuchs in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 8.—**Good is the word.** While there is resignation, there is no doubt something also of selfishness, in Hezekiah's acceptance of the situation. "Après moi le déluge" is a saying attributed to a modern Frenchman. Hezekiah's egotism is less pronounced and less cynical. He thinks with gratitude of the "peace and steadfastness" which are to be "in his day;" he does not dwell in thought on the coming "deluge." The "word of the Lord" is "good" to him in more ways than one. It has assured him of coming male offspring—of sons to sit upon his throne, and save him from the curse of childlessness. And it has assured him of a rest for his nation—a respite, so that the Babylonian struggle shall not follow immediately upon the Assyrian; but there shall be a "breathing-space" (Ezra ix. 8), a tranquil time, during which Israel may "dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places" (ch. xxxii. 18).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—8.—*Carnal joy the prelude to spiritual sorrow.* The Babylonian embassy, a grand affair doubtless, comprising envoys in their rich clothing and with their jewelled arms, camels bearing valuable gifts, prancing steeds, and a vast train of slaves and attendants, was to Hezekiah an inspiriting fact, a circumstance that gladdened and excited him. With his imperfect knowledge of geography, the embassy seemed to him to come from the furthest limits of the earth's circuit—from a remote, almost from an unknown, region (ver. 3). He had hitherto not thought of attempting negotiations with any power further distant than Egypt. If the far-off Babylon courted his alliance, where might he not expect to find friends? from what remote quarter might he not look for overtures? What wonder that "his heart was lifted up" (2 Chron. xxxii. 25)? that he rejoiced, though with a carnal joy, that had no substantial spiritual basis? Isaiah had warned him against all "arms of flesh." Isaiah had bidden him "trust in the Lord Jehovah,"

and in Jehovah only. No doubt he had been especially warned against Egypt; but all the reasons that were valid against Egypt were valid against Babylon also. Babylon was as idolatrous as Egypt; Babylon was as licentious as Egypt; Babylon was as selfish in her aims as Egypt. Hezekiah's joy was thus a purely carnal joy, a rejoicing in his own honour, and in the prospect of material aid from a tainted source. In the midst of his joy the prophet announces himself. "What said those men?" he sternly asks. "Whence came they? What have they seen? Ah! they have seen thy treasures, have they? All of them? Thou thinkest those treasures will make them thy friends. Nay; they will make them thy bitterest enemies. It will not be forgotten at Babylon that thy temple and thy treasure-house are worth plundering. The days will come when all the wealth of thy house, and of the temple, and of the holy city will be carried off to enrich that city. The days will come when thou wilt have disgrace from Babylon instead of honour. Thy descendants—they that have issued from thy loins—will serve the King of Babylon, will be eunuchs, doing the menial offices in his palace." In a moment the king's joy is gone, and replaced by sorrow. It is with a saddened spirit that he submits, and acquiesces in his punishment. "Good is the word of the Lord"—he spares, even when he punishes; he chastens me with a milder chastening than I deserved at his hands—"in his wrath he remembereth mercy" (Hab. iii. 2).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The dangers of prosperity.* I. THE OSTENTATION OF HEZEKIAH. The Chronicler passes a censure upon him. After his recovery he "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore was there wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. xxxii. 25). He gives a picture of his treasuries, and store-houses, his cities, his flocks and herds. An embassy comes from Babylon, partly to congratulate him on his recovery, partly to inquire concerning the portent of the sun-dial or step-clock. Under these pretexts political views were doubtless concealed. And Hezekiah delighted to receive the embassy, and displayed to them the whole of his treasures and the resources of his armoury, his palaces and his kingdom.

II. THE REBUKE OF THE PROPHET. The prophet, in virtue of his Divine call and his insight into the heart of things, assumes an authority over the monarch, and, coming to him, inquires, "What have these men said? and whence came they to thee?" "He challenges the king to explain his conduct. Jehovah's will is opposed to all coquetting with foreign powers." It is "weaving a web without his Spirit" (ch. xxx. 1). The answer of the king is indirect, perhaps evasive: "They have come from a far country, from Babylon"—as if hinting that hospitality to them was a duty. A second stern question follows: "What have they seen in the house of the king?" And the king replies that he has shown them all his treasures. There is that in the very manner and questions of the prophet which implies censure. What he sees in the act of the king is an uplifting of the heart; not merely pride in his resources and wealth as such, but reliance on worldly resources—a desire to match himself with the great Eastern power on its own ground. And this is an affront to the Divine King in Zion, who had founded it that the afflicted of his people might find refuge therein (ch. xiv. 32). "Not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts" is over the word, the principle, on which the kingdom must stand. If Hezekiah has violated this, there must be retribution, either in his person or in the persons of those he represents.

III. THE PUNISHMENT. It was to correspond to his sin. "He thought to subscribe his quota to a profane coalition, and his treasures should be violently laid hold of by wolves in sheep's clothing." Babylon had solicited friendship; she would end by enforcing slavery. Calm and dispassionate is the tone in which the prophet speaks. Charles the Great could not help weeping at the sight of the Northmen's vessels, thinking of the calamities which those fell pirates would bring on the flourishing coasts of the Franks. Jeremiah weeps at the thought of the cruelty of the Babylonians. In Isaiah contentment with the patent will of God overcomes his emotional susceptibility. All the boasted treasures of the king are to be carried away to Babylon, and his descendants

are to become servants in the palace there. The king bows before the authority of the prophet, recognizing his word as the word of Jehovah, and as *good*. And further, he is thankful for the respite granted—for the promise that peace and steadfastness shall remain in his days. The chronicler says that he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Jehovah came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. The picture of Hezekiah is that of a king who prospered in all his works. But the incident clearly teaches the danger prosperity brings to character and principle. It is but a "bad nurse to virtue; a nurse who is like to starve it in its infancy, and to spoil it in its growth." "The corrupt affection which has lain dead and frozen in the midst of distracting business or under adversity, when the sun of prosperity has shined upon it, then, like a snake, it presently recovers its former strength and venom. When the channels of plenty run high, and every appetite is plied with abundance and variety, so that satisfaction is a mean word to express its enjoyment, then the inbred corruption of the heart shows itself pampered and insolent, too unruly for discipline and too big for correction. Prosperity, by fomenting a man's pride, lays a certain train for his ruin; Scripture and experience teach what a spite Providence constantly owes to the proud person. He is the very eyesore of Heaven; and God even looks upon his own supremacy as concerned to abase him. Prosperity attracts the malice and envy of the world; and it is impossible for a man in a wealthy and flourishing condition not to feel the stroke of men's tongues, and of their hands too, if occasion serves. Stones are only thrown at the fruit-laden tree. What made the King of Babylon invade Judæa but the royal stores and treasures displayed and boasted of by Hezekiah before the ambassadors, to the supplanting of his crown and the miserable captivity of his prosperity?" (South). In the day of prosperity *consider!* Let

> "Consideration like an angel come,
> And whip th' offending Adam out of us."

J.

Ver. 6.—*Perishing things.* "Nothing shall be left." How true is this of all *things* of earth, as contrasted with essential *being*—with the life of our own souls! We can look at nothing *material* without being able to say, as we look to the inner world of personal consciousness, "They shall perish, but thou remainest."

I. COMPREHENSIVE LOSS. "Nothing shall be left." "All that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon." Exactly. There is always a Babylon which itself becomes a ruin. Grecian art is taken to Rome, there to be demolished in the sacking of the city. Treasures are taken in after years to Paris, there to be lost in flames. How few relics of any time or nation *remain!* and in due course these are lost to the possessors. If this is true on the great scale of nations, how manifestly true it is of ourselves! Let us look around on all the present possessions of earth, and remember that, so far as we are concerned, "nothing shall be left." "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?"

II. IMMORTAL GAIN. The prophet is true in this revelation of loss. So is the apostle true when he says, "All things are yours." All that a man *is* remains, and all that a man *does* in loyal service remains. So there is permanence amid impermanence. The tabernacle totters, but the tenant lives. "The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day." All that is in *thine house* is lost, but all that is in *thine heart* is immortal. It behoves us, therefore, to remember that the true jewels are soul-jewels; the true ornament is in the hidden man of the heart; the imperishable wealth is in the sanctities of Heaven and the smile of God. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."—W. M. S.

Ver. 8.—*The best blessings.* "There shall be peace and truth in my days." These are God's twin blessings. There can be no peace without truth. There is veracity in God's universe everywhere. It is only a *seeming* blessedness which exists apart from these things, for the flowers have no root. The dancing smile is only like phosphorescence on the face of the dead, if we are not at peace with God.

I. CHRIST'S LEGACY WAS PEACE. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto

you." This is not peace of *condition*, but peace of *conscience*. The ocean, like Christ's life, may be troubled outwardly, but there is rest at the heart of it. We cannot judge by the surface-features of life. We must enter *within* to know if there be really peace. We must see the man in trouble, trial, solitude, and death. Then we shall see how true the acclamation is, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Bunyan had peace in Bedford Gaol; so had the confessors and martyrs of olden time.

II. CHRIST'S ATONEMENT GIVES PEACE. "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." We may be unable to give a theory of the atonement that can cover all its meaning—from the days of Anselm until now men have debated about that; but in depths of agony about *sin* we *feel* the need of a Saviour, and rejoice to sing—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

III. CHRIST GIVES PEACE THROUGH TRUTH. He tells the truth about our moral state and condition. He reveals the truth concerning the nature and purposes of God. He unveils the immortal life, not only as a doctrine, but *in himself*, in heavenly beauty of the earthly life. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." How comfortable it is to rest on this gracious promise, and to know that the True One cannot lie!—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—8.—*Complacency, rebuke, and acquiescence.* We may gather the preliminary truth that *we need to look well before we decide* on the character of Divine decisions and of human actions. Otherwise we shall certainly fall into serious mistakes. 1. It would be a mistake to assume that the calamities here foretold were consequent on Hezekiah's fault. So, at first sight, they might appear to be; but we may be quite sure that they were not. For in other places these national disasters are referred, not to one individual delinquency, but to national apostasy and disobedience. It was simply that the pride of the king provided a *suitable occasion for intimating* the sad humiliations which were in store for his descendants; just as the complacent remark of the disciples called forth the prediction that those great stones of the temple, in which they so much rejoiced, would before long be cast down to the ground (Mark xiii. 1, 2). We need not, as indeed we cannot, suppose that God would visit on a remote generation a terrible calamity in punishment of one comparatively small transgression. 2. It would be a mistake to suppose that Hezekiah was indifferent to the fate of his posterity so long as he and his contemporaries were secure (ver. 8). So selfish a spirit is inconceivable in so good a man. We have, of course, only a small part of his reply to the prophet; but we may assure ourselves that he meant nothing more than to signify his thankfulness that the judgments of God were to be mitigated by mercy toward himself and his people. The incident may speak to us of—

I. THE PERIL OF COMPLACENCY. It seems that, after his recovery from sickness, gratitude was lost in self-gratulation. Then came the ostentation which met with the Divine reproof. Complacency is a very "slippery place" for our foot to tread. Only the steadiest can walk there without a stumble. Whatever may seem to justify it—even if it be successful philanthropy, religious service, or delightful devotion—it is a perilous place, in which it is easy to err and almost impossible to keep quite straight with God. Our occupancy of it should be but momentary; gratitude is much safer as well as much more acceptable to God.

II. THE DIVINE REBUKE. God reproved Hezekiah for his foolish ostentation. This is a sin which is no less offensive to him than it is distasteful to us. We can all see and do all feel how very unbecoming is pride in man. For: 1. We have nothing at all which we have not ultimately received from God. 2. Whatever we possess, whether of strength, beauty, faculty, honour, riches, etc., it is all so much more than we deserve. 3. At any moment we may be required to lay it down. Of the house of our power and our possession we are but "tenants-at-will." Who can tell that God may not be about to say to us, "This night" thou goest forth?

III. HUMAN ACQUIESCENCE. "Good is the word of the Lord." God's rebuke may be met with (1) a sullen, rebellious *resentment* (Gen. iv. 9); (2) or with a stony and sinful *indifference*; when he humbles men in his providence, and they take no note at all of the humiliation he sends them, but continue in ungodliness; (3) or with an ignorant *astonishment*; when men know not their own spiritual poverty and blindness (Rev. iii.

17); (4) or with a wise and reverent *acquiescence* (text);—then God is pleased with us, and we rise to higher ground in our Christian pilgrimage.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The home, seen though not shown.* No doubt the ambassadors of the King of Babylon saw many things in the palace of Hezekiah which he did not exhibit to them; more things are seen than those which are displayed. It is so in every house; and it may be that the visitor goes away more impressed with some things which no one pointed out to him than with anything to which his attention was called. If any one were to ask him what he has seen in the house, he would mention that which its master had not thought to show him. What would any visitor to our house see, though we did not show it to him?

I. ORDER OR DISORDER? The manifest presence of a strong hand keeping every one in order and everything in its place; or the painful absence of it?

II. OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE? Filial readiness and even eagerness to comply at once with the parents' wish; or the lingering step or even the entire disregard of that desire?

III. COURTESY OR DISCOURTESY? Habitually becoming behaviour at the table and the hearth; or the unwise neglect of those smaller observances which minister to the beauty and the sweetness of daily life?

IV. LOVE OR INDIFFERENCE, OR POSITIVE DISLIKE? The presence of that warm affection which should bind husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, in the bonds of happy and enduring fellowship; or a cold and sad indifference to one another's well-being; or a still sadder animosity and persecution?

V. SELFISHNESS OR SYMPATHY? The confinement of thought and care to the four walls of the home establishment; or a considerate and generous regard for the wants and wishes of neighbours and fellow-citizens?

VI. PIETY OR WORLDLINESS? Family worship, and—what is better still—a prevailing religious tone, as if parents and children all felt that temporal success was a very small thing in comparison with spiritual worth; or the language and habits of an ignoble and degrading worldliness?—C.

Ver. 1.—*Friendship that serves its own ends.* A kind of friendship only too common. Illustrated in the motto of a successful Birmingham tradesman, "Friendly with all, thick with none." Which in full means, "Friendly with all, that I may get all I can out of everybody; thick with none, lest anybody should get anything out of me." This is surely the meanest of mottoes ever set for the toning of a life. But Merodach-Baladan's offered friendship with Hezekiah was much of the same kind. The only question with him was, what advantage he could gain for himself by it. And there is no possibility of noble friendship until we can forget self, and say, "What can this friendship be to my friend?" The historical facts of special importance to us are these: The family of Merodach-Baladan ruled in Southern Babylonia, on the shores of the Persian Gulf. The district of the marsh-land of the delta formed, for a period of many centuries, the place of refuge for fugitive rebels from Assyria. While the Assyrian armies were engaged in the siege of Samaria, Merodach-Baladan seized the Babylonian throne, and naturally tried to support his position by securing alliances with distant nations, especially such as were tributary to Assyria. A good excuse was found in the case of Hezekiah, in the report of his serious sickness. In our day the illness of a sovereign is the occasion for sending all sorts of telegrams and embassies.

I. OFFERED FRIENDSHIP MAY FIND GOOD EXCUSES. True in common life of the individual; specially true in the relation of nations. Diplomacy is the art of working out a policy under the shelter of the deception of skilful excuses. It seems to mean a very simple thing; it really works a very subtle work. Baladan had two excuses. 1. His messengers honoured Hezekiah with congratulations on his recovery. A polite thing, quite likely to disarm all suspicions, and win confidence. 2. From 2 Chron. xxxii. 31 we learn that Baladan also framed a scientific excuse, and desired his ambassadors to inquire concerning the singular astronomical phenomenon which had been reported. All this kept out of sight Baladan's political schemings.

II. OFFERED FRIENDSHIP MUST BE JUDGED BY THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO MAKE THE OFFER. It was at least suspicious that Baladan was acting as a rebel against his

sovereign lord. Hezekiah might have looked for some schemes of his own in this embassy. Friendship is always the expression of character and the test of character. The friendship of one who is unprincipled is full of peril. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

III. OFFERED FRIENDSHIP MAY PROPOSE MORE THAN IT CAN ACCOMPLISH. So we should distinguish between friendship that is self-seeking and friendship that is weakly gushing, yet sincere. Our friends, in their love, often promise more than they can perform; and we must learn to take the will for the deed, giving credit for good intentions. God never disappoints.

IV. OFFERED FRIENDSHIP MAY HIDE POSITIVELY MALICIOUS DESIGNS. This will lead to references to the offered friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the utter baseness and iniquity of Judas in coming to Jesus as a friend on the night of betrayal.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The sin of presuming.* "And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things." Presumption is taking the ordering of our lives into our own hands, without consulting God or remembering our dependence on him. It is the sin to which kings and rulers and men of masterful dispositions are specially exposed. Therefore David prayed so earnestly, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." The singular thing, and the suggestive thing, in the case of Hezekiah is that he took the insulting Assyrian letter and at once spread it before the Lord. Trouble drove him at once to God, but flattery disarmed him, and he acted without consulting God. Not without good reason is it urged that prosperity is a severer test of character than adversity; that "woe is unto us when all men speak well of us;" and that added years after a serious illness are oftentimes a very doubtful blessing. The writer of the Chronicles (2 Chron. xxxii. 25) helps us to read the heart of Hezekiah. He says that Isaiah was displeased with him because "his heart was lifted up." Vanity is indicated in this exhibition of all his treasures. Cheyne finds all the excuse that can be found for Hezekiah. He says, 'Was it merely vanity which prompted the king thus to throw open his treasuries? Surely not. It was to satisfy the emissaries of Baladan that Hezekiah had considerable resources, and was worthy of becoming his ally on equal terms. To Isaiah, as a prophet of Jehovah, the king's fault was principally in allowing himself to be courted by a foreign potentate, as if it were not true that 'Jehovah had founded Zion,' and that 'the afflicted of his people could find refuge therein.'" Matthew Henry says of Hezekiah, "He was a wise and good man, but when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay, a little thing then drew him into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations." The sin of presumption is a more common, and a more serious, sin than we are wont to consider it. It is one that finds frequent illustration in Holy Scripture. The sin that lost Eden was presumption. Jacob's grasping at the birthright was presumption. Moses' smiting the rock twice was presumption. Saul's forcing himself to sacrifice when Samuel tarried was presumption. David's numbering the people was presumption. Peter striking off the ear of Malchus was presumption. These are but specimen cases, readily recalled. A careful estimate of many sins will reveal presumption at the root of them. Still, if we read our lives aright, we shall find that we are constantly presuming on what God would have us to do, and acting without making due inquiries of him.

I. TEMPTATIONS TO PRESUMPTION. 1. These come partly out of natural disposition. There is an evil of over-meekness; sometimes we find a lack of energy and self-assertion which prevents men from impressing themselves on any sphere of life which they may be called to occupy. But there is much more frequently the evil of over-assertion, that belongs to energetic, enterprising natures, that take life with a strong grip. Many men cannot wait. They form their judgments quickly, and want them immediately acted on. And such persons are constantly tempted to presume. If good men, they act first, and ask of God the approval of their actions. Oftentimes this strong self-willedness is a hereditary disposition, which the Christian spirit has to battle with and overcome. Oftentimes it is sadly fostered by the pettings of childhood, and the false education of youth; and then it is the serious confirmed evil that is hardly overcome even in a life-long struggle. 2. The temptations come partly out of circumstances. In the des-

perateness of business pressure, the almost bankrupt man presumes on his friends, acts wilfully, and even brings others down in his ruin. But circumstances of success prove even greater temptations. Nebuchadnezzar is the type of the presumers, as he stands in the midst of his city, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?"

II. SIN OF PRESUMPTION. 1. It is sin against man's *creaturehood*. Man is not an independent being. He cannot stand alone. "No man can keep alive his own soul." He has nothing of his own. Then he has no right to presume. 2. It is a sin against a man's *childhood*. Parents have to repress this spirit in their children, because it is subversive of true home-life. And so must the great Father. 3. It is especially sin in man as *redeemed*. Because, as redeemed, man is the humbled sinner, who is made a monument of grace, and ought to walk humbly with God, always coming after him, and never pressing on before. The evil of this sin is seen in the deterioration of Christian character which follows whenever it is indulged.

III. PUNISHMENT OF PRESUMPTION. Usually this comes by the failure of the self-willed plans; or the sad results that follow the self-willed course that is taken. In the case of Hezekiah God sends a vision of what will follow out of that embassy of which the king was so proud. It was the thin end of a wedge. Driven home, by-and-by, it meant the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of Judah, by those very Babylonians. Hezekiah boasted in order to get a worldly alliance. His boastings excited cupidity, which presently led to the carrying away of the exhibited treasures. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" into the sin of presumption.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Shadows projected from coming trouble.* Almost our worst troubles are the things we *fear*. They loom so large and seem so terrible, like distant figures in a fog. The mind is so long occupied with them before it can do anything in relation to them. Our Saviour's life was darkened with the shadows of his coming woe. As he talked with heavenly visitants, he "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." He cried, "Now is my soul troubled . . . Father, save me from this hour." The shadow seemed easier to bear when it darkened down into an actual present conflict and woe. Most men are "all their life in bondage through fear of death," and thousands of men are almost hypochondriacal in their anxieties about troubles that always seem to be coming, but seldom really come.

I. FUTURE THINGS THAT FLING SHADOWS OVER THE PRESENT. 1. The fear of the young Christian that he will not hold out to the end. Often a morbid fear; always an unworthy fear, because it really means our doubting whether God can keep us safely to the end. 2. Fears born of the difficulties of times of business depression. Parents often talk, in their homes, about the workhouse, in a joking way, which nevertheless means that the shadow of it lies upon their lives. A dread of failure and bankruptcy broods over many a business man. Unworthy dread, in view of the promise, "Verily thou shalt be fed." 3. Fears growing out of conditions of health. The exaggeration of this is observed in cases of religious mania or nervous depression. Then all the future is black and hopeless, and the soul immovably accepts the idea that it is for ever lost. These fears, alas! often inspire the suicide to his self-murderous deed. 4. Fears that gather about the certainty of judgment when the conscience bears testimony to guilt. A whole life may be shadowed by a crime. It is not the memory of the crime that flings the shadows; it is the conviction that the crime must come up again to view some day, and make its appeal for vengeance. In one way or another shadows lie on all our lives.

II. PRESENT THINGS THAT RELIEVE THE SHADOWS FLUNG BY THE FUTURE. 1. *Human hope.* The most indestructible thing in human breasts. 2. *Right estimate of life;* as the sphere in which a great moral purpose is being wrought out: character is being moulded by the mingled influence of things evil and things good. 3. *The comforting promises of God;* which assure us of Divine overcomings and overrulings. 4. And *the assurance of the abiding Divine presence,* which is a constant sweet light that, falling on the very shadows, touches them with golden glowing, even as dark evening clouds are kindled into glory at the after-sunset.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Our submissions may be selfish.* "He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." "Hezekiah not only acquiesces in the will of Jehovah,

like Eli (1 Sam. iii. 18), but congratulates himself on his own personal safety. It would, no doubt, have been the nobler course to beg that he alone might bear the punishment, as he alone had sinned. But the principle of the solidarity of the forefather and his posterity, and of the king and his people, prevails almost throughout the Old Testament." Self-delusion is very common in the matter of submission.

I. SOME THINK THEY SUBMIT WHEN THEY HAVE ONLY CEASED TO CARE. The two things are quite distinct. A man only truly submits while he *keeps* his care, and has his personal desire and wish still vigorous. True submission is the voluntary giving up of one's own wish because we accept the wish of another. The glory of it is that it is *hard*. It is easy enough when we have ceased to care.

II. SOME THINK THEY SUBMIT WHEN THEY ONLY LIE DOWN UNDER GOD. As dying people, if asked whether they submit, will often say, "Oh yes; there is nothing else I can do." God is too big for them—that is all. If he were not, they would still struggle against him. This is the Mohammedan form of submission. "Allah Akbar!" —"God is great!" "Islam"—"We must submit to him." The exaggeration of this kind of submission is found in the Eastern *doseh*. Men lie down on the ground side by side, and let the king ride on horseback over their shoulders. Our God asks for no such submission as that.

III. SOME THINK THEY SUBMIT WHEN THE BURDEN IS LIFTED FROM THEM TO REST ON OTHERS. A very comfortable, but very mean, sort of submission. A selfish submission that acquiesces in a will of God that shields ourselves, whatever others may have to suffer. This was Hezekiah's submission. "Good is the will of the Lord in judgment, for he has shifted it over to make things comfortable for me." It is impossible to give Hezekiah much credit for so poor a submission as that.

IV. TRUE HEARTS THINK THEY SUBMIT ONLY WHEN THEY LOVINGLY ACCEPT THE HOLY WILL, WHATEVER THAT WILL MAY INVOLVE. Submission is the expression of confidence, the breath of trust, the sign of perfect love. It is the uttered child-heart. It cannot make any qualifications. Its unceasing refrain is, "My Father knows." The one sublime example of submission is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though the holy will involved bitterest personal suffering, could sincerely say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." After Christ the world's great figure of submission is the venerable Moses, ascending Nebo to receive the kiss of God and die, "with Canaan's goodly land in view."—R. T.

PART III. ISAIAH'S LATER PROPHECIES (CH. XL.—LXVI.).

SECTION I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD COMFORTED IN TRIBULATION (CH. XL.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XL.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

THE Assyrian struggle is over. The prophet has accepted into the depths of his spirit God's announcement that the true spoiler, "the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation," is not Assyria, but Babylon. He has accepted the sentence that his people is to go into captivity. Into this future of his nation he throws himself with a faith, a fervour, and a power of realization, which are all his own. "The familiar scenes and faces, among which he has hitherto lived and laboured, have grown dim and disappeared. All sounds and voices of the present are hushed, and move him no more. The present has died out of the horizon of his soul's vision. . . . The voices in his ears are those of men unborn, and he lives a second life among events and persons, sins and suffering, and fears and hopes, photographed sometimes with the minutest accuracy on the sensitive and sympathetic medium of his own spirit; and he becomes the denouncer of the special sins of a distant generation,

and the spokesman of the faith and hope and passionate yearning of an exiled nation, the descendants of men living, when he wrote, in the profound peace of a renewed prosperity" (Stanley, quoted by Mr. Cheyne, 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 213). The primary idea which occurs to him is that of "comfort." He will "comfort his people" in their affliction, so far as in him lies; and he will do this by preaching (1) the recovery of Israel from sin by faith and waiting upon God; and (2) their recovery from the bondage to Babylon, which was the consequence of sin. In the present chapter it is the former topic especially which he urges.

Ver. 1.—**Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.** The key-note is struck at once. With that iteration which is his favourite mode of emphasizing what is important (see the comment on ch. xxxviii. 11), the prophet declares that he and his brethren have a direct mission from God to "comfort" Israel. Note the encouragement contained in the expressions, "*my* people," and "*your* God." Israel is not cast off, even when most deeply afflicted.

Ver. 2.—**Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem**; literally, *speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem.* Address her inmost feelings, her very spirit and soul. **Her warfare is accomplished . . . is pardoned . . . hath received.** These perfects can only be viewed as "perfects of prophetic certainty." According to every theory of the authorship of ch. xl.—lxvi., they were written before the close of the Captivity, when Israel's warfare was not yet accomplished, her iniquity not yet fully pardoned. Isaiah, however, sees all as already accomplished in the Divine counsels, and so announces it to the people. Israel's warfare, her long term of hard service (comp. Job vii. 1), will assuredly come to an end; she will thoroughly turn to God, and then her iniquity will be pardoned, she will be considered to have suffered enough. **Double.** "It was the ordinary rule under the Law that 'for all manner of trespass' a man condemned by the judges should pay double" (Kay; comp. Exod. xxii. 9). Heathen legislators adopted the same rule for certain offences (Arist., 'Eth. Nic.,' iii. 5, § 8). It is not here intended to assert that the law of Divine judgment is to exact double; but only to assure Israel that, having been amply punished, she need fear no further vengeance (comp. ch. lxi. 7).

Ver. 3.—**The voice of him that crieth**; rather, *the voice of one that crieth.* A voice sounds in the prophet's ear, crying to repentance. For God to come down on earth, for his glory to be revealed in any signal way, by the restoration of a nation, or the revelation of himself in Christ, or the final establishment of his kingdom, the "way" must be first "prepared" for him. The hearts of the disobedient must be turned to the wisdom of the just. **In the wilderness**; either, "the wilderness of this world" (Kay), or "the wilderness separating Babylonia from Palestine" (Delitzsch), in a part of which John the Baptist afterwards preached. **Prepare ye the way of the Lord.** The "way of the Lord" is "the way of holiness" (ch. xxxv. 8). There is one only mode of "preparing" it—the mode adopted by John Baptist (Matt. iii. 2—12), the mode pointed out by the angel who announced him (Luke i. 17), the mode insisted on in the Collect for the Third Sunday in Advent. The voice enjoins on the prophets of the captive nation to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming manifestation of God.

Ver. 4.—**Every valley shall be exalted**, etc.; rather, *let every valley be exalted.* The prophets are to see that the poor and lowly are raised up; the proud and self-righteous depressed; the crooked and dishonest induced to change their ways for those of simplicity and integrity; the rude, rough, and harsh rendered courteous and mild. "In general, the meaning is that Israel is to [be made] take care that the God who is coming to deliver it shall find it in such an inward and outward state as befits his . . . purpose" (Delitzsch, 'Comment. on Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 142).

Ver. 5.—**And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.** Then, when the preparation is complete, there shall be a revelation of the glory and might of Jehovah. The nature of the revelation is for the present shrouded in darkness; but it is a revelation which is not confined to Israel. **All flesh shall see it together.** It shall draw to it the attention of the human race at large. While the restoration of Israel to Palestine is the primary fulfilment of the prophecy, that restoration clearly does not exhaust its meaning, which points on to the restoration of all mankind to God's favour in Christ by the ἐπιφάνεια of his advent in the flesh, which has drawn, or will draw, the eyes of "all flesh." **For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.** A repetition of the emphatic clause wherewith Isaiah had terminated the third section of his first prophecy (ch. i. 20). It occurs again in ch. lviii. 14. No other writer uses the expression.

Ver. 6.—**The voice said, Cry**; rather, *a voice of one that sayeth, Cry.* It is a second voice, distinct from that of ver. 3, that now reaches the prophet's ear—a voice responded to by another. The speakers seem to be angels, who contrast the perishable nature of man with the enduringness and unchang-

ingness of God. **The** point of their discourse is that "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (ver. 8), and therefore the preceding promises (vers. 2, 5) are sure. **And he said**; rather, *and one said*. A second voice answered the first, and asked what the proclamation was to be. In reply its terms were given. **All flesh is grass** (comp. ch. xxxvii. 27; and see also Job v. 25; Ps. xc. 5; xcii. 7; ciii. 15). **The goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.** So Ephraim was compared in ch. xxviii. 1 to "a fading flower." The similitude is found also in Job xiv. 2 and in Ps. ciii. 15. Homer approaches the idea in his well-known simile, Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ('Iliad,' vi. 146).

Ver. 7.—**The flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.** When the hot winds, which God sends, blow in spring-time, the flowers fade; when a destroying breath from him (see ch. xxx. 33) passes over the generations of men, they perish. **Surely the people is grass.** Either a mere repetition of "all flesh is grass" (ver. 6) with an asseveration, or an intimation that "the people" of Israel is not exempt from the lot of mankind in general, but shares it.

Ver. 8.—**The Word of our God shall stand for ever.** Amid all human frailty, shiftingness, changefulness, there is one thing that endures, and shall endure—God's Word (see the comment on the first part of ver. 6). In the sureness of God's promises is Israel's exceeding comfort.

Vers. 9—11.—The time of Israel's restoration has drawn nigh. The preparation has been made. The voice calling to preparation is silent. The promises are now on the verge of receiving their accomplishment. It is fitting that some one should announce the fact to the nation. Isaiah calls on the company of prophets living at the time to do so (ver. 9). They are to take up a commanding position, to speak with a loud voice, and to proclaim the good tidings to Zion, to Jerusalem, and to the cities of Judah (comp. ch. xliv. 26). The terms of the proclamation are then given (vers. 10, 11).

Ver. 9.—**O Zion, that bringest good tidings,** etc.; rather, as in the margin, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion* (so the LXX., Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Maurer, Hitzig, Knobel, and Kay). **Get thee up into the high mountain**; rather, *into a high mountain*. Choose an elevated spot from which to make proclamation. **O Jerusalem, that bringest,** etc.; again, as in the margin, *O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem*. The repetition, with a slight change, is quite in the manner of Isaiah. **The cities of Judah.** These would be in ruins, no less than Jerusalem herself (see ch. xlvi. 26; lxiv. 10).

Ver. 10.—**The Lord God**; literally, *the Lord Jehovah*. **With strong** hand; or, *with strength*. **His arm shall rule for him.** Kay translates, "His arm shall get him rule;" *i.e.* the manifestation, which he shall make of his power, shall cause his kingdom to be extended far and wide upon the earth. "The Lord's arm," "the Lord's hand," are favourite expressions of Isaiah's (ch. v. 25; ix. 12; x. 4; xi. 11; xxxi. 3; li. 9; liii. 1; lxii. 3, etc.). **His reward is with him, and his work before him**; rather, *his wage is with him, and his recompense before him*—a case of synonymous parallelism. The phrase is repeated in ch. lxii. 11. Mr. Cheyne understands "the reward which God gives to his faithful ones" to be meant. But perhaps it is better to understand, with Dr. Kay, that in the "little flock" which he restores to Palestine God finds his own reward and recompense—the compensation for all his care and trouble.

Ver. 11.—**He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.** The similitude is a favourite one with the psalmists (Ps. lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52; lxxx. 1), and occurs again later on in Isaiah (xlix. 9, 10). Its beauty and sweetness have been widely recognized. **He shall gather the lambs**; collect them, *i.e.*, when they have strayed from the flock. **Shall gently lead those that are with young**; rather, *those that give suck* (comp. Gen. xxxiii. 13, where the same word is used). Ewes that are suckling their lambs require specially tender treatment.

Vers. 12—31.—THE MIGHT AND GREATNESS OF GOD CONTRASTED WITH THE WEAKNESS OF MAN AND THE FUTILITY OF IDOLS. If captive Israel is to be induced to turn to God, and so hasten the time of its restoration to his favour and to its own land, it must be by rising to a worthy conception of the nature and attributes of the Almighty. The prophet, therefore, in the remainder of this chapter, paints in glorious language the power and greatness, and at the same time the mercy, of God, contrasting him with man (vers. 15—17, 23, 28—31), with idols (vers. 19, 20), and with the framework of material things (vers. 21, 22, 26), and showing his infinite superiority to each and all. In contrasting him with man, he takes occasion to bring into prominence his goodness and loving-kindness to man, to whom he imparts a portion of his own might and strength (vers. 29—31).

Ver. 12.—**Who hath measured the waters?** (comp. Prov. xxx. 4 and Job xxxviii. 4—6). The might of God is especially shown in creation, which Isaiah assumes to be God's

work. How infinitely above man must he be, who arranged in such perfection, "by measure and number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 20), the earth, the waters, and the heavens, so proportioning each to each as to produce that admirable order and regularity which the intelligent observer cannot but note in the material universe as among its chief characteristics! **In the hollow of his hand.** The anthropomorphism is strong, no doubt, but softened by the preceding mention (in ver. 10) of God's "arm," and by the comparison of God to a shepherd (in ver. 11). Isaiah's exalted notion of God renders him fearless with regard to anthropomorphism. **And meted out heaven with the span**; rather, *with a span* (comp. ch. xlviii. 13, "My right hand hath *spanned* the heavens"). **And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure**; literally, *in a tierce* (as in the margin). The measure intended is probably the *seah*, which was the third part of an *ephah*, and held about three gallons. The *seah* was "the ordinary measure for household purposes." **In scales . . . in a balance.** The *peles*, here translated "scales," is probably the steelyard, while the *môzĕnaim* is "the balance" or "pair of scales" ordinarily used for weighing. God metes out all things with measures, scales, and balances of his own, which are proportioned to his greatness.

Ver. 13.—**Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord?** Mr. Cheyne remarks, that "in Isaiah there is a marked tendency to hypostatize the Spirit;" and the remark is undoubtedly a just one (see ch. xxxii. 15; xxxiv. 16; xlviii. 16; lxi. 1, etc.). In the present place, perhaps, the introduction of "the Spirit of the Lord" arises out of the remembrance of the part in creation which is assigned to the Spirit in Gen. i. 2. He "moved," or "brooded," upon the face of the waters, and thence began the change, or series of changes, by which order was produced out of confusion. The Spirit of the Lord "directed," or regulated, these changes; but who, Isaiah asks, "directed," or regulated, the Spirit itself? Can it be supposed that he too had a director over him? Isaiah does not seriously doubt on this point, or "leave it an open question." He makes his inquiry by way of a *reductio ad absurdum*. Is it not absurd to suppose that he had a director or a counsellor? He does not—here, at any rate—so far "hypostatize the Spirit" as to view him as a Person distinct from the Person of God the Father, working under him, and carrying out his will. **Or being his counsellor hath taught him?** "The Lord *by wisdom* founded the earth" (Prov. iii. 19); but he was his own counsellor. He had no adviser external to himself. The wisdom which wrought with him was his own wisdom, an essential part of the Divine essence. The evangelical prophet approaches those mysteries of God's nature which the gospel brought to light, but cannot penetrate them.

Ver. 15.—**Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.** "From nature," as Mr. Cheyne says, "we pass to history." If God is so great, so apart and by himself in relation to the material universe, what is he in relation to man? What are nations, compared to him, but "as a drop from a bucket," which drips from it, and is of no account? What are they, but **as the small dust of the balance**, which lies on it but does not disturb its equilibrium? They are absolutely "as nothing" (ver. 17)—vanity and emptiness. **He taketh up the isles as a very little thing**; literally, *he taketh up islands*, or perhaps *lands* generally. As he weighs mountains and hills in his balance (ver. 15), so he can take up in his own hands "lands," or "countries" (Cheyne), with all their inhabitants, and do with them as seemeth him good. They are no burden to him.

Ver. 16.—**Lebanon is not sufficient to burn.** Man may think that he must be of some account, since God has required of him sacrifice and burnt offering, from which he may suppose God to derive some satisfaction. But, the prophet says, even if man were to burn all Lebanon as firewood on God's altar, and offer there all the (clean) beasts of the entire tract, still God would be put under no obligation. Man would even then have paid less than his debt.

Ver. 17.—**All nations**; rather, *all the nations*; i.e. all the nations of the earth put together. In ver. 15 single "nations" had been declared to be of no account; now the same is said of all the nations of the earth collectively. They are accounted of God as *'ephes*, nothingness, and *tohu*, chaos or confusion.

Ver. 18 is more the complement of what precedes than the introduction to what follows (comp. ver. 25). If God be all that has been said of him in vers. 12—17, must he not be wholly unique and incomparable? Then, out of this, the thought arises of the strange, the poor, the mean "likenesses" of God, which men have in their folly set up in various times and places. It has been said that Israel in captivity did not need to be warned against idolatry, of the inclination to which the Captivity is supposed at once to have cured them (Urwick, 'Servant of Jehovah,' p. 15). But there is no evidence of this. Rather, considering the few that returned, and the many that remained behind (Joseph., 'Ant. Jud.,' xi. 1), we may conclude that a large number adopted the customs, religion, and general mode of life of their masters.

Ver. 19.—The workman melteth a graven image; rather, *the workman casteth an image* (comp. ch. xli. 7; xliv. 9—17; xlvi. 6, 7). Israel's tendency to idolatry has been touched on in the earlier prophecies once or twice (ch. ii. 8, 20; xxxi. 7); but in the later chapters idolatry is assailed with a frequency, a pungency, and a vigour that are new, and that imply a change, either in the prophet's circumstances or in his standpoint. Perhaps it is enough to suppose that, placing himself ideally among the captives, Isaiah sees that the Babylonian idolatry will be, or at any rate may be, a snare to them, and provides an antidote against the subtle poison. The special antidote which he employs is ridicule, and the first ground of his ridicule is the *genesis* or formation of an image. It is made by man himself, out of known material substances. Either a figure is cast in some inferior metal, and then coated with gold and finished with the graving tool, or a mere block of wood is taken and cut into shape. Can it be supposed that such things are "likenesses" of God, or that he is comparable to them? **Casteth silver chains**; as ornaments to be worn by the images, which were often dressed (see Thucyd., ii. 13; Baruch vi. 9—12).

Ver. 20.—**He that is so impoverished**, etc.; rather, *he that can only make a poor offering*, i.e. that cannot spend much on religion. **Chooseth a tree**; rather, *chooseth wood*—goes to the carpenter, and selects a good sound block of wood, out of which his idol shall be made. After this he has to find a skilful workman, who will carve his image for him and set it up, so that it shall not shake. As Delitzsch observes, "The thing carries its own satire" in the mere plain description of it. Is such a thing comparable to God?

Ver. 21.—**Have ye not known?** Hitherto the prophet has restrained himself, and confined himself to quiet sarcasm. Now he bursts out. Is there any one so insensate, so devoid of natural reason and understanding, as not to know what has been known to **all from the beginning**—yea, **from the foundations of the earth**—by "the light that is in them," viz. that God is something wholly different from this?—that he is such a One as the prophet proceeds to describe in vers. 22—24, alike above nature and above man, Lord of heaven and earth, and absolute Disposer of the fates of all men? **Hath it not been told you?** If ye have not known the nature of God by the light of nature, has it not come down to you by tradition? Have not your fathers told it you? Has it not been handed on by sire to son from the very foundation of the earth? The appeal is to men generally, not especially to Israel. **Have ye not understood**, etc.? Some omit the preposition after "understood," and render the passage thus: "Have ye not understood the foundations of the earth?" *i.e.* how it was founded, or created—that its creation was God's sole act? (so the LXX., the Vulgate, Gesenius, Hitzig, Delitzsch, Knobel, Kay; but Ewald, Henderson, Weir, and Mr. Cheyne prefer the rendering of the Authorized Version).

Ver. 22.—**It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth**; rather, *above the vault of the earth;* above the vault of sky which seems to arch over the earth. **As grasshoppers**; *i.e.* minute, scarcely visible (comp. Numb. xiii. 33). **That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain.** So in Ps. civ. 2, only that here the "curtain" is represented as one of thin gauze. The idea is common to Isaiah with Job (ix. 8), Jeremiah (x. 12; li. 15), and Zechariah (xii. 1), and is a favourite one in these later chapters (comp. ch. xlii. 5; xliv. 24; xlv. 12; li. 13). **As a tent** (comp. Ps. xix. 4, where God is said to have set in the heavens a "tabernacle"—*'ohel*, the word used here—for the sun).

Ver. 23.—**The princes . . . the judges**; rather, *princes, judges.* The entire class of such is meant, not any special individuals (comp. Ps. cvii. 40; Job xii. 19—21). **As vanity**; or, *as chaos*—the same word that is used in ver. 17.

Ver. 24.—**They shall not be planted . . . shall not be sown . . . shall not take root.** The verbs are all of them in the past tense. Translate, *have not been planted, . . . sown*, etc. The meaning is that princes and judges of the earth are not fixed in their places, have no firm root in the soil, are easily overturned. Even if the case were different, a breath from the Almighty would, as a matter of course, dry them up (see ver. 7) and blow them away. **As stubble** (comp. ch. v. 24; Ps. lxxxiii. 13).

Ver. 25.—**To whom then**, etc.? This is a summary, to conclude the section (vers. 19—24), as ver. 18 concludes the preceding one. If God is paramount over idols (vers. 19, 20) and over nature (ver. 22) and over humanity (vers. 23, 24), to whom can he be likened? Is he not altogether unique and incomparable? **Saith the Holy One** (comp. ch. lvii. 15). Isaiah's special designation of God, at once pregnant and almost peculiar (see the comment on ch. i. 4), is "the Holy One of Israel." This is, here and in ch. lvii. 15, abbreviated.

Ver. 26.—**Lift up your eyes**, etc. Once more an appeal is made to creation, as proving God's greatness. "Lift up your eyes **on high, and see who hath created those** (heavens), bringing out their host (*i.e.* the stars) **by number**, or in their full number (Cheyne), and calling **them all by names**" (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 4, 5, "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by

their names," which, however, is probably later than Isaiah). Omnipotence alone could have created the starry host. Omniscience is required to know their number and their names. The Israelites are supposed to have "learned that the constellations had names, in Babylon" (Cheyne, *ad loc.*); but a special name for each *star*, which the Babylonians did *not* give, seems to be here intended. **Not one faileth**; *i.e.* "not one star neglects to attend the muster when God marshals the host." The stars are viewed as his army.

Ver. 27.—**O Jacob . . . O Israel.** (For this pleonastic combination, so characteristic of Isaiah, see ch. ix. 8; x. 21, 22; xiv. 1; xxvii. 6; xxix. 23, in the earlier chapters; and ch. xli. 8; xlii. 24; xliii. 1, 22, 28; xliv. 1, 5, 23; xlv. 4; xlvi. 3; xlix. 5, 6, etc., in the later ones.) **Why sayest thou . . . My way is hid?** The prophet has gone back to the time when Israel is suffering all the calamities of the Captivity, instead of being on the point of emerging from it, as in vers. 9—11, and he now hears the complaints of the exiles, who think that God has forsaken them—that he does not see their "way" of life, or regard their sufferings. **My judgment.** Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne translate "my *right*," and understand the "right" of Israel to be independent of its oppressors.

Ver. 28.—**Hast thou not known?** Complaining Israel is bidden to stay itself upon God, as (1) everlasting; (2) the Creator; (3) unwearied; (4) unsearchable; and is then further consoled by the promise that God will give them strength to endure; support them, refresh them, and, as it were, renew the youth of the nation (vers. 29, 31). **Creator of the ends of the earth**; *i.e.* "Creator *even* of the remotest ends," and therefore of the *whole* earth. **Fainteth not** (comp. Ps. cxxi. 3, 4). If God were for a moment to "faint" or "be weary," to "slumber" or "sleep," the whole fabric of nature would fail and disappear, universal chaos would set in, all moral order would cease—probably all existence, except his own, sink into nothingness. God is wholly free from whatsoever is weak or defective in man. **No searching** (see Job v. 9; ix. 10; xi. 7; Ps. cxlvii. 5; Eccles. iii. 11). God's ways being unsearchable, his servants must trust him to accomplish their deliverance in his own good time.

Ver. 29.—**He giveth power to the faint.** So far is he from being "faint" himself, that he has superabundant energy to impart to any that are faint among his servants.

Ver. 30.—**Shall faint . . . shall fall**; rather, *should even the youths faint and be weary, and should the young men utterly fall, yet they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*, etc. The two clauses of ver. 30 are "concessive."

Ver. 31.—**They shall mount up with wings as eagles** (comp. Ps. ciii. 5; and, for the use of the eagle as a metaphor for strength, see Exod. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii 11).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Comfort after trouble.* God "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;" it is no satisfaction to him to punish. As soon as ever those whom he is forced to punish will submit to the chastening rod in a proper spirit, and allow the staff of the Divine indignation to have its due effect upon them, God is ready to comfort. God the Holy Ghost is the One True Comforter. He and he alone can pour balm into the heart, quiet the conscience, enable the stricken soul to feel that it is once more at one with God. A few words may be said on (1) the conditions of comfort; (2) the methods of comfort; and (3) the proper results of comfort.

I. THE CONDITIONS OF COMFORT. As trouble comes upon us to punish sin, the first condition of our receiving comfort is that sin be put away. The next is that we implore God's pardon for our past transgressions, and acknowledge the justice of his chastisement. The third is that we pray to him of his great goodness to remit his anger, and speak comfort to our souls, and pour his peace into our hearts. If we neglect any of these conditions, we have no right to expect that God will bless us with the great blessing of his comforting grace, which is not, like the rain and sunshine, an ordinary blessing of his providence, but is a special boon reserved for those who have prepared themselves to receive it.

II. THE METHODS OF COMFORT. God sometimes comforts us through the instrumentality of our fellow-men. Job's friends were "miserable comforters, all of them" (Job xvi. 2); but it is not always so with the afflicted. The kind sympathy of friends, the wise counsel of spiritual guides, is often blessed by God to the relief and solace of those who are in trouble. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," was his address to the prophets of Israel (ver. 1); and we may be assured that his Spirit went with the

mouth of his prophets, and made the comfort which they strove to give effectual. Again, sometimes he comforts us by his Word. Many a time has the despairing soul found peace and joy in the promises of the gospel, which are indeed potent to raise up hope in the most despondent, and to comfort the most unhappy. But frequently—perhaps we may say mostly—God gives his comfort himself, without intermediary. The stricken soul stays itself upon him, leans on him, makes its moan to him; and he "comes to it," and with his blessed presence puts an end to the soul's trouble, dispels the darkness, drives away despair and fear, infuses hope, breathes peace, imparts comfort (see Ps. lxxi. 2; ch. li. 3; lxvi. 13; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4; 2 Thess. ii. 17, etc.).

III. THE RESULTS OF COMFORT. The immediate result of comfort is peace and happiness. The soul comforted by God is at least contented, blissful. The further results should be (1) gratitude for the great mercy and loving-kindness showed to us; (2) perseverance in well-doing, the fruit and necessary result of gratitude, the chief means which creatures have of showing forth their thankfulness to God for any and every mercy vouchsafed to them; (3) praise and thanksgiving, the natural utterance of the mouth, when the heart is really touched with gratitude, and sensible of God's goodness. As David says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and *call upon the Name of the Lord*. I will *pay my vows unto the Lord* . . . in the presence of all his people . . . *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and will call upon the Name of the Lord" (Ps. cxvi. 12—17).

Vers. 4—8.—*God's promises sure.* With Isaiah it is enough that "the mouth of the Lord has spoken" a thing (ch. i. 20; xl. 5). "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Numb. xxiii. 19). What he has promised, he will perform; what he has said, he will do, in the sense in which he said it. It is true, his promises are of two kinds (1) unconditional, and (2) conditional; and, though both kinds are sure, they are not sure in the same way.

I. GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL PROMISES ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. God has promised that he will never again destroy mankind by a flood (Gen. ix. 11). He has pledged himself that "while the earth remainetb, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22). By his Son he has declared that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church" (Matt. xvi. 18), that he will send his Son to earth a second time to judge the quick and dead (Matt. xxv. 31—45), and that then the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. xxv. 46). These are unconditional promises, and are absolutely certain of fulfilment. Nothing can come in their way. God's veracity is pledged to them, and, as he is true, he must and will bring them to pass.

II. GOD'S CONDITIONAL PROMISES ARE CERTAIN OF ACCOMPLISHMENT, IF THE CONDITION BE FULFILLED. The bulk of God's promises to mankind are "covenant promises," and, by the nature of a "covenant promise," they depend on a condition or conditions which have to be fulfilled. The promises to the Israelites that they should possess Canaan, to David that his seed should sit upon his throne, and to captive Israel that it should be restored, were of this nature. So are all promises of temporal and spiritual blessings to individuals. Even where the condition is not expressed, it is understood. A single example will suffice to show the nature of this kind of promise. A covenant was made with David to establish his seed for ever, and set up his throne to all generations (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4). This covenant was to stand fast, so long as his children walked in his ways. If, however, they forsook God's Law, and walked not in his judgments; if they broke his statutes, and kept not his commandments, then their transgressions were to be visited with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. The Anointed of the Lord was to be cut off and abhorred; the covenant with him was to be made void, and his crown to be cast to the ground (Ps. lxxxix. 30—39). In these cases God's part of the covenant remains sure; it is man's which is uncertain. If man fails, then God is, by his very faithfulness, bound to mark his sense of the failure by non-fulfilment of the promises which were made conditional on a certain course of human action. Unless man fails, God's promises remain firm. No one can pretend to point out any case in which the covenant has been observed by man, and God's part in it has been that of a defaulter.

Ver. 11.—*God the Shepherd of his people.* This favourite image is "full of figures and analogies of loving-kindness. It is almost sacramental in its depth and power." To exhaust its meaning is impossible; to draw out all that it implies is hopeless; even to make it the subject of comment may seem almost impertinent. Still, in an exegetical work, some comment must be made upon a passage at once so characteristic and so powerful; some attempt at exposition must be attached to the declaration of a truth so precious. Six things would seem, then, to be especially involved in the declaration.

I. GOD LOVES HIS FLOCK. Love is at the root of even an earthly shepherd's care for his flock, if he is a true shepherd, and not a mercenary hireling. Without love, there may be care, but it will not be tender care; there may be guardianship, but it will not be incessant, unwearied, jealous guardianship. The heavenly Shepherd loves the sheep of his flock with a deep, true, patient, and abounding love, surpassing far the utmost affection whereof man is capable, surpassing even the utmost conception that man can form of love. His flock is his own creation, his own reflected image, his own purchased possession. His desire is toward it (Cant. vii. 10). He loves it with a love which "many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown" (Cant. viii. 7).

II. GOD CARES FOR HIS FLOCK. It is God's care for his flock on which Isaiah especially insists both in ver. 11 and ch. xlix. 9, 10. He "gathers the lambs with his arm, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that suckle their young." He gives them "pastures in all high places," suffers "neither the heat nor sun to smite them, and leads them by the springs of water." The most tender care, the most solicitous vigilance, is implied in all that is told us of his treatment of his flock, so that we may well say, that "all love, care, providence, devotion, watchfulness, that is in earth or in heaven, in the ministry of men or of angels, is but a reflection and participation of that which is thus seen to be in him" (Manning).

III. GOD GUIDES HIS FLOCK. The Oriental shepherd goes in front of his sheep; and so God is represented as going (Ps. lxxviii. 52; ch. xlix. 10; John x. 3). He points out to them the way wherein they should walk, and leads them in it. By the inner light of conscience, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and by the outward light of revelation, which shines on many, he directs their paths. By the secret motions and influences of his Spirit he keeps them, for the most part, in the right way, and suffers them not to depart from it.

IV. GOD GUARDS HIS FLOCK. God's flock has enemies as powerful and as dangerous as the flock of any earthly shepherd. Many a wolf in sheep's clothing seeks to devour it; one lion, at any rate, is ever walking round the fold, longing and hoping for prey. But God is always on the watch against these enemies, baffling their attacks, defeating their designs, causing them to fall into their own snares. True, he cannot effectually guard all, if they will not listen to him, will not obey his commands, will rush madly into danger. But he is a sure Defence to such as "hear his voice" and follow his directions. No wolf can snatch his faithful ones out of his hand; no lion can hurt them, nor any roaring beast. God guards them night and day. "He that keepeth Israel slumbers not nor sleeps."

V. GOD FEEDS HIS FLOCK. God is said to "lead his flock into green pastures" (Ps. xxiii. 2), to "feed them in a good pasture, a fat pasture" (Ezek. xxxiv. 14). Our Lord declares himself "the Bread of life" (John vi. 48)—the "living Bread which came down from heaven," whereof "if any man eat, he shall live for ever" (John vi. 51). God feeds his flock upon his Word, upon his faithful promises, upon himself received sacramentally. He feeds them himself, and he commands the shepherds under him, with emphatic iteration, to feed them (John xxi. 15—17). He gives them "angels' food" to be the sustentation and support of their souls; "bread of immortality" to be their life here and hereafter; precious manna, far beyond that which he gave to his people in the wilderness, sweet at once and satisfying. "Lord, evermore give us this bread" (John vi. 34).

VI. GOD SEEKS AND SAVES THE WANDERERS OF HIS FLOCK. Isaiah tells us that God "*gathers* the lambs with his arm" (ver. 11). Our Lord, describing the good *human* shepherd, tells us that if he have an hundred sheep, and lose one of them, he straightway "leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goes after that which is lost, *until he find it*; and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke xv. 4, 5). The Son of man came "to seek and to save that which was lost"

(Matt. xviii. 11). The sheep of God's flock perpetually "go astray," turn from the right way, wander into strange paths, seek pastures that are not good; if God were not perpetually checking their inclination to stray, seeking them, recalling them, "gathering" them, bringing them back to him, there would soon be no flock left. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to his own way." If the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. v. 4), "the great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. xiii. 20), had not cared for us and sought us and brought us home, we had been lost indeed; but now, through his great mercy, we are "returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" (1 Pet. ii. 25).

Vers. 12, 22, 26.—*God in creation.* Creation tells of God in many ways. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge" (Ps. xix. 1, 2). "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20). Here we have noted especially—

I. GOD'S MARVELLOUSNESS IN CREATION. 1. The very *act of creation* is the most marvellous of all marvels. For what is creation but the production of something out of nothing?—a seeming contradiction, at any rate a strange paradox. Isaiah affects strongly the use of the word *bârâ* (ch. iv. 5; xl. 26; xli. 20; xlv. 8, 12, 18, etc.), which, if not confined to the sense of "producing out of nothing," at any rate includes that sense (Gesenius, 'Lex. Heb.,' *ad voc.*). 2. And the marvellousness of creation is enhanced by the *vastness of creation:* sun, moon, planets, stars; the incalculable distances of space—the *nebulæ*, either unformed stars, or infinitely distant solar systems like that of which our system forms a part; the Milky Way, or outer edge of our own system, set so thick with stars that they seem to form a continuous girdle of light. 3. *The perfect order of creation:* all things weighed out and measured by God's hand in set proportions one to another; all keeping their appointed courses without collision or confusion; observing their respective times and seasons; displaying an infinite variety, which, however, is all ordered and regulated. 4. And by *the unity of creation:* all of it from one hand, from one mind, working without assistance, without counsel (vers. 13, 14), from its own inexhaustible stores of wisdom and knowledge; and all of it subject to that one mind and obeying its every behest (ver. 26).

II. GOD'S GOODNESS IN CREATION. God does not leave his creation alone, to stand or fall by its own inherent strength. Every part of it is upheld by him, maintained in existence by him, enabled by him to perform the task which he has set it. The "way" of no part of his creation is "hid from him" (ver. 27). Each star is known by name, and the starry hosts are marshalled "by number," and led forth in their stately march, so that "not one faileth" (ver. 26). So with his moral creatures. They too are upheld; "power" and "strength" are given to them continually (ver. 29); he who sustains them is "never faint, never weary;" a way is contrived for them by which they may "renew their strength" (ver. 31). Doubtless there is this difference. Material things are absolutely upheld, and prevented from failing; God's moral creation is not absolutely upheld. It is given a sufficiency of help (2 Cor. xii. 9), but is not compelled to accept the gift. If man wills to perish, he must perish. Though God's grace is "sufficient for him," he can reject that grace—he can thwart the will of God, who "wouldeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Were it otherwise, he would be a machine, and not a moral being.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The prophet's commission.* He is to unfold a theme of consolation, which runs through the whole of the book, introduced by this chapter. He speaks to the prophets: "Ye prophets, prophesy consolation concerning my people" (Targum of Jonathan); or, "O priests, speak to the heart of Jerusalem," according to the LXX. The former is probably correct. The prophets were numerous both in Isaiah's time (ch. iii. 1; xxix. 10, 20) and during the Babylonian exile (Jer. xxix. 1). Jehovah is now reconciled to his erring people, and calls them no longer by names expressive of

rejection or contempt (as in Hos. i. 9; ch. vi. 9), but as *my people*. "Israel, my people, and I their God," is the great word on which both Judaism and Christianity rest. Now the prophets are to "speak to the heart of Jerusalem." It is to be in a voice clear and distinct and penetrating. "Heart," in Hebrew use, is a comprehensive word; it stands for "intelligence, conscience, feeling," in one (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 3; l. 21, where the Hebrew is, "to their hearts"). Perhaps chiefly the latter here. The vocation of the prophet is now especially to comfort and encourage. And so ever with the preacher. We may compare with these words the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth. Christ announces himself as the Bearer of consolation to the heart of his people, to the heart of mankind, especially to the poor and the distressed and dejected. And surely the burden of every ministry may well be the "Christ of consolation."

I. THE MESSAGE TO JERUSALEM. 1. "Her warfare is fulfilled." "Warfare" standing for "enforced hardships." The metaphor "very suggestive of the peculiar troubles of military service in ancient times:" "Hath not man a warfare [hard service] on the earth?" (Job vii. 1). The idea of an appointed time of *service* enters into the word—the discharge of a duty for which a man has been *enlisted*, or solemnly *engaged*, as that of the Levites in the tabernacle (Numb. iv. 23; viii. 24, 25). *Life as a period of enforced service.* It means for most of us, perhaps for all of us, toil, danger, suffering. From this enlistment the only discharge is by death (Job xiv. 14; Dan. x. 1). Our times are in the hand of God. A period is fixed to all suffering and trial. It may calm the apprehension of calamity in the most susceptible heart to see how quick a bound has been set to the utmost infliction of malice. We rapidly approach a brink over which no enemy can follow us. "Let them rave; thou art quiet in thy grave." 2. "Her guilt is paid off." For punishment is viewed as the *payment* of *a debt*, and so as the *satisfaction* of the demands of Divine justice. In the Law, the sword and dispersion among the heathen are threatened against the disobedient and the unreformed; but never does Jehovah forget the covenant between him and the people; he is ever ready to suspend punishment when they suspend sin. Here the people are represented "as having suffered what God had appointed them—endured the natural punishment he saw to be necessary. They had *served out* the long term he had appointed. Now he is satisfied, has pleasure in releasing them and restoring them to their own land." Happy that moment in the *personal life* when the soul can be assured that suffering has done its work, and that it may be self-forgiven, because God-forgiven.

> "At the last, do as the heavens have done:
> Forget your evil; with them, forgive yourself."

3. "'She hath received double for all her sins.' The expression seems to denote what is *amply sufficient* (cf. Jer. xvii. 18; Rev. xviii. 6)" (Cheyne); "As much as God judged to be sufficient" (Grotius); "Double to be received for large and abundant" (Calvin). The great law of compensation running through life, we must believe, is exact in its operation. God makes no mistakes in his reckonings. Suffering may continue long after sin has been forgiven. If the memory of guilt be still poignant, if the consequences of sin seem still "ever before us," it is as if God were saying, "Not enough hast thou suffered yet to know how precious is the peace of forgiveness." And when that blessed sense of forgiveness steals into the soul, it is the symptom that the hand of God is removed, that the cup of sorrow has been drained, that the medicine has done its work. The justice of our God will exact sufficient from us in the way of suffering; his clemency and mercy will never add a superfluous stroke from the scourge; rather he will stop short of the full exaction—thirty-nine rather than the full forty stripes.

II. THE MYSTERIOUS CALL. From what is to be believed of Jehovah, we pass to what is to be done for Jehovah. So ever does faith push on to practice. The internal act of the mind realizes itself and is made perfect in the external act of the life. 1. Mysteriously a voice bids the listening heart *prepare for Jehovah.* It is a "non-Divine, yet supernatural voice." The poetic effect is heightened by the mystery (cf. ch. li. 9; lii. 1; lvii. 14; lxii. 10). Similar voices are spoken of in the Book of Revelation (i. 10, 12; iv. 1; x. 4, 8). There are times when the breath of coming change is felt stirring, and voices are heard calling to men to welcome it in and to help it on. Whence come they? Who knows? A spiritual world is all about us. It has music, and words; but while "this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close us in, we cannot

hear." But at times they pierce through our sensuality and break up our lethargic indolence. "Clear ye Jehovah's way in the desert." The Divine monarch is about to make a progress. Let the heart of the nation be as a highway for their God (Ps. lxxxiv. 5). So the Gospels understand the cry (Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4). From another point of view, the way of Jehovah through the desert is symbolic of his people's destinies. Babylon, as the scene of captivity, reminds us of the scene of captivity of yore in Egypt. When the temple was destroyed and Israel went forth, it was as if Jehovah had departed—perhaps to his sacred seat in the north, where Ezekiel (i. 4) sees the cherubic chariot. His coming back is the people's coming back under his leadership. The imagery of clearing the way may be illustrated from the practice of Oriental princes. Diodorus tells of Semiramis that, in her march to Ecbatana, she had precipices digged down, and hollows filled up, so as to leave an everlasting memorial of herself—the "road of Semiramis" (cf. Baruch v. 7). Then the glory of Jehovah, eclipsed or hidden through his people's suffering and exile, will shine forth in its splendour, and all mankind shall look on. 2. Again the voice is heard saying, "Call!" And the prophet answers, "What shall I call?" The burden of the cry is the *frailty of man and the eternity of the truth.* Homer compares the race of man to the successive generations of the leaves of the wood; the prophet to the grass and the flowers (cf. Ps. xc. 5, 6). Israel and Assyria are both politically extinct, and Babylon is hurrying to its end. The thought is suggested, though not expressed, that if Israel is to rise again from its ashes, it can only be by abstaining from all attempts at secular aggrandizement. The new Israel will be, in all the circumstances of its growth, supernatural. And what is true of one people is true of all. Princes, nobles, and monarchs, armies and magistrates, are feeble like grass and will soon pass away. On the one hand, they would not be able to accomplish what was needed for the deliverance of the people; on the other, their oppressors had no power to continue their bondage, since they were like grass and must pass away. But Jehovah had all power, and was ever-enduring, and able to fulfil all his promises, especially those concerning Israel (ch. xliv. 26; xlv. 19; lii. 6; lxiii. 1; Jer. xliv. 28, 29). And the healing results are to be known by all mankind.

III. THE INSPIRING VISION. The prophet is carried away in spirit to Palestine, and sees the fulfilment of the promise drawing near. He personifies Zion and Jerusalem, and calls upon them to lift up their voices and announce to the cities of Judah the approach of God. Perhaps he idealizes the city, or is thinking of the city out of sight—the spiritual commonwealth of which the earthly and visible one was the type. Lo! he comes! the God and Leader of the people returning to the city, the temple, the land. He will come in his might; the arm is the very symbol of his almightiness; and it rules "for him," *i.e.* for the peculiar people, the people of his possession. He comes to recompense his friends and to execute vengeance on his foes. The ruler of a people is fitly imaged as a shepherd, and they as his flock. And now he has sought and found his sheep again, and will once more lead them to green pastures (Jer. xxxi. 10; l. 19; Ezek. xxxiv. 11—16), and, as a good shepherd, will not overdrive the suckling ewes (Gen. xxxiii. 13). In the Syrian plains the frequent removal to fresh pastures is very destructive to the young, and shepherds may now be seen in the Orient carrying, on such occasions, the lambs in their bosoms. We need, by any means in our power, travel, and observation, to realize strongly the grave *responsibility*, the *constant anxiety*, the *patient* and *unwearied tendance*, connected with the shepherd's life in the East. Compare such a life with that of the hunter, who, from watching, pursuing, outwitting wild beasts, comes to partake of their fierce and cunning nature. The life of the shepherd draws upon the fund of love and tenderness in his heart; it is a humanizing life, full of a fine education; elevating by means of condescension. Then how rich a symbol is the pastoral character of the nature of the redeeming God! And how do the numerous passages in the New Testament, in which Jesus is so described, start into life and beauty, when these things are considered (John x.; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4)! There is an ineffable union of might with tenderness in the character of the Redeemer-God, which should in some sort be reflected in the *pastoral* character of Christ's servants (John xvi. 15—17).—J.

Vers. 12—18.—*Jehovah incomparable.* I. HIS POWER OVER NATURE. The boldest

imagery to express this thought: the "hollow of his hand;" his "span;" his "tierce," a small measure; his scales, with which he weighs the volumes of sea and land, and measures the vast extent of heaven without an effort,—as we use the hand to weigh or to span! Far from taking offence at such figures, we feel them to be truthful, appropriate, sublime. The Creator is infinitely superior to his world. Vastness of space may overwhelm our imagination, but not his. His thought holds with ease the universe as a whole and in all its parts. "Thou hast ordered all things by measure and number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 20). Vain the "materialistic" dreams of students occupied too much with the physical and the phenomenal. The physical is the expression of the intellectual; the phenomenal but the "appearance" of the real; the creation, the "garb we see God by." How much truer to what a spiritual religion teaches us is this view than that which would direct our wonder and our worship to the mere splendours of the material world, rather than to the great creative and informing spirit of the world! Isaiah, contemptuously speaking of the sea as held in God's hand, as one might hold a drop of water, is a better poet than Byron, who apostrophizes the sea as a living being.

II. THE ORIGINALITY OF HIS MIND. A theological difficulty is supposed to be alluded to. "Who hath regulated the mind of Jehovah?" "Was he himself absolutely free? May not Omnipotence itself be subject to conditions? May there not be an equal or superior power to whose counsels he must defer?" (Cheyne). Distinctly the prophet, without arguing the question, denies the truth of such an hypothesis. By the Spirit of God we mean the mind of God, which is

"The life and light of all this wondrous world we see."

The world is not "dead matter," but the creation of that intelligence, the vast poem, inspired by Divine thoughts that breathe and burn. Love is the last ground of all things, and conscience and intelligence are its ministers. God's Being is simple, unique, absolutely original. In a like sense to that which we say the works of a great poet are his unassisted productions, does the prophet say the world is the work of God. "Contrast the Babylonian myth of a joint action of Bel and the gods in the creation of man; and the Iranian of co-creatorship of Ormuzd and the Amshaspands;" or the crude cosmogonic notions of the Greeks. All parts of the world, all habitable lands and nations, are dependent on him, derived from his will, subject to his power. How, then, can earth's noblest products add anything to his riches, or further illustrate the glory of One to whom they already belong? The poverty of Judah in wood may be contrasted with the rich forests of Lebanon; but even Lebanon could not yield enough for his honour, if that honour is to be measured by the extent of the offerings. The nations, and all that is great and imposing in their life, are nought in his eyes; chaos may designate them in this contemptuous view. In short, he is *incomparable*. No illustration, analogy, similitude, ever thrown forth from the poet-soul and imagination in mankind, as no picture of painter, image of sculptor, will here avail. Nay, there must be moments when the very forms of thought into which everything must be thrown that we may see it at all, and even last of all, the richest and purest musical harmonies, must be set aside as inadequate.

"All are too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set our Maker forth."

Nothing can surpass the simplicity and the sublimity of this view of God. Nothing less lofty will satisfy our intelligence or meet the yearnings of our heart. The idolatry we are so ready to lavish upon the finite object is the poor caricature of that immense delight which God demands we should enjoy in the thought of him, and which we cannot be satisfied until we have attained.—J.

Vers. 19—26.—*Idolatry ridiculous.* A strong tone of irony and ridicule runs through the description; and nothing could better illustrate by contrast that sublime faith which has just been presented to our view.

I. THE IMAGE CONTRASTED WITH JEHOVAH. All our thought is composed of images; but what a descent from that image in the mind and solely there on which we have been dwelling, to yonder thing of metal, which the craftsman casts, and the gold-

smith overlays with gold, and for which he forges chains of silver! Let art be honoured; let artists strive their best to give distinctness to thoughts that must otherwise wander in the vague. But if the concrete thing be thrust into the place of that spiritual reality it can but faintly suggest, it becomes an object of scorn instead of admiration. Have the great traditions of our fathers ended in *this*? What has that *thing* of your poor manufacture to do with the great scheme of things?

II. THE ETERNAL REVELATION. The prophet is astonished that men are blind and deaf to that eternal truth which has been announced from the beginning of the creation —the speech poured out from day to day, the declarations of every starry night. The works of God are the shadows of himself. "The whole system of the world is but a standing copy and representation of the Divine goodness, writing little images of itself upon every the least portion of this great body." "The night itself cannot conceal the glories of the heaven; but the moon and stars, those lesser lights, then show forth their lesser beauties. While the labourer lies down for his rest, the astronomer sits up and watches for his pleasure." When men were talking atheism around Napoleon on the passage to Africa, the great man exclaimed, pointing to the starry sky, "It is all very well for you to talk, gentlemen; but who made all that?" Again the prophet rises to that conception of the sublimity of Jehovah and the insignificance of man's power in contrast with him, which may be called contrast in Hebrew thought. A series of "admiring exclamations" follows. Jehovah sits above the circle that overarches the earth (Job xxii. 14; Prov. viii. 27); and men seem as insignificant insects in comparison (cf. Numb. xiii. 33). His vast hand has spread out the heavens like a curtain of fine cloth; they resemble a habitable tent—also an idea frequent in Hebrew poetry (ch. xlii. 5; xliv. 24; xlv. 12; li. 13; Job ix. 8; Zech. xii. 1). Thus the *dimensions* of nature suggest the *majesty* and *infinitude* of God. So the revolutions of the nations suggest the sovereignty and spiritual might of God. Men of weight are by him brought to nothing, and the judges of the earth become as worthless chaos. A magnificent city, with the tombs of departed and the palaces of living kings, is an imposing monument of human passion and human intelligence. Nineveh and Babylon "seemed planted for eternity, firmly rooted in the soil; but to the prophets, regarding them from the point of view of the future, they seemed as though they had never been." Profound faith in the Eternal fills the mind with contempt for the *gloria mundi*, which seems to be withering in the very hour it most proudly flourishes. The prophet falls back upon the thought of the holy and incomparable One, who marshals the starry hosts, who is Lord of the physical universe and of the world of man's spirits. We need to rest our thought upon the infinite power of God. Weak ourselves, we need to lean upon that which is strong and enduring. And here we are liable to many illusions—the illusion of the permanence of physical systems, the illusion of the permanence of human customs and institutions. God can cause the heavens to be shrivelled like a scroll, can efface the cities of the nation as if they were so many rubbish-heaps from the face of the earth. He and the soul alone abide.—J.

Vers. 27—31.—*Despondency reproved.* I. THE COMPLAINT OF THE PEOPLE. They feel themselves, or are tempted to feel themselves, forsaken of God. Their "way" seems to be hidden from him. The "way" is a figure for the course and condition of life. And is it not said in the first Psalm, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous"? There are times when this cannot be realized. The truth of a providence over the national and the personal life—what more consoling? "Thou art with me;" "Thou God seest me:" what might is there not in such thoughts to "warn, to comfort, to command"? There are other moods, and thoughts of another complexion. We suffer, and God seems indifferent. There is a sense of the injustice of the world, and God does not defend us. "Our right has been let slip by our God." He has living oracles for others, not for us. We gaze into his words; luminous to others, they radiate not their meaning upon us. Who and what is that God in whom we have been taught to believe? A name, and nothing more? These are, indeed, dark moments. "Passed and passed my turn is," says a modern poet, in describing the "fears and scruples" of the drooping and despondent soul. The worst is that the weakness which is subjective, in ourselves, we are tempted to throw out of ourselves—to project on God. He

must be growing weary and faint, and something less than God. This mood the prophet meets (cf. ch. xlix. 14; Job xxvii. 2).

II. THE REPLY OF THE PROPHET. 1. *He appeals to their intelligence.* "Hast thou not perceived?" Look away from self and its restriction within the bonds of present distress; look at others who are expatiating on the "large places" of Jehovah's goodness. Look at the silent heavens with their "goings on;" the march of the seasons; the recurrence of seed-time and harvest; consider the breath which stirs the souls of men to progress in wisdom, culture, peace, civilization. Contemplate as a whole and in its parts the marvellous mechanism of the human world. Divert thy thoughts from the little self-world to the immense universe. *Listen* as well as *look*—to the immemorial tradition; to the oracles that have lived and cannot die; to the deep voice of prophets and the music of psalmists; to the simple accents of the babes and sucklings. One immense harmony starts upon the ear and the heart; the loving and eternal God its central theme. "Oh, my brothers, God exists; believing love will relieve us of a load of care." Intelligence and conscience combine with the sacred unbroken traditions of the race, to assure us that he is what he was and where he was. 2. *The attributes of Jehovah.* An *everlasting God.* Mortality means fickleness and caprice. His Name means constancy, faithfulness. His covenants are irreversible. In the English Testament of the Jews, that grand Name, "the Eternal," is preserved. He is "Creator of the ends of the earth;" *i.e.* of the "whole earth from end to end." Babylonia, then, the seat of the exile, is not beyond Jehovah's empire, as if he were only "the god of the hills of Palestine" (Cheyne). Creation infers providence. If God made the world, he governs it too. Men are dependent on him, and in their dependence is safety and bliss. He has *no human infirmities:* faints not, nor is weary. He works for his world both day and night (Gen. i. 5, etc.; Exod. xiii. 21; 1 Kings viii. 29; Ps. cxxi. 4). His *unfathomable intelligence.* (Cf. Job v. 9; ix. 10; cf. ch. xxxiv. 24; xxxvi. 26.) Therefore there was a "wise purpose" in all this present procedure of providence, so dark as it seemed. We look upon the wavering ripples on the surface of the river; but the sunbeam strikes upon them with directness and certainty. And "God's hand is as steady as his eye." His *self-communication.* "Man's weakness, waiting upon God, its end can never miss." For he is self-imparting; and if there be a void in us, it is that he may fill it; a weakness in us, that his strength may be seen consummate in it. "Unto the powerless he maketh strength to abound." 3. *The wisdom of waiting.* Waiting! How much is included in that word! Faith, and hope, and endurance, and strength. Take the most vivid image of strength: the youth in his athletic vigour—the agile wrestler, the nimble runner. Is he strong? Nay, he shall stumble, while the stationary, waiting one "gathers fresh force." He seems to be on the wane, to be losing the dew and brightness of his youth. 'Tis but the moulting of the old eagle of fable—he will put forth fresh feathers. With "ages on his plumes," he will still be travelling on. These waiters are the stayers in the race. They may appear as stationary as earth itself; they roll on by the same momentum, they are the agents of the same force. Exertion without God: what more impotent? impotence touched by God's breath, God's hand: what can it not do? "*Wait,* I say, on the Lord."—J.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Divine consolations.* "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." Here, after prophetic revelation of danger and warning against the Nemesis of sin, we come upon the evangel of love. For God delights not in denunciation or death. All his universe testifies that he loves life, that he "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

I. HERE IS REITERATION. "Comfort ye, comfort ye." It is an inspiration of earnestness in conveying the heavenly message. For God is the God of comfort. Not comfort *in* sin, but comfort to all who seek to be delivered from it. This is like the "Verily, verily." It gives emphasis to hope. For love deals not in cold aphorisms, but repeats itself, that the heart may be sure of the message. To convince of sin is not enough. To expose evil may be the work of the moral dramatist. To scorn it may be the work of the satirist. But God is more than a Judge; he is a Saviour. The Son of man came (as his great work), "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

II. HERE IS REST. "Her warfare is accomplished." The weapons to be put into the hands of the faithful suffice to secure victory, and therefore the warfare is spoken of as accomplished. Looking forward to the Redeemer's days, Isaiah reminds us that his sacrifice is to be complete, as we read in Hebrews, "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Thus Christ spake of his own death, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." This is the *spirit* of the New Testament. "Iniquity *is* pardoned." All who believe have full and free remission of sins. And the warfare *within them* must end in holy conquest—every rebel flag on every province of the nature will be hauled down, and every worldly enemy will be laid low. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith."

III. HERE IS DEPENDENCE. We receive double from "the Lord's hand." This is the theme of all the true Churches of Christ. Whether we express our gratitude for redemption in the words of Lyte or Watts, Keble or Doddridge, Faber or Wesley, it is still the same, and antedates the great Church worship of heaven: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, . . . be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—W. M. S.

Vers. 3—5.—*The golden age.* "Every valley shall be exalted," etc. Everything depends upon how we view the *future*, whether with the horoscope of history or prophecy. History says the old evils return—war, strife, wrong, selfishness. Then the heart sinks, and inspiration to duty is weakened. But when we go with the prophet to the mountain-tops, we see—

I. PATHS OF PREPARATION. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." There are the ruins of the old military roads of the Cæsars, but the Cæsars are gone. There the Ptolemies of olden time made inoursions, but their sway is past. But the highways of commerce, the freer intercourse of peoples; the more humanizing influences of equity in law, and reformation in punishment, the kindly workings of pity and charity to the neglected and forgotten;—all these are preparation-paths for the great King who is to reign in righteousness. Not alone through the royal gates of olden prophecies, but through the triumphal arches of redeeming ideas and influences which he has set at work, the Messiah shall come.

II. OBSTACLES REMOVED. "Every valley," etc. This is but a figurative way of stating that no hindrance can affect the onward march of the Redeemer. In Eastern countries the things described here *were* obstacles sufficient to hinder Solomon in his Eastern journeys. There *were* limits to his progress when he left his grand basilica to visit his wide domains. Not so will it be with One greater than Solomon.

III. GLORY REVEALED. It is hidden now. Men are dazzled with false glory, with meretricious ideas of empire, and they see no beauty in Christ that they should desire him. But one day—as the æsthetic student realizes in time what is true art, as the musician understands the majesty of Beethoven—the *moral nature* of men being quickened and renewed by the Spirit, they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. Not some here and there, but *man* everywhere; "all flesh shall see it together." What a vision! and what a day of jubilee! We need cherish no doubt about it. The vision is not imagination. The grand climacteric result is not predicated from a mere study of the triumph of the strongest forces. God has pledged his own word: "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—W. M. S.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The imperishable.* "The grass withereth," etc. The soul of man is immortal, and the Word that is to feed it is immortal too.

I. THE DECAY OF NATURE. "The grass withereth"—that which feeds the dying race of creatures upon earth. "The flower fadeth"—that which regales the physical senses of man. Each generation learns this great lesson, and it is interwoven into poem and song in every literature.

II. THE SYMBOLISM OF NATURE. These pictures of decay are to teach us how frail is the earthly life of man: "*He* cometh up and is cut down like a flower." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower thereof." So that his best life, his soul, will demand the greater care; *that* must be rooted in the everlasting. The inspiring of the human is a pensive enough consideration at times; we can only be

comforted by the faith which, uniting us with Christ, enables us to say, "Though the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day."

III. THE ETERNITY OF TRUTH. "The Word of our God shall stand for ever." It is blessed to be able to say "*our* God," because that implies not only reconciliation, but interest in his kingdom, and that kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. There is the written Word, and that lives and is translated into almost every language and dialect on the earth. There is that Word as it lives and breathes in the regenerated hearts and histories of the saints of God. There is the eternal Word himself, the Logos, the Lord Christ, the Inspirer of all truth in all the ages, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Lord God Almighty.—W. M. S.

Ver. 10.—*Present reward.* "His reward is with him." There is a glory to be revealed. There is a day of the manifestation of the sons of God—a day of august solemnity, when the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed." But the Christian dispensation is not fairly represented when its rewards and punishments are declared to be future only. These words speak of a present reward.

I. CHRIST JESUS HAD HIS REWARD HERE. So says the prophet, speaking here of Christ. And the apostle says, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross;" and Jesus gives this legacy to his disciples: "My joy." We are apt to think of Jesus *only* as the "Man of sorrows." And so our artists have painted him. In their pictures there is often no light of triumph in his eye! How he went about doing good! What a reward it was, every day to comfort the mourner and to heal the broken-hearted! Think of all that Jesus said in the synagogue of Nazareth—that he came to do, and you will understand that *beneath* this sorrow and suffering there was a still deeper joy. His reward was with him. So it was, *even* on the cross, strange as that may appear. Still the prophet says, "*When* thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, . . . the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

II. CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE ENDORSES THIS TRUTH. The Christian's reward is with him. True duty is not discharged for the sake of reward. Men in this world never get happiness by seeking for it alone. It must come, not as an end, but as an accompaniment of duty. Besides, we should be open to the criticism that the gospel appealed to selfishness if we invited men and women to become Christians *for the sake* of heaven. No; we invite them to take up their cross and follow him, and therein they will find their reward. Strange as it may seem, they too will find blessedness where they least expected it in doing the will of God; and then heaven will come as the culmination and perfection of sacrificial and spiritual life.—W. M. S.

Ver. 29.—*Weakness made strong.* "He giveth power to the faint," etc. The pilgrim to Zion is often weary. Lassitude and faintness steal over the soul, and energy is gone. At such seasons we cannot recover ourselves. No effort of will can give tone to the spirit and zeal to the activities.

I. FAINTNESS RELIEVED. Our principles have not changed; nor have our ideals. To live for Christ is still our aim. But somehow the heart, which is the centre of the life, beats feebly. God has varied ways of relieving our weakness and restoring our strength. But whatever the instrumentality, it is God that does it, God's Spirit that fills it. Blessed hours are those when the heavenly breath revives the soul; when the graces lift up their faded heads like dew-bathed flowers; when courage revives, and the soul rejoices in God.

II. STRENGTH INCREASED. "To them that have no might." Further than this we cannot go. And it should comfort those who regard their experiences of feebleness as indications that they are not the children of God, that such a state is recognized in Holy Scripture as possible to us. "No might." Patience gone. Endurance gone. Perseverance gone. It is almost like moral paralysis. But it is not, indeed, so. The nerve is weakened, but not snapped. Divine communication can and will come, even to the most enfeebled and dejected. While we say "no might," there *is* a little strength, or it could not be "increased." And this increase is often very slow and imperceptible. When we are physically feeble, we cannot measure progress as we inhale the air of sea or mountain; only steadily does the tide of health, like the ocean tide, return. But it

does come, if we wait upon God; for God is faithful who hath promised. It is all of him.—W. M. S.

Ver. 30.—*Spiritual faintness.* "Even the youths shall faint," etc. Then faintness is not a matter of age. Exhausted power may belong to youth. We are to learn that natural spirits are not enough for this great campaign. Health and energy will do much for the earthly soldier, and for the young mountaineer on the Swiss Alps. But it is otherwise here. From beginning to end of the Divine life we shall faint and fail unless God be with us to inspire and strengthen us.

I. YOUNG EXPERIENCES. It is perhaps well that we should learn the great lesson early, so that we may never think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. There are doubtless joyful experiences in our first love to Christ; but Bunyan was right when he placed the Slough of Despond so near the starting-place. We soon meet with disappointments and disheartenments. We are soon face to face with temptations which well-nigh overcome us. The Philistines make us afraid.

II. FALLEN FORTUNES. Not in houses or estates, but in hearts and lives. We fall —utterly fall. So that there may be no excuse, no palliation, no pretence that it was only a stumble; we cannot gaily pick ourselves up and go on our way as though nothing had happened. We are told of our utter failure. But to fall, even, is not to be lost. We may be maimed, bruised, broken, but God can lift us up. "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for when I fall I shall arise." This is the victor-song of souls that trust not in themselves, but in him who is able to make all grace abound unto them. Never let the fallen, whether it be in faith, or creed, or character, be treated as lost.—W. M. S.

Ver. 31.—*Renewal of strength.* "They that wait upon the Lord." Here we have revealed to us the secret of the soul's renewed energy. It is open to *all.* We are thus "changed men," for the Hebrew word here, "to renew," means "to change." Experiences like these alter alike character and countenance. God restores unto us the joy of his anointed.

I. A DIVINE PROMISE. Written in the book of inspiration? Yes; and embodied in the experience of a great multitude of souls. So attest the men of old, like Daniel and Nehemiah, who had each religious work to do in pagan courts. And so also must we. No philosophy of prayer may be possible to us, save that best of all philosophies, the philosophy of experience. And this we cannot set aside. As the Bible is its own best evidence concerning its inspiration, so is prayer its own best argument. They that wait upon the Lord, in every age, whether in the patriarchy, the theocracy, or the Christian age, *have* renewed their strength.

II. A TRIPLE EXPERIENCE. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." True, there *is* a higher realm into which as we rise we are surprised that the cares and worries of this lower world should have such power to harass and overcome us. We do see light in God's light. The nearer we get to Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, the more we feel this light and heat. "They shall run, and not be weary." Progress is made. Elasticity of heart is felt. We renew the youth of our souls. "They shall walk, and not faint." For we cannot always be in the enjoyment of swift progress. We have hills to climb and waters to ford, and what we call the commonplaces of life to attend to. Still, there is room for heroism here, and for gracious communion with God and contentment with his will. To walk and not faint is sometimes more difficult than to run and not be weary.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Pardon and penalty.* Israel is to be comforted by her teachers and pastors, because the time of her exile, which is the period of the Divine sentence, has nearly expired, and the hour of her redemption is consequently nigh. If we ask what ground of comfort we find here for the Christian Church, or for the chastened human soul, we have to reply—

I. THAT COMFORT IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE SUPPOSED LENIENCY OF GOD. No thought can be more perilously false than the imagination that God is too great to concern himself with our misdeeds, or too "good" to take offence with our shortcomings. Scripture, providence, and a sound philosophy alike protest against that

ruinous doctrine. Sin is clearly a most serious thing, a heinous and terrible departure in the sight of God. Let no man comfort his soul with the hope that "le bon Dieu" will overlook his life of impiety or his various acts of iniquity. God does, indeed, pardon sin on man's penitence and faith; but even then pardon does not absolutely exclude penalty. We may not press into our service here the word "pardoned" (ver. 2), as it may perhaps there signify *expiated;* but elsewhere the redemption of Israel is treated as an act of *Divine mercy.* Yet here we have judgment and mercy blended. The guilty nation is not to be restored until "her warfare" (the time of her service) has been "accomplished," until she has received at the Lord's hand "double" (full and ample chastisement) for all her sins. And the fact is, as we find in our daily experience, that when God now pardons and restores, he lets his reconciled children feel the effects of their past folly and sin. The consequences of a vicious youth go far on into even *Christian* manhood. The penalties of an unwise and irreverent fatherhood follow the parent to the very foot of the grave. God's mercy does not immediately arrest the tide of suffering and sorrow which flows from a long course of wrong-doing. The man "bears his penalty until his warfare" (his time of servitude) "is accomplished;" and that is often a long time, covering many years, extending over whole periods of human life.

II. THAT COMFORT IS TO BE FOUND IN THE FACT OF A REAL RESTORATION to the love and favour of God. In a very true sense, when a man repents and seeks the Divine mercy in Christ Jesus, he is one of God's "people" (ver. 1); God is *his* God, as he was not before (ver. 1). And the ills that he now suffers lose their stern aspect; penalty becomes discipline—it is no longer the sentence of the Judge, it is the correction of the Father.

III. THAT COMFORT IS TO BE FOUND IN THE RELEASE OF DEATH and the freedom of the heavenly country. When the end of life's hard service comes, and the note of the soul's return shall be sounded, then shall there be a glorious deliverance from evil, and entrance on the highest good.—C.

Vers. 3—6.—*Human preparation for the Divine advent.* We shall find, with very little seeking, a threefold application for these words: (1) a primary one in the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem; (2) an historical and human one in the advent of our Lord and the founding of his kingdom; (3) a future one in the restoration of the race to the likeness and the favour of God. The keystone of the passage we find in the fifth verse; it is the idea of the manifestation of God's glory, which all mankind is to witness. We have, then—

I. THE MANIFESTED GLORY OF GOD. This was to be displayed and has been shown in two illustrations which are now historical. 1. The faithfulness and the power of Jehovah in the accomplishment of his people's redemption from exile. 2. A more striking instance of Divine faithfulness, wisdom, and power, in the giving of the gospel of his grace, in preparing the nations of the earth for its reception, in its actual initiation and inauguration, and in its early and widespread diffusion among men.

II. THE GLORY WHICH WAITS TO BE REVEALED. Christ has come, and we celebrate his advent with joy and gratitude. But it is also and equally true that *he is coming* He is still "the Coming One." Across the arid wastes of indifference, and over mountains of opposition and gulfs of apparent impossibility, he is coming, and in time we shall see him—the present, reigning, triumphant Lord. It is a glorious *spiritual* advance he is to make, and presence he is to confer, and power he is to exert; but it will be none the less glorious or gracious for its spirituality. That, indeed, will immeasurably enhance its worth, for it will be the grander, the truer, the more lasting achievement.

III. THE STRENGTH OF OUR ASSURANCE CONCERNING IT. "All flesh *shall* see it: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." There may be many indications that Jesus Christ will one day secure a glorious victory over the disbelief, the vice, the superstition, the selfishness, the indifference of the world; but the strongest assurance we can take to our striving, yearning, sometimes wondering and doubting hearts is that "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it:" "I, if I be lifted up," etc.

IV. OUR CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS ITS COMING. "Prepare ye the way," etc.; "make straight a highway," etc. The Christian Church has to ask itself the urgent, practical

question, what it can do to quicken the coming of its Lord in his redeeming and regenerating power. And it may find its answer here. 1. Fill up the gulfs of unbelief; let not lack of faith on the part of Christian men hinder the putting forth of Divine power (Matt. xiii. 58). 2. Remove the hills of inconsistency; let not profession and exhortation be neutralized by immoralities in life, by wide departures from the will and Word of God. 3. Take up the stones of blemish; make a patient effort to cast aside lesser evils which, if not serious obstacles, do yet trouble and impede. 4. Lay down a highway by prayer and zeal.—C.

Vers 6—8.—*The passing and the abiding.* We are so little affected by that with which we are most familiar, that we need to hear a voice crying in our ear and reminding us of what we well know to be true. To nothing is this more applicable than the transitory nature of our human life and our earthly interests. We want to be told—

I. THAT HUMAN LIFE IS CONTINUALLY PASSING. We do well to walk in the city of the dead, and let the gravestones, with their names and dates, speak to us with simple eloquence of the passage of human life. We are wise when we take some measures to recall to our thought and write on the tablet of our souls the fact which care and pleasure are so industriously trying to conceal, that, when a few more years have come and gone, we shall be numbered with the dead, and that the objects and the incidents which are everything to us now will be nothing to us soon. It is a real gain to us, in wisdom, to be reminded that we are but passengers to the unseen world, and that every step we take leaves us less of the journey to be pursued. Human life is like a flower of the field, a little while ascending to its perfection, and then a little while descending to its doom.

II. THAT ITS EXCELLENCY RAPIDLY DISAPPEARS. "All the goodliness" of human life disappears still more quickly than life itself. The most exquisite things are the most evanescent; the fairest are the frailest. The beauty, the strength, the glory of human life,—these last but a very little while; they appear above the surface and put forth their blossom; then comes the killing frost, and they perish.

III. THAT THE TRUTH OF GOD IS EVERLASTING. 1. *Enlightening* truth. All that he has told us of himself and of ourselves, of our nature, character, destiny, way of return, etc. 2. *Commanding and inviting* truth. He still says imperatively, "Return unto me;" invitingly, "Come unto me." 3. *Comforting* truth. It will never cease to be a sustaining and mitigating fact that "God is our Refuge and Strength," that he chastens us, not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be made "partakers of his holiness." 4. *Warning* truth. It is as certain now, as it was in the earliest era, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." 5. *Hope-giving* truth. From generation to generation it shall be, as it has been, declared that "whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life."—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*God: his presence, power, and grace.* Such good tidings are to be brought to Zion that the language used is that of exultation; the messenger is to stand upon a high mountain, to lift up his voice with strength, to proclaim so that every one, far and near, shall hear. The message to be delivered is the presence of Jehovah, his everlasting power, his grace in bringing a large reward in his bountiful hand. The primary reference is obvious (see previous homilies); the secondary one is to Messiah's kingdom, and the glory which is yet to be revealed. The most striking applications are to—

I. GOD'S PRESENCE IN JESUS CHRIST HIS SON. Then, when "God was manifest in the flesh," when "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," the "Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his Person," might these words be most appropriately used, "Behold your God." Then One was present who (1) while he had in his nature and his character all Divine attributes (Divine knowledge, power, truth, purity, love, etc.), (2) was visible to the human eye, audible to the human ear, accessible to the human race; then he that was "above all" was "with us" all, the Immanuel.

II. GOD'S POWER IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. No doubt it seemed to the Jews a very glorious illustration of Divine power to overcome all the obstacles that stood in the way of their return from exile—to guide them into and

establish them in the land of their fathers. But it is an incalculably greater instance of Divine power to overcome all the hindrances in the way of a spiritual redemption of the race, and to secure that glorious issue. This is that which the ruling and overruling arm of the Almighty is now accomplishing. Well might such a work be published with farthest-reaching voice from the highest mountain! God is doing that with which no victories that human monarchs ever won will for one small moment compare. He is triumphing over the prejudices, the superstitions, the vices, the selfishness, the individual and the organized iniquities of the world; and on the ruins of sin and wrong he is rearing the mighty and majestic edifice of universal righteousness and peace.

III. GOD'S GRACE IN CONFERRING IMMORTAL GLORY. "His reward is with him." God comes to us in the gospel with a very large reward. On them who seek for honour and glory in his appointed way, he confers "eternal life;" that is to say, (1) *life of the very highest kind*—life that is spiritual and Divine, spent in his near presence and in his holy service; and (2) *life that never fails, but evermore enlarges*—life that does not, as does our mortal existence, ascend and then descend till the end is reached, but that continually and eternally ascends, enlarging and expanding as the centuries pass away. Well is it for these, and wise is it of them, to rejoice in his manifested presence, to take a sympathetic and active share in the outworking of his great accomplishment, to have for their chief hope a share in that heavenly heritage.—C.

Ver. 11.—"*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Of no one can these words be used with such exquisite appropriateness as of that "great Shepherd," that "good Shepherd" of the sheep, whom we call Lord and Master. They express—

I. HIS PRACTICAL KINDNESS. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." He will be to them, in all kindly service, what the shepherd is to his sheep. 1. He provides with all-nourishing truth. 2. He leads in the paths of righteousness. 3. He defends from spiritual perils.

II. HIS TENDERNESS. "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." He is tender in his treatment of: 1. *The young.* They may well sing, "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me," etc. He who so graciously received the little children, who took them up in his arms and blessed them (Mark x.) will regard with truest tenderness the children of his people now. 2. *The sick and suffering.* As tenderly as the pitiful mother waits upon her sick child, will he sympathize with those of his disciples who are afflicted in body. 3. *The sorrowful.* He is the "High Priest touched with a feeling of our infirmities," holding and healing with delicate hand the wounded and suffering spirit.

III. HIS CONSIDERATENESS. "And shall gently lead those that are with young." He will suit his step to the pace of those who have to fall behind. No hard iron measure has he in his hand; he requires of us only according to the strength we have. The shorter and slenderer service of the unprivileged, of the burdened, of the feeble, of the "little ones" of his flock is quite as acceptable to the considerate and patient Saviour as the longer and larger service of the privileged and the strong.—C.

Vers. 12—17.—*The greatness of God and the littleness of man.* These most eloquent words, so impressive as they stand that it seems undesirable to touch them in the way of analyzing them, may speak to us of—

I. THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF GOD. 1. *His Divine majesty.* All that is most vast and powerful in the universe—the sea, the heavens, the land, the mountains, etc.—is small and slight indeed when compared with him; his surroundings, his possessions, all bespeak his unapproachable majesty. 2. *His Divine power.* Such is his boundless strength that he can hold up the waters in the hollow of his hand, can "take up the isles as a very little thing." What cannot *he* accomplish to whom this is easy? 3. *His Divine knowledge.* Power rests on knowledge; God is able to do all things because he knows all things. He can tell what is the measure of "the dust of the earth." He cannot be taught anything by any being, for all knowledge is his already (vers. 13, 14); greatest things and least, the weight of the mountains, the number of the grains of dust, etc., are known to him. 4. *His Divine wisdom.* "Who hath taught him in the path of judgment?" (ver. 14). Perfect wisdom, the secret of right action, of the direction of

greatest affairs, of prevision and provision, of ruling and overruling, is at his command. His wisdom is incapable of increase; it is absolutely complete.

II. HUMAN LITTLENESS. "The nations are as a drop of a bucket" (ver. 15). We note, as corresponding with God's greatness: 1. *Our insignificance.* We *may* find ourselves mean and humble enough when compared with our fellow-men; most certainly we *do* when we bring ourselves, our circumstances, our authority, into comparison with him. 2. *Our impotence.* How very little can the strongest and most influential men effect! how much less those whose lives are spent in lowly spheres! 3. *Our ignorance.* We want men to direct our spirit, to counsel us, to teach us knowledge. There are few men from whom we have not something to learn. We need to be acquiring knowledge, not in the time specially devoted to study, but all day long and all life through. 4. *Our foolishness.* We do not know how to conduct our own affairs wisely, and are continually making larger or smaller mistakes: how much more so in our conduct of other men's affairs! Therefore we do well: (1) To retain truest and deepest reverence of spirit; filial confidence and joy in God must always be made consistent with profoundest adoration. (2) To accept without question the truth he has revealed to us in his Word. (3) To trust his guidance in the direction of our lives, however dark and inexplicable some passages may seem. (4) To work on cheerfully and hopefully, though a successful issue appear exceedingly remote.—C.

Vers. 16—26.—*The hopelessness and the simplicity of Divine service.* "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn," etc.; "Not one faileth." If we were asked whether it was a very difficult or a very simple thing to serve the Lord, we should say, "It is both the one and the other; everything depends upon the way and the spirit in which we proceed." We learn—

I. THAT MERE QUANTITY OF SERVICE IS VAIN AND FUTILE. "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor will [all] the beasts thereof suffice for a burnt offering," if the *acceptable element* in worship *be absent.* Great hecatombs are heathenish things; they are based on the essentially false idea that God can be enriched by human gifts—"as though he needed anything," as though, "if he were hungry, he would tell us." And all ideas as to quantity in service are erroneous. It is not by "thousands of rams or tens of thousands of rivers of oil," that he is to be placated. It is a hopeless and impossible task which so many set themselves to accomplish—to please and serve the living God by a multitude of services, of celebrations, of privations, of prayers ("much speaking"), of acts of outward benevolence. As all Lebanon with all its beasts would not be sufficient for one acceptable sacrifice, taken of itself and of themselves, so millions of Masses and multitudes of charities, and innumerable acts of service, whether good or bad in themselves, would take a man no nearer to the favour of God and the kingdom of heaven, if there were not present something apart from these things and of more intrinsic excellence than they. Without this last, service is either formal, or superstitious, or selfish; in any case it is worthless.

II. THAT THE SMALLEST SERVICE RIGHTLY RENDERED IS EFFECTUAL WITH GOD. Not one of the vast army of the heavenly hosts fails to take its place and exert its influence and do its appointed work in the vast plans of the Creator. Every smallest star gives its light, and helps to keep everything in the sidereal universe in equipoise and in orderly movement. Not *one* faileth. So may this be true in the great army of Divine worshippers and of Christian workers. With a reverent and a loving spirit, the service of God is the simplest thing in the world. 1. The ejaculation of a moment is an effectual prayer. 2. The gift of two mites is a liberal offering. 3. The cup of cold water will by no means lose its reward. 4. The simple sentence of encouragement to the tired traveller along the road of life, or of comfort to the wounded soldier in the battle of life, or of good cheer to the baffled workman in the Master's vineyard, is eloquent in the ear of the Lord of love. 5. The household duty conscientiously and devoutly discharged will be owned and blessed by him who observes and rewards the "bond and free." 6. The simplest act of magnanimity, rendered in the interchange of our homeliest relations, by which a brother, or sister, or neighbour is frankly forgiven the hard word, or the inconsiderate silence, or the unloving deed, weighs in the scales of him who was the first to say, "Love your enemies." Every soldier among the rank-and-file can serve the Divine Captain. With love in the heart there is no need of

Lebanon and its beasts for an altar or a sacrifice. Not one need fail to do, day by day, hour after hour, act after act, that which is well pleasing in the eyes of him "with whom we have to do," whose good pleasure with us is the gladness of our heart and the music of our life.—C.

Vers. 18—26.—*The degradation of the Divine.* The holy indignation of the prophet is aroused as he sees the Godhead so pitifully presented to the mind, so shamefully represented to the eyes of men. He has in view the power and majesty of the Supreme One, and places in contrast the creatures of human imagination, the fabrications of the human hand. We have the degradation of the Divine—

I. AS IT APPEARED TO THE HEBREW PROPHET. He beheld: 1. *The power and the majesty of God,* shown in (1) his immeasurable exaltation above all his creatures (ver. 22); (2) the perfect ease with which he formed the most wonderful objects in creation (ver. 22); (3) the absolute control he exercises over the mightiest of the children of men (vers. 23, 24); (4) the knowledge and wisdom he displays in ordering the physical universe (ver. 26). 2. *The utter folly of the heathen* in their way of presenting Deity to their minds; attempting to fashion an image which should bear a resemblance to the Lord (vers. 18—20), as if anything that the hand of man can fashion could bear the smallest resemblance to, or be in any way fitted to suggest the idea of, the Majesty of heaven; the practical and the common issue of such idolatry being the actual acceptance of the graven image as constituting the very object of worship. We may regard the degradation of the Divine—

II. AS IT APPEARS TO US IN OUR OWN TIME. 1. We have *the true thought of God,* as revealed to us by Jesus Christ—that of a Divine Father conferring on us our being and our powers, visiting us with constant loving-kindnesses, divinely interested in our highest well-being, interposing to restore us to his love and his likeness, giving his own Son to redeem us and his own Spirit to renew us, disciplining us with fatherly care, and rejoicing in our filial affection and obedience with parental joy. 2. We have *the degraded thought of God* which men still entertain. (1) The fetish of the heathen world: a being, ordinarily represented by an idol, whose malignant hostility is deprecated and averted by gifts and self-inflicted penalties. (2) The fiction of the philosopher: an impersonal power, an abstraction or generalization, an ideal humanity, etc.—something in which a few trained intellects may rest, but which no human heart can trust or love, and no human soul strive to resemble. (3) The god of the ungodly: a being accepted by the mind but banished by the heart, unrecognized by the conscience, neglected in the life. This last is the guiltiest degradation of the Divine; for "*this* is the condemnation, that light is come," etc., and "He that knoweth his Lord's will and doeth it not shall be beaten with many stripes."—C.

Ver. 26.—*The distinguishing love of God.* "He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power." The infinitude of God is no argument at all against his observance of the individual and the minute; rightly regarded, it is a strong inference in favour of it. Because he is infinite in wisdom he compasses all that is most vast and extensive; and *for the same reason,* "by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power"—he has a perfect mastery over all the particulars of his creation. He not only summons the mighty armies of the skies and marshals the whole host of heaven, but he is familiar with each separate star: "He calleth them all by names." This individual attention applies to: 1. The inanimate creation (text). 2. The sentient, unintelligent creation: "Not a sparrow falls to the ground," etc.; and this fact constitutes a strong reason for forbearing from cruelty towards every living creature, and for treating all the members of the animal world with constant kindness. 3. The whole human world. Even if this doctrine were not true in other realms, it certainly must be in this. As we could not think and feel as we wish to do of the human father who failed to distinguish his children from each other, so also could we not reverence and love the heavenly Father if he failed to distinguish us. But he does not fail; "he calls us all by names;" he is the true and good Shepherd, who "calls his own sheep by name." Each one of us is: (1) The object of *his Divine thought and care.* Every child of man can say, "The Lord thinketh *on me.*" (2) The object of *his parental yearning.* Away in the far country, each prodigal may be sure that there is a wronged, waiting,

expectant Father, who is grieved concerning him, and who earnestly remembers him still. (3) The object of his *redeeming and self-sacrificing love.* "He loved me, and gave himself for me," we can all say, after the apostle. (4) The object of *his disciplinary dealing.* "Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son," etc. (5) The object of *his desire that we should share his work and his glory.* To each of his disciples he says, "Follow thou me;" "Go [thou], and work in my vineyard."—C.

Vers. 27, 28.—*The impiety of impatience.* God rebukes Israel for its impatience under trial. It ought to have "remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High;" it ought to have considered that its Divine Sovereign was one whose faithfulness did not depend on a few passing years, that the action or the inaction of "the everlasting God" was not open to the criticism which condemns the short-lived policy of frail and dying men. The rebuke is full of practical truth applicable to ourselves.

I. OUR DISPOSITION TO DOUBT THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Whatever our creed may be, and however unexceptionable our views as to the attributes and actions of God, we find ourselves strongly tempted to indulge the fretful, distrustful spirit shown by the children of Israel; we are apt to think that God has "forgotten to be gracious" to us, that he has "passed us by," that our wrongs and sufferings are disregarded by him just as if they were actually hidden from his eyes. This, whether we are suffering from, (1) *continued persecution,* inflicted by a political power or by individual men; or (2) *protracted difficulties,* social, or domestic, or financial, from which we have been anxiously striving to escape, but from which there seems no way of extrication; or (3) *unrelieved illness*—pain, weakness, disease, decay, unrelieved either by recovery or wished-for death; or (4) *unsuccessful seeking* after God, after the peace and joy of his salvation, after the blessedness of conscious friendship with Jesus Christ; or (5) *unprofitable labour* in the field of Christian work.

II. THE IMPIETY OF SUCH COMPLAINT. It arises, not from a pardonable ignorance, but from a culpable forgetfulness, an inexcusable disregard of the nature of the God whom we serve. We ought to remember: 1. That God does not measure time by our chronometry; with the "everlasting God" one day is as a thousand years, etc. He is not slack as we count slackness; length and shortness of time are not the same thing to him that they are to us. 2. That it is impossible for him to be unmindful of our necessities or our sorrows. He "faints not, neither is weary." What might possibly prove troublesome to men will not be wearisome to God. He does not withdraw his notice of his children's needs for one small moment. 3. That we cannot enter into his reasons for delay or his methods of interposition. "There is no searching of his understanding." For anything we know, an earlier interposition even by a single day would be a precipitancy that would do us harm; and for anything we can tell, God may have already started means of deliverance whose ultimate outworking will realize our hearts' desire. Wherefore let us banish dissatisfaction and distrust as ungodly, and cultivate a devout trust in the Lord, who will make good the kindest word "on which he has caused us to hope."—C.

Vers. 29—31.—*The need and the gift of spiritual power.* What Israel wanted in captivity the Church of Christ now needs in its present situation, surrounded by an unsympathizing or even hostile world. It lacks *power* to do that which it was created to accomplish. Potentially, it has within itself all that is required to complete the great work of regeneration which its Divine Master began; in simple fact and in sad reality, it has failed to discharge its function. Every Church should be a great power for good in the country, in the neighbourhood in which it is planted; every Christian man should be a real power for piety and virtue in the circle in which he moves. We ought to have power to "witness a good profession for Jesus Christ," power to live an elevating, influential life, power to execute a useful and abiding work for our Lord. Can we say that this is the case with our Churches, with ourselves? Must we not regretfully admit that it is not so? We note—

I. THE PREVALENCE OF HUMAN WEAKNESS. Probably the "faint, and those who had no might," among the exiled Israelites were the dispirited, the dissatisfied, the despairing—those who had lost hope in God and had no expectation of ever seeing again the land of their fathers. So with the Israel of God; the faint and the weak include:

1. *Joyless souls*, who have no gladness in God, and no happiness in his service, who walk even in the "path of life" with no brightness in their countenance and no elasticity in their step. But they include also: 2. *Half-hearted souls*, whose devotedness to Christ is seriously defective, who cannot say, "With my whole heart have I served thee," who seem to think that a very large amount of selfishness is consistent with loyalty to the Lord, and who are often falling "out of rank" when they should be walking on in the march or actively engaged in the battle. 3. *Faint-hearted souls*, who have no courage to attempt anything for their Master and their fellow-men, and who consequently allow their life to pass on and away without achieving anything in the field of sacred usefulness. 4. *Souls open to temptation*; those who have gained such an imperfect control over themselves that they lie exposed to the gusts of temptation, and their best friends are continually solicitous lest they should dishonour themselves and the Name they bear.

II. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN STRENGTH. There were those in Israel from whom, in the natural course of things, strength, vigour, fortitude, might have been expected. But in vain: "Even the youths shall faint," etc. There are those in the Church of Christ whose physical constitution, or whose natural temperament, or whose intellectual capacity or acquisition might give them the appearance of strength; it would not be expected of them that they would become "weary," still less that they would "utterly fall." But no reliance can be placed on such natural supports, such unspiritual resources. These souls are not strong in the deeper sense in which the Church needs strength. They are subject to the inroads of pride; they are liable to fall under the assaults of passion; they are tempted to withhold from God the glory which is due to his holy Name; they may do nothing to commend the Divine Saviour himself and his glorious gospel to the hearts of men; and, "not gathering with" Christ, they only "scatter abroad" the seeds of error and of wrong.

III. THE GIFT OF DIVINE POWER. "He giveth power . . . he increaseth strength." God has access to our human souls—direct and immediate access. He can "lay his hand upon us," and touch the secret springs of our nature, calling forth all that is best and worthiest, "strengthening us with strength in our soul." He can communicate to us so much of "the exceeding greatness of his power" that we can, through him and in him, become strong indeed; can attain to strength of: 1. *Resistance*; so that we shall be able to stand in the evil hour of temptation. 2. *Endurance*; that we can be calm, peaceful, acquiescent, even under the severest and the most lasting trials. 3. *Steadfast piety*; that we become "living epistles of Christ," etc. 4. *Sacred joy*. 5. *Faithful utterance*. 6. *Perseverance* in every good work. God gives us of the refreshing, renewing, invigorating influences of his Holy Spirit, and we run without weariness, we walk without fainting.

IV. THE CONDITION ON WHICH IT IS CONFERRED. This includes (1) a patient waiting for the exercise of God's power on our behalf; and also (2) an earnest appeal to him in believing prayer that he would fulfil his word. The truly reverent spirit will devoutly seek the Divine blessing, and confidently look for its bestowal. To expect without seeking is presumption; to seek without expecting is unbelief; to do the one and not to leave the other undone is obedience and faith in happy union.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The comfort of God's restored favour.* The question of the authorship of the latter half of Isaiah resolves itself into a discussion of its claim to be prophetical. If it is descriptive, it must have been written by some "great unknown." If it is prophetical, and a vision of historical events covering long centuries, but grouped for effective representation, then it may have been written by Isaiah, and it fittingly completes a work which, revealing Divine judgments, also reveals "mercy rejoicing over judgment." Isaiah seems to be among the wearied, burdened, disheartened exiles in Babylon, towards the close of the Captivity. They are "hanging their harps on the willows," and refusing to sing. They have waited so long, that it seems quite plain "God has forgotten to be gracious." To them Isaiah has a message from God. He is to "comfort them;" and this is to be the comforting—God's time of judgment is almost over, God's restoring mercies are close at hand. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). "Having, in ch. xxxix. 6, 7, predicted the Captivity, Isaiah, with a view to console his nation, delivers the prophetic discoveries which, in

perspective vision, he obtained of the remarkable interposition of Divine providence for their deliverance." We notice that the comfortable and comforting message is to give assurance of three things.

I. WARFARE ENDED. The warfare meant is that struggle to bear and keep heart which had been so trying all through the long years of captivity. Or it may mean God's warfare with their idolatry and iniquity, the Captivity being regarded as God's fighting with the national sins, in order to destroy them and root them out. There can be no comfort, no rest, for us until sin is resisted and mastered. Heaven is only a rest-time, because, then and there, the people are all holy. We must keep the warfare so long as we keep the sin. The discipline will be ended, the pressure of our military service, only when the victory of righteousness is won.

II. GUILT PAID OFF. This seems to be the idea of the original, which we have as, "her iniquity is pardoned." Reference is rather to the penalty of iniquity being effectively removed. There can be no comfort while we are compelled to look this way and that, asking, "Where shall iniquity be laid?" On Israel it lay as a burden of so many years of national humiliation and captivity. To us the mystery of the "Sin-bearer" has been revealed; and we know that God has "laid on him the iniquity of us all." This knowledge is comfort indeed.

III. FAVOUR AT THE DOUBLE. The sentence is variously explained. Some refer it to the sufficiency of the sufferings endured. Others think it suggests abundance of restored grace and favour. Treated meditatively, we may take the "double" to suggest the temporal restorations under Cyrus and the spiritual restoration under Messiah. When God restores, he does it in such a gracious, full, superabounding way, as to be an infinite consolation and joy to us. The comfort unspeakable is God's restored smile. —R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Needed preparations for Christ.* "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord." The figure used by the prophet is one whose force could only be fully apprehended in that country to which he belonged. Until recent years there were no roads, at least no roads on which vehicles might be drawn; only such paths, often very rough, and steep, and dangerous, as would be made by the passing to and fro of cattle and of men. But a few years ago, when Ibrahim Pasha proposed to visit certain places in Lebanon, the emirs and skeikhs sent forth messengers to all the people on the way the pasha was coming, with a proclamation very similar to this of Isaiah, commanding them that they should gather out the stones, make straight the crooked places, level the rough places, and so prepare the way for his grand cavalcade to march through. Applying this figure to Messianic times, we note that the world wanted Christ, but it was not prepared for him when he came; and it is still true of many human hearts—they do really want Christ, but they are not prepared for him in his spiritual comings.

I. THE WORLD WANTED CHRIST. There is no word which so exactly describes the condition of the world when Christ appeared as the term *darkness*. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." When God created man, or, let us say, set him forth as the Head of his creation, he put light within him, and was light unto him. But when man sinned by exalting self-will, God took his light away, and left humanity to work out the problem of life in the power of its own self-will. That problem may be stated thus: Man is satisfied with himself, with the light that is in him: then can he find his own way to God and righteousness? Can he answer for himself this question, "How shall man be just with God?" You cannot understand the history of Israel, or of the ancient world, save in the light which this representation throws upon them. Each nation took its own way in trying to solve the problem. Egyptians, and Persians, and Syrians, and Grecians, and Romans, all were working at it. But man, by himself, has always failed to discover any satisfactory solution. The light he had faded. Twilight passed into night; night grew blacker and darker; the stars were hidden by low overhanging clouds; and it was the gloom of moral midnight over all the earth when Messiah came. But the heathen, in their debasing idolatries, were conscious of bondage, and looked for a Deliverer. The Jews, though corrupted with formalism, held passionately to their hope of Messiah. The sins of the world wanted Christ. The woes of the world wanted Christ. The minds and hearts of men wanted Christ, though they could not put into shape of words their inarticulate longings. Humanity had its

watchmen at every point of advantage, and again and again the question was eagerly asked, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" It is interesting to notice that, whilst Christ was a babe, and as yet no shame had gathered about him, all humanity offered homage to him by its representatives, and bade him welcome to the world that so greatly needed him. Shepherds, representing the whole Jewish people, followed the angelic sign, and welcomed the Messiah-Child. Eastern Magi, star-directed, representing the whole heathen world, offered him their gold and frankincense and myrrh. And Simeon and Anna, representing the spiritual, the religious classes, hailed him with the joy of believing and loving hearts.

II. THE WORLD WAS NOT READY FOR CHRIST. They had made no room for him. The inn was full. He must find a place for himself, where he could—some strange place, out in the stable, in the manger. And there was no better room for him in men's hearts. Only let the story of his life unfold a little. Only let his hands begin to do deeds of charity; only let his lips speak words of spiritual conviction; only let him point out the follies and sins of the age; only let him show that his mission was to the poor, the sorrowing, and the sinning; only let the purity of his perfect life, like a Divine light, reveal the corruption of his times;—and then he is the "despised and rejected of men;" then they hurry him forth out of the synagogue to throw him over the hanging rock; then they lead him forth, bearing his cross, and crucify him between two thieves. How is this? Why does the world want Christ, and yet, when he comes, he finds men so unprepared that they reject instead of receive him? The answer is a very simple one, but a very painful one. Men get to love sin for its own sake. They dislike, indeed, the penalties attached to it; they tremble at the consequences of it; but they love the sin and cherish it. They would gladly enough have welcomed a Saviour who would break off those chains of bondage to Rome, which had been fixed on them as a judgment for their national sins; but they did not want to part with their national pride and exclusiveness. They would gladly have welcomed a Christ who could burn up the great book of death, which so surely treasured up for them "wrath against the day of wrath;" but they did not want to give up the sins that led to spiritual death—the hypocrisy, the sensuality, the multiplied forms of moral evil, which they loved and sought. Therefore who can wonder that, when Christ came as a Saviour from *sin*, men were not prepared for him—men refused such a Christ? It is evident that the world, in its unpreparedness, needed the intense, arousing, almost terrible, preaching of John the Baptist. The work given to John was to try and alter the views of men in respect of Messiah. He preached "Repent;" change your minds; get another view of sin; see the essential evil and hatefulness of it. To all who came he spoke directly and plainly of the particular sins they loved; he demanded the giving up and putting away of individual and social sins as the necessary preparation for Messiah's coming. This, then, is the one wrong thing—sin loved for its own sake. This was the mountain that must be levelled, this the crooked place that must be made straight, this the rough place that must be made plain, before the glory of the Saviour from sin "could be revealed, and all flesh see the salvation of our God."

III. WHAT WAS TRUE OF THE WORLD IS TRUE OF US. Our souls want Christ. It is sad, indeed, to be sinners, living without God, and without hope in the world. We have often felt that all was not right with us; dark shadows hung all around us, and all before us. We have looked and longed for the light. When we have thought of God and sin and the future we have cried out, "Oh that I knew where I could find him! I would come even unto his seat." Sin in us wants Christ the Saviour. Conscious separateness from God wants Christ the Reconciler. Ignorance wants Christ the Teacher. And Christ wants us. Then why is the old fact of the time of his first coming repeated among us to-day? They wanted him, but were offended at him, and cast him out; cruel hands smote him, fierce nails pierced him, scorn howled around him, and a violent death freed him from a world that was not prepared to greet him. The reason for our rejecting him is the same as theirs. We, too, are unwilling to give up our sins for Christ. We want a Saviour from punishment, from consequences, from fears, from death, from hell; but not a Saviour from *sin*, from self-confidence, from pride, from independence of God, from our rebelliousness, our lustings, and our self-indulgences. We want a Saviour who will give us a secure title to future bliss; but not one who will take the stony heart away, and give us a heart of flesh; not a Saviour

who can deliver us from the very love of sinning, and "create in us a clean heart." Is, then, your path full of the stones, the crooked ways, the rough places, of loved sins? remember that Christ is a Saviour *from sin*. He is named Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins. He will not save you at all unless you are heartily willing that he should save you from your evil self, from your loved iniquities.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Christ, as the Lord's Glory.* The glory of God is his forgiving and redeeming. And it is *this* glory that was dimly revealed in the raising up of Cyrus to deliver Israel from the bondage of Babylon, and brightly revealed in "raising up his Son Jesus, to bless men, by turning them from their iniquities." It may be shown that God, as the great Spirit, never can be seen or known by any creature, because all creatures are put under limitations of the senses. No creature can apprehend "esseuces;" he is limited to "accidents." Nobody has seen the sun; it is the glory, the shining, the ray, of the sun that reveals it to us. So "no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ is the "Image" of God, which we can see; the "Word" of God, which we can hear; the "Glory" of God, making a holy warmth about us, which we can feel. He is "the Brightness of the Father's glory, the express Image of his Person." His revelation is made that we might know the true God, and in the knowledge find "eternal life." This view appears to be, in a very special manner, commended and enforced by the Apostle John, in his Gospel; and from this Gospel illustrations may be taken.

I. GOD REVEALED IN JOHN'S PROLOGUE. Explain the figure of the "Word," as meaning the medium, or agency, by which God communicates his thought to men's minds. It is, as it were, God translated for man's apprehension. But the "Word" is a Person, and John says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

II. GOD REVEALED AT CANA. Putting forth miraculous power to provide for man's need, Christ showed God's constant care of men, and led men's thoughts to the mystery of God that was in him, for John says, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus, . . . and manifested forth his glory."

III. GOD REVEALED AT LAZARUS'S GRAVE. Pleading with Martha, our Lord spake thus: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

IV. GOD REVEALED IN THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN. In a moment of sore trouble, Jesus exclaimed, "Father, glorify thy Name;" as if he felt that his supreme work was to show the Father forth. "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John xii. 28).

V. GOD REVEALED AT THE SUPPER-TABLE. When Judas left the table, and the beginning of the end had evidently come, Jesus said, in a meditative, but most revealing way, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John xiii. 31; see also John xiv. 13).

VI. GOD REVEALED IN THE HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER. This is our Lord's supreme desire: "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." And this is his sublimest thought, as he looks back over his brief life: "I have glorified thee on the earth." Christ is the Glory that reveals God for us, "who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that our faith and hope might be in God."—R. T.

Vers. 6—8.—*The transitory and the permanent.* This passage is brought to our minds, in the early summer-time, by the sight and the smell of the fields. One day they shine with the glory of the golden flowers, and, in a little while, the flowers are fallen, the grass is withered, and we are freshly impressed with the mutability of all earthly things. Man changes; God is the "same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Man removes; God abides, and his dwelling-place is as the everlasting hills. Man dies; God lives for ever and ever. From changing, passing, transitory earth, we may look upward to God, saying, "He liveth, and blessed be my Rock." Of this double truth our text is one of the most poetic and eloquent expressions. The figure is sufficiently impressive to us, who see the swathes lying in the path of the mower; but it is full of force and suggestion in the East, where sudden blasts of scorching wind

burn up the vegetation in an hour, and change freshness and flowers into barrenness and death. The Word of God endures for ever. It cannot be likened to anything on which rests the earthly stamp. It is not even like the giant trees, which grow on while the grass and the flowers of a hundred passing summers flourish and fade beneath them; for at last even the trees fail to respond to the wakening spring-breath, and the great trunks crumble down to dust, and pass away. It is not even like the mighty hills, which, towering high over us, seem to have their foundations in the very centre of the earth, and to outlast the generations; for they too are wearing down, and shall one day change and pass. It is not like the vast firmament, which keeps, through summer and winter, its broad expanse of blue, though clouds all blackness and clouds silver-tinged sweep in ever-varying shapes across it; for at last even "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

I. THE TRANSITORINESS OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS. All nature echoes the message of the grass. The winter snow falls lightly, and lies in its white purity—mystic, wonderful—over all the land; but too soon it soils, and browns, and sinks, and passes all away. The spring flowers that come, responsive to the low sunshine and the gentle breath, are so fragile, they stay with us only such a little while, and then they pass away. The summer blossoms multiply and stand thick over the ground, and they seem strong, with their deep rich colouring; and yet they too wither and droop and pass away. The autumn fruits cluster on the tree branches, and grow big, and win their soft rich bloom of ripeness; but they too are plucked in due season, and pass away. The gay dress of varied leafage is soon stripped off with the wild winds; one or two trembling leaves cling long to the outmost boughs; but, by-and-by, even they fall and pass away. Down every channel of the hillsides are borne the crumblings washed from the everlasting hills, as we call them, that yet are passing away. And *man*—does he differ from the things in the midst of which he is set? Nay; he is but flesh. "He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." It is even true of man's *work*. All the glory, all the goodliness, of man's genius and enterprise and effort—it is all as the "flower of the field." Man's strength, and wisdom, and riches, and learning, and beauty, and science, and art, all are subject to decay; the "moth and the rust eat into them, and the thief steals them away." It is even true of the very *forms and modes* in which one man strives to bless and help another. The forms are not the principal things; they are but the temporary human stamp; and God may remove or change them to make us feel our entire dependence on him.

II. THE PERMANENCE OF ALL DIVINE THINGS. More especially of all Divine revelations and declarations, for these are properly gathered up in the term, the "Word of God." Everything that speaks to our souls of God is a revelation to us. It may be a touch of nature. It may be only a pure white flower. It may be the pale gold and green of a late sunset. It may be the snowy crest of an Alpine mountain, lying soft and pure against the summer's deep blue sky. It may be the weird mist of the gloaming creeping over the landscape. It may be the glimpse "down some woodland vale, of the many-twinkling sea." It may be the thunder-voice of God echoing among the hills, or it may be the voice of some fellow-man, translating into human words for us the mysteries of Divine truth and love revealed to him for our sakes. Howsoever the Word of God may come into our souls, it is true for ever. All things that our souls hear and feel and know are Divine, are permanent, eternal things. When God speaks to our souls by his *providence*, the message is permanent. The revelation of *redemption* is permanent. Everything that pleads in us for *duty* is eternal, because it bears on the culture of character. All God's *comfortings* abide with us. And when God kindles hope, it is hope that cannot disappoint, that will never make ashamed. In Dr. Bushnell's life is the following passage, found pencilled by him on a stray sheet of paper. Referring to the time of his infancy, when he "came out in this rough battle with winds, winters, and wickedness," he says, "My God and my good mother both heard the cry, and went to the task of strengthening me, and comforting me together, and were able ere long to get a smile upon my face. . . . Long years ago she vanished; but God stays by me still, embraces me in my grey hairs as tenderly and carefully as she did in my infancy, and gives to me, as my joy and the principal glory of my life, that he lets me know him, and helps me with real confidence to call him my Father."—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*God, in Christ, shepherding,* or doing shepherd's work. Here also the first glance seems to be at Cyrus, who, in ch. xliv. 28, is called God's shepherd; but the after-glance rests on him who could say, "I am the good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "The change in the fortunes of the Jews is compared by the prophet to a shepherd's seeking his lost sheep, and feeding them again in green pastures" (comp. Jer. xxxi. 10; l. 19; Ezek. xxxiv. 11—16). No doubt the figure in the prophet's mind was that of a flock taken such a long and wearying journey as that from Babylon to Canaan, emblem of the pilgrim-path along which the good Shepherd leads the flock of his Church. The important distinctions between Eastern and Western shepherding should be carefully pointed out. Eastern associations alone provide effective figures. Van Lennep says, "One of the pleasantest sights to be witnessed under the clear and brilliant sky of Western Asia is a flock of snow-white sheep scattered over the surface of a fine green meadow; the lambs skipping and gamboling in frolic; the shepherd sitting on the soft turf, playing with his flute, and his shaggy dog by his side, keeping watch in all directions." An Eastern traveller tells of seeing precisely what Isaiah so poetically describes. "One shepherd led his flock, by a zigzag path, up the almost perpendicular bank of the glen. Behind it two young lambs trotted gaily along at the feet of their mother. At first they frisked about, and jumped lightly from stone to stone; but soon they began to fall behind. The poor little things cried piteously when the path became steeper and the rocks higher, and the flock more and more distant. The mother cried too, running back and forth—now lingering behind, now hasting on before, as if to wile them upwards. It was in vain. The ascent was too much for their feeble limbs. They stopped trembling on the shelving cliff, and cried; the mother stopped and cried by their side. I thought they would certainly be lost; and I saw the great eagles that soared in circles round the cliffs far overhead, sweeping lower and lower, as if about to pounce upon their prey. But no! The plaintive cries of distress had already reached the ear of the good shepherd. Mounting a rock, he looked down, and saw the helpless little ones. A minute more, and he was standing by them. Then taking them up in his arms, he put them—one on each side—in his bosom, in the ample folds of his coat, which was bound round the waist by a girdle." Christ's care of his flock includes—

I. RULE. This is the proper idea of "feeding" them. In the East feeding involves daily guiding the flock to its pastures and watering. So it includes the entire control and direction of daily life. Sheep are the most helpless of creatures, and wholly dependent on the wisdom and kindness of the shepherd. "His arm rules for him." He restrains the wayward, corrects the erring, guides and provides for all. And we are as helpless as sheep, and as truly need to be ruled and provided for. From this we may unfold the authority of the Lord Jesus, and his direct control of our life and ways. Happy the flock that is willing to follow the good Shepherd's lead!

II. GENTLE CONSIDERATENESS. Daniel Quorm is made by the Rev. M. Guy Pearse to express this very quaintly and cleverly. "'But that be not all, though it be a good deal,' Dan'el went on again. 'He carries them in his bosom—in his *bosom*. You know the man who had a hundred sheep, and lost one of them, went after it, and laid it on his shoulders—on his shoulders. When an old sheep goes astray—one of us old 'uns—the good Shepherd has his watch-dog to fetch us back again. He sends a snappish sorrow to bite us, or a sharp-toothed loss to shake us up a bit, and to drive us out of the ditch into which we had wandered. And the shepherd lays the runaway on his shoulders. It wasn't a very comfortable position, held on by the legs, with his head danglin' down. That be the way the Lord carries old sheep when we go astray But the lambs he carries *in his bosom*. The shoulder is not for them, but the bosom There they lie, with his arms folded about them—there, where his kind eye can keep its glance upon them. In his bosom, where they can feel the great full heart beatin' in its love, where he can hear the first mutter o' their fear, and they can catch the gentlest whisper of his lovin' care. He carries the lambs in his bosom. Keep close to him—lie down in his arms, an' you're safe enough.'" Of this we may be quite sure, Christ takes particular care of those that most need it; of lambs, those that cannot help themselves—young children, young converts, weak believers, sorrowful spirits.

III. SELF-DENYING HELPFULNESS. We must never think that the wise, gracious, faithful shepherding of Jesus costs him no pain, no anxiety, no self-sacrifice. This is

as much the suggestion of the shepherd-figure as the previous ideas of rule and gentleness; but it is not so often dwelt on or realized. He who rolls over us the "tribulum" of discipline and trouble, to separate the chaff from the wheat, finds the rolling to be hard and trying work. Our Shepherd suffers in his care for the sheep, and it keeps our hearts tender to be reminded of his sufferings for us. Illustrating this, we may recall the Eastern shepherd, who, especially in the early months of the year, "has much to endure. Snow falls and frosts set in, which kill many of the lambs, although he seeks to save all he can by carrying them under his cloak, and 'in his bosom.' This period tries his own powers of endurance, for it is the rainy season. He cuts small branches of trees, and lays them in a pile, to avoid the consequences of standing in the wet. The only sleep he can secure is by lying on such a pile of branches or fagots, enveloped in his heavy cloak, or crouching in a sitting posture, with its stiff heavy folds set up over him like a tent." We often think of our good Shepherd's care, but too seldom we remember, lovingly and thankfully, how much it costs him.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Wanted, a likeness for God.* "What similitude can ye place beside him?" This and similar appeals in the later portion of Isaiah bear directly upon the idolatries with which Israel was surrounded in Babylon, and exerted a most important influence on the delivery of Israel, once and for ever, from idolatrous sentiments and sympathies. Isaiah's plea is, "How should the image-deities of idolatrous Babylon be compared to the almighty and unsearchable God of Israel?" The incomparableness and uniqueness of God are in the prophet's mind; and his plea may be compared with the argument of the Apostle Paul at Athens (Acts xvii. 29, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device"). The Babylonian gods were also the gods of Assyria, and they were, for the most part, of Accadian or pre-Semitic origin. "The Babylonian lived in perpetual dread of the evil spirits which thronged about him; almost every moment had its religious ceremony, almost every action its religious complement. In Babylon we find the remains of scarcely any great buildings except temples." During the Captivity, God's people were closely associated with a most elaborate idolatrous system, and the appeal is therefore most effective. "Look around you. Notice all the forms in which deity is represented. See all the thought-figures of God which men can fashion, and say, is there any one of them to which you can liken your God?" We may let the appeal take its widest forms.

I. CAN YOU FIND A LIKENESS FOR GOD IN HIS CREATION? His works are a revelation of himself, but no one of them is a picture of his form. They are no more like him than the machine which a man makes is like the man. The machine reveals the man, tells us of his skill, his thought, his patience. And so God's handiwork reveals the attributes of God; but if men try to find a likeness for God in the material creation, they will do, as the Egyptians did—begin with the sun and end with the slimy reptiles of the Nile-banks.

II. CAN YOU FIND A LIKENESS FOR GOD IN MAN'S CREATIONS? They may vary, from the mere upright block rudely carved to represent a face, to the splendid Jupiter fashioned by the highest genius of the Greek. Art may paint exquisitely; but no brush, no chisel, no graving tool, in civilized or uncivilized lands, ever fashioned anything worthy to be likened to God. Illustrate from the unsatisfactoriness of the best faces of the manifested God Christ Jesus; and by the painfulness of all attempts to paint God the Father.

III. CAN YOU FIND A LIKENESS FOR GOD IN MAN'S MENTAL CREATIONS? For he *thinks* figures of God, when he does not make statues. Philosophy has its conceptions, and now men say *law* is such a name as may henceforth stand for God. But the images of men's thoughts are no better than the idols of men's hands. Thus we are brought to face the question—How can God be known? The answer is this—He cannot be known *in himself*; but he can be known *in his relations to us*, and that is the knowledge wherein is "eternal life."—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*Darkness breeding doubt.* Here is a question which is full of surprise. "How, then, can Jacob and Israel be faint-hearted, or despair of their restoration, when this unmatchable, all-powerful, unwearying God is their God?" Yet there is almost an

excuse for their doubtings and depressions in their national circumstances. They had been so long in the power of their enemies, and their outlook was so utterly dark and hopeless, that they concluded they were quite overlooked by the God of their fathers. And we cannot wonder at this, for circumstances, private and national, can make darkness for us under which it is easy enough for doubts to breed. We think of some.

I. OVER-STUDY. There is a fixed limit of brain-power. We dare not go beyond it. And the usual penalty of overdoing is a darkness which nourishes depressions, needless fears, doubts, mistrusts, and even despair that inspires suicide. It is needful that we should, in these days, be warned of an insidious form of evil. Educational forcings of children make darkness brood over whole lives. Pressure in manhood, under ambitions or necessities, bring black clouds to shut the sunshine out of many a life; and much of the scepticism of our time is no more than the diseased questionings of overwrought brains. Truth only appears to quiet minds.

II. DISAPPOINTMENT. When our way is closed up, our schemes fail, or our friends prove unworthy, the darkness broods over us, and we easily say, "There is no truth or trust anywhere;" and we fling our doubtings against the very throne of God. This was the secret of the faintings of Israel. They were disappointed. Again and again great national changes raised high hopes, and again and again the darkness fell, and seemed to shut them in. Then the bitter cry arose, "God hath forgotten to be gracious."

III. A SCEPTICAL ATMOSPHERE. One man breathes out his suspicions, another his questionings; this man attacks the things most surely believed among us; and another man writes a book to shift the old foundations, and make the great Christian house tumble about our ears; and the very air is charged with an electricity of unbelief, which all must breathe, and few have spiritual health enough to resist. Such are the times in which we now live. It is easier to doubt God than to trust him.

IV. ILLNESS AND FRAILTY. The class of diseases characteristic of highly civilized times of society is precisely that which relates to the nerves, and has for its symptoms lowness of spirits, distorted vision, gloomy fears, and melancholia. Many and many a poor burdened body cries out, "God has forgotten to be gracious," and it is only a body-cry; the heart holds fast its trust. Whensoever the doubting comes, the remedy is the same: the psalmist expresses it, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*He who has power alone can give it.* "He giveth power to the faint." "The final verses of this chapter are remarkable for the frequent occurrence of 'fainteth' and 'is weary.' They come in every sentence, and if we note their use we shall get the essence of the hope and consolation which the prophet was anointed to pour into the wounds of his own people, and of every heavy-laden soul since then. Notice how, first, the prophet points to the unwearied God; and then his eyes drop from heaven to the clouded, saddened earth, where there are the faint and the weak, and the strong becoming faint, and the youths fading and becoming weak with age. Then he binds together these two opposites—the unwearied God and the fainting man—in the grand thought that he is the *giving* God, who bestows all his power on the weary. And see how, finally, he rises to the blessed conception of the wearied man becoming like the unwearied God. 'They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint'" (Maclaren).

I. A MAN MUST GIVE WHAT HE POSSESSES. He only truly enjoys it by giving it. The miser who holds is miserable. To have anything is simply blessed because we can share it, we can give it. This is more true than we think it, in all the best relations of life, even under our present depraved conditions. Ideally it is the only noble conception of life. Mothers only care for possession because it brings power to give. Thinkers only acquire truth for the joy of imparting. We are permitted to think that this is true of God. He has no joy in possession. His joy is giving. He is always spending and working; and the gift of his Son is only the sublimest instance of what he is always doing—giving away his possessions.

II. A MAN CAN ONLY GIVE WHAT HE POSSESSES. We seek out each man for the skill he possesses. This man can give us healing, that one comforting, and this one teaching. Each has his own possession, and each can help us in his own way. No one man can

do *all things* for us; and we are foolish indeed if we expect of a man what he has no power to give.

III. WHAT GOD HAS IS THE FULL, ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF ALL OUR WANTS. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." In the passage now before us the provision of God for us is gathered up into the significant word "strength." Paul's great want is also our great want—the great want of every man the world over, in whom a trace of the Divine image is left. It is *power*—"power to perform that which is good;" some spiritual force to act on our souls, and make us more than conquerors over self and sin. And that is within God's ability. To bestow it is the purpose of his good will. "Giving power to the faint" is his Divinest work. —R. T.

SECTION II. RECOVERY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD FROM THEIR SIN, AND FROM THEIR BONDAGE IN BABYLON (CH. XLI.—XLVIII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLI.

Vers. 1—7.—ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DELIVERER, AND EFFECT ON THE SURROUNDING NATIONS. Isaiah returns to the standpoint of ch. xl. 9—11. A deliverer of Israel is about to appear. The nations are therefore summoned to attend, and consider the facts (ver. 1). He will carry all before him (vers. 2, 3), being raised up by God (ver. 4). The nations will tremble, and seek the protection of their idol-deities (vers. 5—7).

Ver. 1.—**Keep silence before me, O islands.** God is the speaker. The "islands," or maritime lands of Western Asia, are to be silent before him, pondering the facts with a view to future argument. "*Then* let them speak" (see vers. 21—29). **Let the people renew their strength**; rather, *the peoples* or *the nations*; i.e. the inhabitants of the maritime tracts. **To judgment**; *i.e.* to a discussion, which shall terminate in a right verdict.

Ver. 2.—**Who raised up the righteous man**, etc.? rather, *who raised up from the East one whom righteousness will call to his foot.* It is generally agreed among moderns that the reference is to Cyrus, who is further referred to in ver. 25, in ch. xliv. 28; xlv. 1—4, 13; and xlvi. 11. Cyrus, whether we regard him as King of Persia, or as King of Elam (Susiana), would come from a land lying *east* of Babylon. "Righteousness called him to his foot" when God, the Righteous One, made him his minister, and gave him a certain task to perform (ch. xliv. 28). **Gave the nations before him**; rather, *gives*, or *will give.* (On the rapid conquests of Cyrus, see Herod., i. 75—191; and comp. 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iv. pp. 354—377.) That he was God's instrument must be admitted by all who allow that the course of history is determined by a superintending Providence. **Made him rule over kings.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "makes him trample upon kings," which seems to give the true sense. It was certainly not the general policy of Cyrus to establish under him a number of subject kings, but rather to rule the conquered countries by means of Persian or Median governors (see Herod., i. 153, 156; 'Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæol.,' vol. vii. p. 166). **He gave them as the dust to his sword**, etc.; or, according to some, *he maketh their sword as dust, and their bow as driven stubble.* The result is the same, whichever we regard as the true construction. The prophecy tells of the ease and completeness with which Cyrus vanquished his enemies.

Ver. 3.—**He pursued them, and passed safely**; rather, *he shall pursue them, and shall pass on in safety.* Even **by the way that he had not gone with his feet**; rather, *a path with his feet he shall not tread.* The meaning seems to be that he will dispense with customary paths, making his advance everywhere over all obstacles, by untrodden ways. Compare the frequent boasts of the Assyrian kings: "To the recesses of the deep forests and the peaks of the difficult mountains, *which had never been trodden by the foot of man*, I ascended" ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 13). "Difficult mountain chains, and *inaccessible hills*, which none of our kings had ever previously reached—tedious paths and *unopened roads*—I traversed" (ibid., p. 16). "The lands of Sibak, of Arda, of Ulayan, of Alluria, *inaccessible mountains, impossible for the horses, and inaccessible for myself*, I went through" (ibid., vol. vii. p. 36).

Ver. 4.—**Who hath wrought and done it?** *i.e.* "by whom has this mighty conqueror been raised up?" Can any of the idol-gods claim him as their *protégé*? Assuredly not. He is my work; I, Jehovah, that have called (into being) the generations (of man) from the beginning (of the world)—I, Jehovah, the First, and with the last, am

he that he has done this thing. By "the First, and with the last"—a favourite phrase in these later chapters (see ch. xlv. 6 and xlviii. 12)—seems to be meant simply "the Eternal" (comp. Rev. i. 8, 11, 17; ii. 8; xxi. 6; xxii. 13).

Ver. 5.—**The isles saw it, and feared.** A general terror seized the nations on the conquest of the Medes by Cyrus. Crœsus of Lydia, Nabonidus of Babylon, and Amasis of Egypt, were at once drawn together by the common danger, and made alliance offensive and defensive (Herod., i. 77). The weaker tribes and peoples gave themselves up for lost. Scarcely any resistance seems to have been offered to the Persian arms by the tribes between the Halys and Indus, the Jaxartes and the Indian Ocean. Lydia and Babylon alone made a stout fight; but even these were conquered without very much difficulty. **The ends of the earth . . . drew near**; *i.e.* distant nations held (will hold) consultation together on the danger which threatens them. The league of Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt is the only known instance of such "drawing near" (see the preceding note). Isaiah anticipates marked consultations and exhortations with respect to the idol-gods, in which trust should be put; but perhaps he is scarcely serious in vers. 6, 7. Rather he is indulging his sarcastic humour at the expense of the idols and of those who put their trust in them. (For instances, however, of actual trust in particular idols, see 'Records of the Past,' vol. iv. p. 58; Herod., v. 67; viii. 64.)

Ver. 7.—**The carpenter, etc.** (comp. ch. xl. 19, 20 for the variety of workmen employed in the production of idols). Each encourages the others to manufacture a right good god. When all is done, there is, however, need of **soldering**, and of nails, that the wretched object may be kept erect, and not show its weakness by falling, like Dagon, upon its own threshold (1 Sam. v. 4).

Vers. 8—20.—A PROMISE TO ISRAEL OF GOD'S PROTECTION AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE TROUBLOUS PERIOD THAT IS APPROACHING. Israel is assured (1) of God's faithfulness (vers. 8, 9); (2) of special divinely infused strength (ver. 10); (3) of the infusion of weakness into their enemies (vers. 11, 12); (4) of external Divine aid (vers. 13, 14); (5) of an aggressive vigour that shall enable them to scatter their foes (vers. 15, 16); and (6) of spiritual refreshment even amidst their worst sufferings (vers. 17—19). The eye of the prophet travels perhaps, in part, beyond the period of the Captivity; but he is mainly bent on giving the people grounds of comfort and trust during that trying time.

Ver. 8.—**Israel . . . my servant** (comp. ch. xliv. 1, 2, 21; xlv. 4; xlviii. 20; xlix. 3—6, etc.). The title characterizes these later chapters, and, while standing no doubt in some special relation to the "Servant of Jehovah" who is the subject of ch. xlii. 1—5; xlix. 5—7, etc., is perhaps mainly selected, and dwelt on, to console Israel in captivity, when *servants* of the King of Babylon (2 Chron. xxxvi. 20), by the thought that their true Master was God himself, and that to him, and him only, did they really belong. **Jacob whom I have chosen** (comp. ch. xliv. 1). (On this "choice," and the love which it implied, see Deut. vii. 6—8; x. 15.) **Abraham my friend**; or, *Abraham that loved me.* It was the special privilege of Abraham to be known as God's friend (see 2 Chron. xx. 7; Jas. ii. 23) among the Hebrews, even as he is among the Arabs to this day. The "friendship" intended comprised, no doubt, both an active and a passive element, but it is the active element which the word principally enforces. Abraham loved God, and showed his love by his obedience.

Ver. 9.—**Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth**; *i.e.* from Ur of the Chaldees (Mugheir in Lower Babylonia), and again from Egypt, another "end of the earth" compared with Palestine. The prophet views Palestine as Israel's true *habitat*, whatever may be its temporary abiding-place. **From the chief men thereof.** Most moderns translate "from the *corners* thereof;" but *atsilim* has the meaning of "chief men" in the only other place where it occurs (Exod. xxiv. 11). **And not cast thee away.** Not even when in exile was Israel "cast away." God's care was still extended over them.

Ver. 10.—**Fear thou not.** This verse is most closely connected with the two preceding. The clauses in vers. 8, 9 are one and all vocative; here the verb follows. The whole passage is one of great tenderness. **I am with thee** (comp. Deut. xxxi. 6, 8; and see above (vol. i., p. 132), on the force of the word "Immanuel"). **I will strengthen thee**; rather, *I have strengthened thee*, or *I have chosen thee* (Delitzsch, Cheyne). The two other verbs are also in the past tense. While primarily they declare past favours, they may also be regarded as prophetic of future ones, since "with God is no variableness."

Vers. 11, 12.—As Israel would grow strong through God's help, so her enemies would grow weak through God's disfavour. That enemies of all kinds may be seen to be included, the designation is four times varied—"they that are *angry* with thee;"

"that are *at strife* with thee;" "that are *in conflict* with thee;" "that are *at war* with thee." The order is one of climax. Similarly, with each augmentation of the hostility there is an augmentation of the sentence of punishment—"shall be covered with shame;" "shall perish;" "shall not be found;" "shall become as nothingness."

Ver. 13.—**I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand.** God himself will be their Strength, will personally interfere on their behalf, taking them as it were by their right hand. **Saying unto thee**; rather, *I who say to thee.*

Ver. 14.—**Thou worm Jacob.** Though in thyself the weakest of the weak, grovelling in the dust, a mere worm (Job xxv. 6; Ps. xxii. 6), yet thou hast no cause to fear, since God sustains thee. **Ye men of Israel**; rather, *ye handful, Israel* (Delitzsch). The term used is one of disparagement, corresponding to the "worm" of the parallel clause. Few and weak though they be, God's people need not fear. **Thy Redeemer.** The word *goêl*, here used for the first time by Isaiah, is frequent throughout the later chapters (xliii. 14; xliv. 6, 24; xlvii. 4; xlviii. 17; xlix. 7, 26; liv. 5, 8; lix. 20; lx. 16; lxiii. 16). It is used for the "nearest of kin," and "avenger of blood," in the Levitical Law, but has a sense similar to that of the present passage in Job xix. 25; Ps. xix. 14; lxxviii. 35; ciii. 4; Prov. xxiii. 11; and Jer. l. 34. The sense "redeem" belongs to the verb of which *goêl* is the participle, in Exod. vi. 6; xv. 13; Lev. xxv. 25, 33, 48, 49; xxvii. 13, 19, 21, etc. **The Holy One of Israel.** Isaiah's favourite designation of the Almighty in his covenant relationship to Israel, used eleven times in the earlier chapters (i.—xxxv.), once in the middle or historical portion, and thirteen times in the later chapters (xl.—lxvi.); only used elsewhere in Ps. lxxi. 22; lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18; Jer. l. 29; and li. 5 (see Urwick, 'Servant of Jehovah,' pp. 36, 37).

Ver. 15.—**I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument.** Israel is to be more than sustained. Strength is to be given her to take the aggressive, and to subdue her enemies under her. She is to "thresh them" and "beat them small," as with a threshing-instrument (comp. 2 Kings xiii. 7; Amos i. 3; Micah iv. 13). In the literal sense, no earlier accomplishment of this prophecy can be pointed out than the time of the Maccabean war. Metaphorically, it may be said that Israel began to conquer the world when her literature became known to the Greeks through the expedition of Alexander the Great, and completed her conquest when the Roman empire succumbed to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. **Having teeth.** Threshing-instruments of the kind described are still in use in Syria (Thomson, 'The Land and the Book,' p. 539) and Asia Minor (Fellows, 'Asia Minor,' p. 70). The corn is spread out on the ground, and the machine, which is sometimes armed with sharp stones, sometimes with saws, is dragged over it. The Arabic name is still *noreg*, a modification of the Hebrew *moreg*. **Thou shalt thresh the mountains . . . the hills**; *i.e.* "thou shalt subdue proud and mighty foes" (Delitzsch).

Vers. 17—20.—The crowning promise is that of spiritual support and refreshment through the dull and dreary time of the Captivity, during which Israel dwells as it were in a desert, without water, or shade, or the relief to the eye which is furnished by the greenery of trees and shrubs. God was able to make of this "wilderness a standing water, and water-springs of the dry ground" (Ps. cvii. 35), and he promises to do so (ver. 18). The soul that longs for him, that thirsts after him, feeling that it dwells "in a barren and dry land, where no water is" (Ps. lxiii. 1), shall be relieved and satisfied by a revelation of God's presence, and an outpouring of his grace unusually copious and abundant. God's grace is shadowed out under the two similitudes of water and verdure, as in ch. xxxv. 7, and, to some extent, in ch. xxx. 23—25.

Ver. 17.—**The poor and needy**; *i.e.* primarily, Israel in captivity; but secondarily, also, the "poor in spirit," and those that feel the need of God's grace, everywhere and at all times.

Ver. 18.—**I will open rivers in high places** (comp. ch. xxx. 25). If even the "high places" had water, much more would the low ground—the valleys—be abundantly supplied. The abundance is indicated by the fourfold designation of the water-supply, as coming from (1) rivers; (2) fountains (or wells); (3) pools; and (4) springs (comp. vers. 11, 12).

Ver. 19.—**I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, etc.** The "glory of Lebanon," the "excellency of Carmel and Sharon" (ch. xxxv. 2), shall be given to the "wilderness," wherein Israel dwells. The trees named are the choicest of Syria and Palestine, viz. the cedar (*erez*), the great glory of Libanus; the acacia (*shittah*), abundant in the Jordan valley; the myrtle (*hadas*), which grew on the hills about Jerusalem (Neh. viii. 15); the olive, cultivated over the whole country; the fir (*bĕrôsh*), or juniper, a product of Lebanon (2 Chron. ii. 8); the plane (*tidhâr*), a tree far from uncommon in Cœle-syria, sometimes growing to a great size; and the sherbin (*tĕasshûr*), a sort of cedar, remarkable for the upward tendency of its branches. The list of names shows a

writer familiar with the Palestinian region, but not familiar with Babylonia.

Ver. 20.—**That they may see**, etc. The change would be such that those who experienced it could not fail to recognize "Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel," as its Author.

Vers. 21—29.—JEHOVAH'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE NATIONS AND THEIR IDOL-GODS. The argument is now taken up from vers. 1—4. Jehovah and his worshippers are on the one side; the idol-gods and their votaries on the other. The direct challenge, however, is given by Jehovah himself to the idols: 1. What predictions of their own can they bring forward as proofs of supernatural knowledge? 2. What indications can they give of power either to do good or to do evil (vers. 22, 23)? If they can do neither, they are vanity (ver. 24). Jehovah has both reared up Cyrus—he and he only—and has announced the good tidings to his people (vers. 25—27). No such announcement has been made by the idol-gods; they are therefore mere "wind and confusion" (vers. 28, 29).

Ver. 21.—**Produce your cause.** The nations had been told to "draw near"—to "keep silence" while God spoke—and "*then* to speak" (ver. 1). Now the time for them to speak is come, and they are challenged to "produce" and plead "their cause." **Your strong reasons**; literally, *your bulwarks*, or *defences*. **Saith the King of Jacob.** The king and tutelary god of the nation, Israel, really holding the position that the idol-gods were regarded as holding towards the peoples that worshipped them. The "kingly" character of the idol-gods was indicated in such names as Moloch (equivalent to "king"), Melkarth (equivalent to "king of the city"), Adrammelech (equivalent to "glorious king"), Baal (equivalent to "lord"), Adonis (equivalent to "my lord"), etc.

Ver. 22.—**Let them . . . show us what will happen.** God claims that the power of predicting the future is his own inalienable prerogative. He defies the idol-gods and their votaries to give any clear prediction of future events. No doubt the claim to possess the power was made very generally among the idolatrous nations, who almost universally practised divination, and in many cases possessed oracles. But it was a false claim, based upon fraud and cunning, which deceived men as often as dependence was placed upon it (Herod., i. 53, 91) and landed them in misfortune. **The former things . . . things for to come.** Some commentators regard "the former things" as things actually past—"the beginnings of history, for instance, which to the heathen nations were wrapped in darkness" (Kay); but it seems better, on the whole, to understand (with Vitringa, Stier, Hahn, Cheyne, and Delitzsch) by "the former things" those in the immediate future, by "things for to come" those about to happen in remoter times. The former are, of course, much the easier to predict, since they fall to some extent within the domain of human foresight; the latter are more difficult; but the idol-gods are challenged to produce either the one or the other. **What they be.** A definite and clear statement is required to preclude such vague and ambiguous utterances as the heathen oracles delighted to put forth. **That we may consider them** (or, *lay them to heart*), **and know the latter end of them**; *i.e.* compare them with the event, when the time comes.

Ver. 23.—**Yea, do good, or do evil.** Here the proof required of the idol-gods is changed. If they cannot prophesy, can they effect anything? Can they do either good or harm? Let them show this. It is a plain "abatement" from the first demand, and therefore properly introduced by "yea" (*aph*); comp. 1 Kings viii. 27. **That we may be dismayed**; *i.e.* rather, perhaps, *that we may look to it*, or *examine it*; i.e. see if you have really shown a power of doing anything.

Ver. 24.—A pause may be supposed between vers. 23 and 24, during which the idol-gods are given the opportunity of "bringing forth their strong reasons," and, in one way or other, proving their Divinity. But they are stricken dumb; they say nothing. Accordingly, "judgment goes against them by default" (Cheyne), and Jehovah breaks out upon them with words of contempt and contumely, **Behold, ye are of nothing**, etc. "Ye are utterly vain and futile."

Ver. 25.—It remains for Jehovah to plead his own cause, to vindicate his own Divinity. He adduces, as proof of his power in action, the fact of his raising up Cyrus; as proof of his ability to predict, the fact that he has announced his coming. **One from the north . . . from the rising of the sun.** Both as a Persian, and as King of Elam, Cyrus might be considered to come from the east. In fact, however, when he attacked Babylon, he fell upon it mainly from the north. After his conquest of Astyages (Istivegu), he made Ecbatana his capital (Herod., i 153); and it was from this comparatively northern city that he directed his attack upon Nabonidus. His march lay by way of Arbela ('Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæol.,' vol. vii. p. 159) and Sippara

(ibid., p. 165), through the district called Akkad to the Chaldean capital. Herodotus agrees with the monuments in bringing him to Babylon from the north. **Shall he call upon my Name**; or, *shall he proclaim my Name*. (For the actual proclamation of Jehovah's Name by Cyrus, see Ezra i. 3; and note especially the phrase, "He [*i.e.* Jehovah] is *the* God.") Recent discoveries have raised the suspicion that Cyrus was a syncretist, who was willing to accept the chief god of any nation as identical with his own Ormuzd. But it is to be borne in mind that the document which has produced this impression is one issued by the priestly authorities of Babylon in their own language, and may have been quite unknown to the Persian court. Cyrus may have been a better Zoroastrian than he is represented by the priests of Merodach. The Zoroastrian religion was, as Delitzsch observes, "nearest to the Jewish religion of all the systems of heathenism" (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. pp. 93—117; and comp. Pusey, 'Lectures on Daniel,' pp. 530—550). **He shall come upon princes as upon mortar**; *i.e.* he shall tread them underfoot, mortar being commonly mixed with the feet, as was also clay for bricks and pottery (Herod., ii. 36). The chief "princes" whom Cyrus is known to have conquered were Astyages of Media, Crœsus of Lydia, and Nabonidus of Babylon. He was studiously mild in his treatment of royal captives, but naturally deprived them of all power.

Ver. 26.—**Who hath declared from the beginning?** Which of the idol-gods has announced the coming of a conqueror? If any, we on Jehovah's side are quite willing to acknowledge it, and to say, He is **righteous**; or rather, *he is right*. But, in fact, there is **none of them that showeth, none that declareth**—no one has heard of any such announcement as delivered by any of them.

Ver. 27.—**The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them**; rather, *the first has said*. By "the first" must certainly be meant Jehovah—"*the First*, and with the last" of ver. 4. He has already announced to Zion her deliverance (see ch. xl. 9—11; xli. 2, etc.). **I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.** Perhaps Isaiah himself (Grotius, Stier, Delitzsch). Perhaps some prophet of the Captivity, as Daniel, who "knew by books" when the Captivity was drawing to a close (Dan. ix. 2), and may be supposed to have announced the good tidings to the other exiles.

Ver. 28.—**For I beheld.** "Jehovah once more looks round to see if any of the idols possess an ability to prophesy, but in vain" (Cheyne). **He finds no counsellor**, *i.e.* no prophet, among them. Hence the final "outburst of scorn" in ver. 29, which, however, is directed primarily against the idol-worshippers, and, only through them, against the idols.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 14—20.—*God's strength made perfect in weakness.* It is when Jacob is brought so low that his only fitting designation is "thou worm," and Israel is so reduced as to be a mere "handful of men," that the promise is made of the triumphant crushing of enemies, and scattering of them "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor." It is when the nation generally feels itself to be "poor and needy" (ver. 17), when it is as it were at the last gasp, actually perishing of thirst, that it is raised to paradisaical bliss, that it finds itself in a veritable "garden of Eden." Exaltation follows abasement, not however by any mere law of alternation, as if men having reached the very bottom of the wheel of fortune must begin to rise, much less by any mere caprice of the power that rules the universe, but by the law of moral fitness. "He that would be great among you let him be your servant." It is when men, chastened by God's afflicting rod, abase themselves in the dust, feeling and acknowledging their weakness, and throwing themselves wholly upon God for strength and power, that they are most fit to become his instruments for the chastisement of others, and to occupy a high position among the nations. *His* strength is made perfect in *their* weakness; and this for two principal reasons.

I. IT IS FOR GOD'S GLORY THAT HE SHOULD ASSERT HIS POWER BY WEAK INSTRUMENTS. The poorer the instrument, the more evident that it is the workman to whom the work is due. Egypt is subdued by plagues of frogs and lice and locusts. Sisera falls by the hand of a woman. The Midianites are smitten by the three hundred who lapped with the tongue (Judg. vii. 5—22). David slays Goliath of Gath with a sling and a stone. Great miracles are wrought by a rod, a word, some spittle. And so also with the events that revolutionize the world. "Big battalions" do not always carry the day. The host of Zerah is smitten by Asa (2 Chron. xiv. 9—12). Ben-hadad and

the thirty-two kings are repulsed by "the young men of the princes of the provinces" (1 Kings xx. 1—20). Cyrus, with a handful of Persian rustics, defeats Astyages (Herod., i. 126, 127). Three hundred Greeks decimate the myriads of Xerxes at Thermopylæ. Judas Maccabæus, with a few thousands, destroys half a dozen Syrian armies three or four times as numerous (1 Macc. iv. 26—34; vii. 40—47; 2 Macc. xii. 13—37; xv. 20—28). God's hand is the more clearly seen, the weaker and poorer the means that he uses.

II. IT IS FOR MAN'S ADVANTAGE THAT HE SHOULD HAVE IT IMPRESSED UPON HIM THAT HIS SUCCESSES ARE NOT DUE TO HIMSELF. As man's arrogance is one of the chief causes of God's judgments upon him, it is well that success should be given him under circumstances which make it almost impossible that he should ascribe the merit of it to his own efforts or abilities. Best, far best for him to know that it is "when he is weak, that he is strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). So long as we are conscious that we are instruments, we are less inclined to exalt ourselves, to be puffed up, to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We feel our dependence upon God, realize his power upholding us, lean upon him, and have a sweet satisfaction in so leaning. As our day is, so we feel that our strength will be (Deut. xxxiii. 25). His grace will be always sufficient, just sufficient, for us. So we avoid all boasting and self-complacency, and are able to "rest in the Lord," to "stay upon him," and to maintain a perpetual consciousness of his mighty arm supporting us.

Vers. 21—29.—*The futility and absurdity of false systems do not prevent them from keeping their hold on men.* At the present day, men are apt to find it strange that the prophets should spend so much time, employ so many words, in confuting idolatry and showing it to be utter and absolute folly. To us of the present age the absurdity seems palpable and gross—therefore not worth arguing against. But systems of religion or of irreligion, whenever they have become established and have got possession of men's minds, are very hard to root out. Those who have been brought up in them, who have been accustomed all their lives to hear them spoken of as undoubtedly true, who have found all those about them of one mind respecting them, can with difficulty be persuaded that there is any absurdity in notions with which they have been from infancy familiar. The force of prejudice is in most minds stronger than the force of reason, and often renders men impervious to all argument which runs counter to their long-cherished opinions. Still, as nothing but argument can shake such opinions, it has to be used, nay, to be insisted on, to be reiterated, to be dinned into people's ears, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Many systems quite as absurd as idolatry have been accepted by men, and have stood them in the stead of true religion for centuries: some such are accepted even at the present day. An instance of the former kind may be found in the system of Democritus and Epicurus; instances of the latter in the pantheism of India and the more fashionable theory of evolution.

I. THE SYSTEM OF EPICURUS AND DEMOCRITUS. To suppose the universe nothing but a congeries of minute atoms, existing from all eternity, and moving as chance directs, combining accidentally into forms more or less permanent and after a while falling apart, ungoverned by any mind, without object, intention, or cause; and to suppose life, intelligence, thought, the accidental results of certain positions or combinations of the atoms;—is a theory so intrinsically absurd and ridiculous, that it might have seemed impossible for the wildest fancy to have conceived it, much more of any man of sane mind to have persuaded himself of its truth. Yet this theory, elaborated by Democritus and Leucippus about B.C. 430—400, embraced by Epicurus about B.C. 300—270, and recommended by the genius of Lucretius about B.C. 75, became the favourite creed of educated Greeks and Romans in the century before and the century after our era. St. Paul found two sects predominant at Athens—Stoics and Epicureans. Epicureans preponderated in Italy, where their treatises are found to have been the favourite reading of the rich men who built their villas on the soft shores of the bay of Naples, at the fashionable watering-place of Herculaneum. Among the adversaries which Christianity had to meet and subdue, this Epicurean philosophy was one of the most formidable.

II. THE PANTHEISM OF INDIA. That God exists and nothing else; that he is 'the One without a second;" that individual men are God, duplications of him, imagining themselves separate; that the material world is absolutely non-existent; and that all

sights and sounds and actions are "illusions," cheats, nonentities with a semblance of being;—this, which is the creed of the educated Hindoo, is another belief so contradictory to common sense, that it might have been supposed impossible of acceptance by any considerable number of men. It is held, however, by thousands, who see no absurdity in it, and are convinced that it is the only rational theory of existence; and, so far as present appearances go, there seems to be no probability that either Christianity or modern science will succeed in shaking the belief, however absurd it may be and however mischievous.

III. THE MODERN THEORY OF EVOLUTION. The spontaneous origin of life from inorganic matter, the development of protoplasm from molecules, of vegetable life from protoplasm, of animal life from vegetable life, and of humanity from advanced animals, which, though a pure hypothesis, has been accepted almost universally by physicists in the present day, is intrinsically as absurd and unthinkable a theory as either Epicureanism or Hindoo pantheism. But its absurdity is not seen by those who have been taught it from the time that they first turned their attention to physical science, who find it accepted by all their teachers, and assumed as a basis by every book that is put into their hands, who live as it were in an atmosphere saturated with evolutionism, and absorb it with every breath that they inhale. The time will probably come, perhaps after no great delay, when a reaction will set in, and the ability of unintelligent matter to improve itself and advance to perfection will be seen to be as absurd and as self-contradictory as the ability of images carved out of wood and stone to affect the course of events—to "do good or to do evil." Meanwhile, however, the existing false system is almost as impervious to argument and criticism as was the system of heathen idolatry. It has possession of the field (the so-called scientific field), as that had of the general field of human society; it supports itself by a number of interconnected propositions, no one of which rests upon any sure basis; and it does not even perceive the force of the arguments which are brought against it. Thus it may keep its hold upon men for some considerable time, before it takes its final place as "a chapter in the history of human error."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Argument with the nations.* Jehovah calls the countries to "come silently" unto him. Let the people pluck up what strength they may have, and let the cause between them and Jehovah come to the tribunal of reason. Have the idols any spiritual power? or is Jehovah only the true God?

1. THE VICTORIOUS CAREER OF CYRUS. This great man has, in the prophet's thought, a vocation from God. He is the minister of the Divine righteousness (ch. xlii. 6; xlv. 13). Cyrus is supported by the unseen might of Jehovah, who gives peoples into his hands, makes him tread on the necks of kings, whose swords turn to dust, whose warlike bow becomes as powerless as stubble driven before the blast. On the hero goes, in swift pursuit, penetrating into trackless districts, or those inaccessible to the ordinary traveller, where he cannot be followed. Or the meaning may be, his passage is swift as that of eagle or vulture (ch. xlvi. 11), and he leaves no trace of his feet behind. Now, "who hath produced and carried out this?" "In all religions men have found it necessary, in any great action, to engage some other agent and principle beside the man himself. The god becomes coadjutor in every noble or heroic achievement. Homer brings in Diomed and Ulysses, assisted by Mars and Pallas—one notable for acts of valour, and the other for those of counsel and wisdom; and the like is said of many others." And now which of the heathen gods has been the coadjutor of Cyrus? Why, he has come to overthrow the worshippers of the heathen gods. The deities are chiefly bound up with the futures of their peoples, and with them they fall. Who, then, can have raised up the great conqueror and destroyer, but he who alone abides—who called forth the generations from the beginning of "the vanished past and the vanishing present," who is Alpha and Omega, who preceded all, and will be self-existent in the ages to come. The expression, "I am he," briefly and suggestively conveys this idea of self-existence, of eternity (ch. xliii. 10, 13; xlvi. 4; xlviii. 12;

Deut. xxxii. 39; Ps. cii. 28): "Thou art he, and thy years will not come to an end." Also Ps. xliv. 5.

"The nameless, he whose nod is Nature's birth."

II. THE ANXIETY OF THE PEOPLES. The decision of the question is postponed; but a scene of alarm among the peoples is depicted. They have heard the news of Cyrus's conquests; the world is shuddering with apprehension. They huddle together like a frightened flock of sheep, trying to impart to one another a courage not really felt. The carpenter and the caster and the goldsmith are all busy among the Western nations, making "a particularly good and strong set of gods." A significant touch is the last—one is strengthening an idol with nails, for fear it should fall, which would be an omen full of dread, as the fall of Dagon of the Philistines may remind us. And so, even as Elijah with the worshippers of Baal, the prophet employs that irony and ridicule which is the test of truth, against the idolaters. And the scene may be regarded as a standing satire against all weak, anxious, fussy resort to human means and devices, and to idle superstitions, when the name of true religion has been paralyzed, when faith in the spiritual and eternal is extinct.—J.

Vers. 8—13.—*The blessed condition of Israel.* I. ISRAEL IS THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH. There can be no higher title of honour, privilege, affection, than son. Though the designation reminds us of the infinite distance between God and man, in another way it reminds us of his nearness. The Master and Lord is here the loving and protecting Patron and Friend; the servant, one who reciprocates his affection. They are the descendants of Abraham, who "loved God." The title "reminds the Jews that they had come very far short of their ideal, but at the same time inspires a well-grounded hope that Abraham's "love" will call forth the Divine mercy towards his seed."

II. THE PEOPLE IS CHOSEN OF GOD. And the choice of God is irretractable (Rom. ii. 29). And the election was made manifest in a wondrous history. They had been fetched from the ends of the earth. The patriarch from Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia; Israel from Egypt. And what are the consequences of this Divine choice? All that is most dear and precious in the relation of marriage or in that of friendship may be called to mind. The nation is wedded to an all-powerful Husband, is linked to a faithful Protector and Friend. Then she may enjoy fearless freedom from fear; the just hand will uphold her. And all her enemies will be thrown into shame and confusion; those that strove with her be brought to nought. Held fast in the right hand of God, Israel may ever hear the assuring word, "Fear not; I do help thee." He is One "who gives salvation to kings;" with one hand giving the Law, with the other defending the obedient. Omniscience watches over the chosen, and omnipotence supports them. Among other "gifts and graces" let us recognize *courage* and *resolution*. Timidity, faint-heartedness, is a universal weakness, and the higher or sacred courage one of the rarest possessions of the soul. Perhaps, next to wisdom, it is Heaven's greatest gift. It "gives and obtains kingdoms, turns swords into sceptres, crowns the valiant with victory, and the victorious often with a diadem." Presence of mind: what can impart it like the feeling that God is ever with us, that our feeble hand is enclosed in his? "It is a kind of ecstasy and inspiration, a beam of Divine light darting in upon reason, and exalting it to a pitch of operation beyond its natural and accustomed measures. Perhaps there was never any person in the world remarkably and heroically great, without some such kind of enthusiasm—a mighty principle which at certain times raised him up to strange, unaccountable heights of wisdom and courage. He who in the strength of such a spirit can look the most menacing dangers in the face, and, when the state of all things about him seems desperate, can yet bear his great heart above despair—such a one for the most part makes fortune itself bend and fall down to him, difficulties vanish, and dangers fly before him; so much is victory the claim of the valiant, and success the birthright of the bold."—J.

Vers. 14—16.—*Weakness made strong.* "A fine touch is lost in the English here. In the Hebrew, Israel is addressed in the feminine gender, as a weak and suffering woman. It is not so in the preceding verses, and in ver. 15 the prophet significantly reverts to the masculine" (Cheyne).

I. HUMILITY THE CONDITION OF STRENGTH. Jacob is a worm, Israel a "petty folk." This was, we know, a clear historic fact. It was not by armies or by navies, by numerous fortresses and serried ranks, and an impregnable land, that she was strong. She was "diminutive Israel," as the LXX. render. At this moment she might well be thought of as a poor, trembling, defenceless woman. In that one simple oracle, "I will help thee, saith Jehovah," realized, lay her might; and all possible might was there. It is not in human nature to depend where it can stand alone. It is when we feel "what worthless worms are we," that the contrast of God's almightiness comes upon us, and the sense that we may connect ourselves with it. Thrown upon our own resources, and finding them at an end, we "catch at God's skirts, and pray." Then it is no longer we, but our enemies, who fear. We cannot have too low an opinion of ourselves, nor too high an opinion of God. He is here described as the *Goël*, the Defender of the right, the Avenger of the wrongs of his people. He is the redeeming God (ch. xlvii. 3, 4; Jer. l. 33, 34). The verbal root means to ransom by the payment of a price, and to deliver from danger, distress, captivity.

II. WEAKNESS MADE STRONG. This petty nation shall become a power against which nothing can stand. Israel becomes as a threshing-roller, sharp, new, and double-edged, which shall crush the mountains, and make the hills as chaff; he shall winnow the nations, and they shall be scattered. With the two-edged sword in their hand, they will execute vengeance on the heathen, and punishments on the people, binding their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron (Ps. cxlix.). Perhaps the allusion is to the Maccabean period, and to the glorious wars of the Jews under the priests Simon and Hyrcanus, against the kings of Syria. The oracle which begins by touching the chord of humility ends with the note of boasting: "Thou shalt exult in Jehovah, and in Israel's Holy One shalt make thy boast." Thus the spirit of the true Israel is the spirit of true religion, the spirit of Christ exemplified in St. Paul: "I will glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—J.

Vers. 17—29.—*The claims of Jehovah.* The thought seems to resume the thread broken off at the beginning of the chapter. Jehovah appeals to what he has done and to what he is.

I. HIS MERCIFUL DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE. The scene and state of exile is brought before us. They are dwelling in the "tents of Kedar." They are in the midst of a flourishing commercial empire; yet it is to them as a desert where no water is (cf. Ps. lxiii. 1). The true desert is the soul without the sense of God's presence. But God is not limited by place; and why, in lands of exile, should not the spiritual be as near as at home? The mind is its own place, and can be made happy if it only possesses God. This highest happiness is figured as abundance of streams among the bare hills and the highland plains. In the Orient, water is synonymous with relief from intense suffering, deliverance from death—in a word, with gladness, salvation, life itself; and the sight of lovely Paradises as they were called, *i.e.* parks of trees—the stately cedar, and the brilliant plane and others. Such scenery enters into pictures of the Greek Elysium, and probably of the happiness of the future life among other nations, and doubtless with a correspondence to the truth. Trees and living water: what more beautiful parable can Nature offer of the eternal energy of the living God? what better hint of the future state reserved for his chosen? The design of all these merciful and wonderful deliverances is that Jehovah's nature may be unveiled, and that the nations may contemplate it with reverence and joy—"that they may at once see, and acknowledge, and consider, and understand, that Jehovah's hand hath performed this, and Israel's Holy One hath created it."

II. JEHOVAH'S CHALLENGE. Let the gods of the heathen bring forward their cause; let them point out the bulwarks of argument behind which they entrench themselves. The "King of Jacob" calls these dæmonic patrons and kings of other peoples to confront him. Have they insight into the future? Can they predict the coming event? Can they "declare the roots of the future in the past, or give a direct forecast of the future? God alone can reveal the secrets of the past. If the idols can do this, they are Jehovah's equals, and may be trusted for their ability to predict the future" (according to some, this is the meaning). Or let them do some signal deed, whether of good or evil, and prove at least that they are alive. Some *wonder* should be performed, at which

mankind may gaze, and by which they may be convinced. But judgment must go by default. The gods "can show no prophecies, cannot so much as speak, are dumb, not gods (Hab. ii. 18)." And they must be known for what they are—"nothing in the world."

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE. Jehovah raised up Cyrus. When called from the north, he came; and from the east, he shall proclaim Jehovah's Name, and diffuse his worship. Some see (combining this oracle with that in ch. lxv. 3—7) the announcement of a spiritual change in Cyrus. He is made to say that Jehovah gave him all the kingdoms of the earth, and charged him to build a house at Jerusalem (Ezra i. 2). He may have come to believe in the God of the Jews, and so to be their brother. The Persians were monotheists, and held a *missionary* religion. And the Jews may have recognized such a religion as that of Jehovah (cf. Mal. i. 11; Acts x. 35; xvii. 23). And projecting themselves to the time of the fulfilment of the prediction, Jehovah and his worshippers point to it as evidence of the truth of the religion. And while Jehovah announces the good news of his return to Zion, that is, of Israel's redemption, the idols are dumb. *They* have no help, no counsel, to give; for they are vanity, nothingness, wind and chaos. Compare with this nothingness the sentences of Jehovah in ch. x. 12; Jer. xxv. 12. Such is the conclusion of the trial. The idols are utterly destitute of strength to aid their friends or distress their foes. Jehovah alone is worthy of confidence and regard, as the true God, Protector, and Guide. In times of deepest distress he can raise up a deliverer like Cyrus, and in his own way and time rescue his people from all their calamities.—J.

Ver. 6.—*Mutual help.* "They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." The subject is—*Helpfulness.* Not mere help, but fulness of help. There may be a help that is tardy, that is somewhat sparse and niggardly; and there may be help which is not helpful in the best sense. This help to which our text refers was accompanied by encouragement—that truest and wisest of all help, which, by giving courage, gives strength. Buildings cannot be *built* by an architect alone. The inferior hand is as needful as the superior. Read the description: "So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smooteth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering." Each man in his place, and fit for his place. So it must be in human life; and, as civilization develops, each man must attend more and more upon one thing. It will not do to play at art, or architecture, or merchandise, or ministry. Each in his place. So it must be in the Church—there must be mutual help, mutual encouragement. We ought to feel indebted to each other. We ought to be inspirational to each other.

I. HELP IS TO BE UNIVERSAL. They helped "every one." It will not do to evade our own share of toil. Work cannot be done by command or contrivance, but by the constraint of a ready mind. Socialism seems to be disturbing the Continent. It may be a *destructive* power, but never can be a *constructive* one. If human beings were machines to be set in order by one hand, it might be so; but they are not. See how Proudhon and Fourier adjust all the social arrangements to a nicety; the Phalange, or the body of associated labourers; the Phalanstere, or the habitation assigned to each, where the four great departments of nature—the material, the organic, the animal, and the social—are provided for. What a scheme! How philosophic it looks—*on paper!* But what madness to try and make it work, when the derangement of one part would be the derangement of the complicated whole! Who is to restrain the leaders and organizers from craft and selfishness and guile? Difficult as it is to secure good government in general functions in society, who could secure it in a ramified system? Then one will not work, and another will drink, and another will laugh, and another will sleep, and in one brief day some will be better off than others, and the perfect arrangements will fly to pieces before the touchstone of actual life. No; God meant diversity. God meant diligence to be rewarded. Riches and honour come of the Lord, and if there were no incentives to progress and culture and invention, there would be no advancing civilization. Socialism cannot *make* men work; it would want an *army* to compel them. The right way is Christ's way. Look every man *also* on the things of another. Use ability, genius, education, wealth, honour, *well*, so as to bless others. None are more despicable than those who look alone to *being* helped. Everything must be ready

for them. The way they speak to servants is detestable. They complain if the physician does not come at once—if they are not the *first* considered by others. Don't they pay? Terrible neglect; *they* are not helped. Money does not satisfy their indebtedness. Let us see whom *they* help—if *they* are swift to speak the generous word, to perform the brave and noble deed. There are, however, some lives—and they must be dread histories—which are spent in fashionable gossip and superficial pleasure-seeking, with no care for others. We see, then, (1) there must be mutuality; (2) there must be energy. Not the help which is mere gift, perhaps easy and costless, but the help which costs service and sacrifice.

II. HELP IS TO BEGIN AT THE NEAREST POINT. "His neighbour"—the nearest person to him. The gospel teaching is to *begin* at Jerusalem. Home, for instance, is to be a scene of help. There are occasions every day in which we can help each other's comfort, growth, education, freedom from anxiety, and increase in the pleasure of life as life. A man's character is judged of in his home, his Church, his village, his town, his neighbourhood. The eloquent assailer of public wrongs may be other than a patriot at home. 1. This is the help which only he *can* render; being the neighbour, he is the nearest. 2. This does not bind him by religious "views" or party spirit. He is to help in the great temple of humanity as well as the temple of the Lord God. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." There *are* charities, I find, which, not content with being Christian, wish to know what people's "views" are! What an atmosphere! No. Christ did not ask who were Samaritans, Syrophœnicians, Greeks, or Jews. "He went about doing good."

III. HELP IS TO BE INSPIRATIONAL. That is to say, it is not to *assist* laziness or to excuse mere incompetence. "Every one said to his brother, Be of good courage." 1. *Courage; for fear is weakness.* Those who expect failure court failure. I am wonderstruck at Stanley's courage at the Falls, especially after Pocock was dead. It is marvellous! Think of that poor native who rushed from the presence of the dreadful roaring river into the wilderness. 2. *Courage; for God is your Helper.* Man is weak! Yes; but read the tenth verse: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee." *That* is an inspiration indeed—God in Christ working in us and with us. He who gave himself *for* us, now working *in* and *with* us. What courage this inspires! "In *me* is thine help found." "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help!" We shall find all worldliness to be weakness in the end. 3. *Courage; for no work is so hard as it looks.* There are creative times. What is the dreamer worth when difficult duties have to be done? 4. *Courage; for cowards make cowards.* Live with persons constantly afraid of fire, of midnight marauders, of infection, of disease, and you will become nervous yourself. If children grow up amid the timorous, they become timorous. But born in the fishing-cove on the beach, how they pull out the boat into the wild sea! accustomed to scenes of courage, they learn courage. Never dispirit others. Say not, "This sum will never be raised. These schools can never be built. This class will never prosper." But say rather, "Be of good courage." 5. *Courage; for hindrances will flee before faith.* Say to the mountain, "Be thou cast into the sea." Strange that it should obey thee! But it does, for it was a mountain of the mind. Courage is not quixotic; it is founded on faith—on the Word, and cross, and throne of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mutual help is what we want. Not the sentimental grievance from some that *they* are not the subjects of perennial attention and ever-delicate consideration, but the help which is the spirit of all Christian life, because it was the law of his life "who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister."—W. M. S.

Ver. 18.—*Water in the wilderness.* "I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." The *place* of the fountain is the key-note of this sermon. We are not surprised to find a fountain in the grove or the garden—*there*, amidst its diamond spray the birds brighten their plumage. But *here* the caravan halts, whilst men and women fall on their breasts and drink in the living nectar—the sweet water that never harms. We have to meditate upon this subject, however, in its highest aspects. We see not all of life. In nature we come upon unexpected spots of verdure in sterile places; in human life we come upon a true friend in the thorny experiences of adversity. Best of all we have here—in this world, which in so many aspects is a

wilderness—One who gives us the testimony concerning himself, that he will be *in us* "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." We have—

I. SPRINGS IN THE DRY LAND OF SIN. What depth of meaning there is in the promise, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"! All seemed lost; and yet at his very feet there sprang up for man "a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." This is God's *revelation* fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Often revelations are left to human discovery. There have been hidden beauties in the universe—unknown continents which man must search out and explore. There are hidden adaptations in nature to the need of man, which will reward his enterprise—medicaments for disease, ministrants of alleviation. And there are yet "hidden fountains," which the discovering hand of man will lay bare in the wilderness. But sin must be met by grace at once, that man may be saved—that the child may yet say, "Father."

II. SPRINGS IN THE DRY LAND OF SORROW. Hagar flies. Not the first, nor the last, that the east wind of bitter hatred has driven from the protecting doors. The newspapers record crime. We shudder. But blows at the heart, deeds never reported, never known, borne in the silence of suffering, are often the worst. 1. *In solitude Hagar finds an angel.* In earliest times *they* were ministering spirits, and we are distinctly told that they not only *were*, but are. We lose much comfort from forgetting that they are ministers to us! How? That is what the inquisitive mind is always asking. It is the "how?" which makes such piles on piles of useless divinity. The Word of God is inspired! How? The atonement is made! How? The dead shall arise! How? 2. *In want she finds refreshment.* Weary and worn and sad, God does not allow her to lack refreshment. Sarah dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face. But another face was looking down upon her. How kind and considerate ought those to be who have others under them! Often far away from home and friends, there should ever be in our relationships all that we mean by kind consideration. 3. *In misery she found peace.* The mind filled with tumultuous thoughts was calmed! The angel tells her that "the Lord hath heard her affliction." What a sermon in a sentence! Teach and preach this, brethren. No eloquent words! No explanatory sentences! *Sorrow itself has a voice*, and God hears that. What rest comes to the heart that feels God has seen and knows all! "She called the Name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called Beer-laha-roi;" that is, "the well of him that liveth and seeth me."

III. SPRINGS IN THE DRY LAND OF SOLITUDE. What shall I do? Where shall I go? Am I to leave home? Am I to enter a wilderness that I know not? Yes; go anywhere, everywhere; but remember God is there. "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" What will to-morrow bring? A Father. Whence will come my supply? Do not know—the fountain is hidden. But *it is there.* What is needful for me to do is to drink and live—to taste the living waters. Many analyze them—admit their purity, but do not drink! Our solicitudes are natural. Especially so when life is, like Hagar's, dependent on others. Some here may be driven out into the wilderness at any time. True; but Christ is there! You will, perhaps, never know how precious this fountain is till you are away from the old home.

IV. SPRINGS IN THE DRY LAND OF SEPARATION. Alas! other fountains dry up. That is to say, they are sealed to us *for a time.* But in the hours of bereavement and desolation I call on you to witness: 1. *What hidden fountains there are in the Bible.* How its histories live when we read our own experiences into them! How its psalms pulse with life when we too are panting after the water-brooks! 2. *What hidden revelations in Christ.* We know him as a Saviour. But how little we know yet! "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." We "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some persons we need to know *less of* to preserve our respect and love. Jesus our Lord is infinite in all beauty, purity, and glory; and the more we know of him the more intense will be our devotion, the more complete our trust, the more fervent our love. Let the hidden fountains be not only rejoiced in by us, but let our voice be heard, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" We think little of water till we are feverish with thirst on shipboard or in an Eastern wilderness. Some of you perchance may have known what thirst is, and how much less precious is the jewelled cup than the water it contains. Yet from the beginning God has sent

the rivers through the deserts one day to be peopled, and the springs as at Damascus run through the valleys. Every nation under heaven can bless God for the rain from heaven and for the water-springs! Soon may all tribes and peoples surround "the fountain." We drink of earthly fountains, and thirst again. But whoso drinketh of the water which Christ will give them shall never thirst again. Within, in the wilderness of these poor hearts, he strikes the fountain that is to lift up its pure springs through the immortal ages.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—7.—*The false refuge and the true.* In the regulation of his life, a wise man will give a large place to the consideration of what resources he will have in the times of great emergency. For he knows that such times must come to him as they come to all men, and when they come there is urgent and even terrible need of a refuge to which the stricken soul may flee. We are here reminded of—

I. THE REFUGE WHICH IS FALSE, AND WHICH WILL FAIL US. (Vers. 5—7.) We smile with pity, perhaps even a contemptuous pity, as we read of the carpenter and the smith joining their labour in order to produce the well-made idol, before which the offerings shall be presented, etc. But may it not be that those who watch us from above, and who are so much wiser than we, sometimes sigh, not contemptuously but sadly, as they see us putting our trust and finding our refuge in that which is little better than the carefully manufactured image? When trouble has come, or when dangers thicken, when the heart is agitated or concerned, then the foolish sometimes resort to *their* idols—to those things which are nearly as impotent and as untrustworthy as these. 1. To the stimulant or the drug. 2. To the social excitement or the stress of business engagement. 3. To the comfort of human affection. But these are wholly unsatisfactory, because: 1. They are not on a level with the height of our spiritual nature; they are not worthy of us who are created in the image of God, and who are bound to find, in our sorrows and our straits, a resource which answers to the spiritual powers we have received of him. 2. They are transient in their influence; they gradually become less efficacious, and at last lose all power to soothe and to sustain. 3. They themselves are temporary; at any moment they may be removed from our sight and grasp.

II. THE REFUGE WHICH IS TRUE, AND ON WHICH WE MAY CONFIDENTLY RELY. (Vers. 2—4.) It is none other than the living God himself. "In the time of trouble he will hide us in his pavilion." There are three strong assurances of Divine succour. 1. *Particular instances of Divine interposition.* (Vers. 2, 3.) The God who raised up Cyrus, who constrained him to answer his own Divine ends, who empowered him to do such great things, and to triumph over such serious obstacles, is One who evidently gives heed to individual souls, and who both can and will select the very instruments which are needed to work out the redemption for which we are waiting and hoping. He who similarly raised up Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, Tyndale, Knox, etc., to take their place and do their work when such men as they were wanted, will not fail us in our emergency now. 2. *His government of the whole human race.* "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?" All human history attests the presence, the power, the righteousness, the providence, of the Lord. 3. *His Divine nature.* "I the Lord, the First, and with the last, I am he." In God, our Father and our Saviour, we have (1) One who, whatever passes, will be always with us (Matt. xxviii. 20); and (2) One who, whatever changes, remains constantly the same (Jas. i. 17; John xiii. 1; Heb. xiii. 8).—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*His grace and our heritage.* We are reminded here of—

I. THE SENSE IN WHICH GOD HAS CHOSEN US. "Jacob, whom I have chosen . . . I have chosen thee." The way in which God's ancient people were chosen of God is familiar biblical history. Abraham was called out of Chaldea, Israel (the people) out of Egypt, the Jews out of Babylonia, in order that they might receive, retain, and reflect the truth of the living God; in other words, this nation was the recipient of those distinguishing mercies which could alone account for their national redemption and their spiritual condition. We are now the subjects of God's electing, his distinguishing grace in these respects;—in ways which are not common to the whole of our race, perhaps not even to the generality of our fellow-men, we have been (1) acquainted with his redeeming truth, made to know and to understand it in its purity

and fulness; (2) wrought upon by kindly, helpful, winning influences, in the home or in the Church; (3) affected by the direct and immediate influences of his Divine Spirit. Thus has God chosen and called us to himself.

II. THE LIFE TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CALLED. A life of holy service. "Thou, Israel, art my servant." We are not called merely to enjoyment or to privilege; we are summoned to God's presence and kingdom—"called to his foot" (ver. 2), *in order that we may serve.* Our Christian life is that most *honourable*, most *elevating*, most *useful*, one of service. It is the life (1) of sacred worship; (2) of cheerful obedience; (3) of active helpfulness.

III. THE INTIMATE AND HONOURABLE RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH WE ARE INVITED TO STAND. "The seed of Abraham *my friend.*" Behold, what manner of love and of condescension is this, that we should be called the *friends* of God! All that Abraham was to God it is certain that we may be,—we who are brought nigh by Jesus Christ. And what his disciples were to him, we also are invited to be (see John xv. 14, 15). We are God's friends, inasmuch as: 1. We have a profound sympathy with him in the principles he holds and in the work in which he is engaged. 2. We are trusted by him to do what is right and worthy, and are entrusted by him with that which is high and arduous. 3. We are admitted to his near presence, and are invited to constant fellowship with him. 4. We are the objects of his love and his good pleasure.—C.

Vers. 10—14.—*God our Strength.* Israel in captivity, hoping for return from exile, but fearing lest its enemies should prevail and the desire of its heart be defeated, might well delight in such reassuring words as these. In the battle and burden of our life we also gladly welcome them to our hearts.

I. SOURCES OF DISQUIETUDE. 1. *The strength of the forces which are against us.* "All they that were incensed against thee;" "they that strive with thee;" "they that war against thee." We may say as Paul said, "There are many adversaries." There are the evil tendencies of our own nature not yet extirpated; there are the vicious, the ungodly, the half-hearted men, who act injuriously upon us; and there are the "principalities and powers" of the evil spiritual world. 2. *The weight of the burden of responsibility laid upon us.* We are God's servants, his children, his spokesmen, his representatives. He is our God (ver. 10), and we owe to him the faithful discharge of varied and weighty obligations. 3. *Our personal feebleness.* "Thou worm Jacob;" "Ye men [mortals] of Israel." Who is sufficient for all these things? With our bodily weakness, our mental poverty and our spiritual failures, with the limitations of our humanity, we look forward to the work which we have to do, to the sufferings we shall be called to bear, to the battle we shall have to fight, with serious apprehension. We are inclined to give way to "fear," to allow ourselves even to "be dismayed."

II. OUR STAY IN GOD. 1. *His sympathizing presence.* "I am with thee." The presence of a friend or of a parent in the time of trouble is, in itself and independently of any expectation of help, a reassuring thought. That God our Divine Father, that Christ our unfailing Brother and Friend is with us, is by our side, with purest interest and tender sympathy in his heart,—this is a strength and a stay to our trembling hearts. 2. *His strengthening aid.* "I am thy God: I will strengthen thee," etc. God helps his people (1) by making their difficulties to disappear, so that "they that are against them are as nothing;" *e.g.* the drowning of the Egyptian host, and the slaughter of the army of Sennacherib; or, and more often, (2) by imparting courage and strength to overcome them. He "holds our right hand;" he inspires us with skill and energy to act, with fortitude to endure, with patience to persist, with victorious strength. He "always causeth us to triumph." 3. *His faithful, redeeming word.* When he is not actually interposing on our behalf we may rest on his sure promise. He has assured us of our ultimate triumph, not only for ourselves, but for the cause of truth and righteousness in which we are engaged. On this word we may absolutely build. (1) It is a Divine word; "he is our God" (vers. 10, 13). (2) It is the word of one whose faithfulness cannot fail; it comes from him whose hand is "the right hand of his righteousness." (3) It is the word of One whose compassion is well proved. He is "the Lord, our Redeemer."—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The triumph of the truth.* I. THE MOUNTAINOUS OBSTACLES THAT

HAVE TO BE OVERCOME. These are not kingdoms, military forces, or fortifications, but things which are far mightier than they—error, prejudice, passion, pride, habit of life, materialism, self-will. These are high hills, massive mountains in the way of the world's welfare.

II. THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH THEY ARE TO BE SURMOUNTED. This is none other than *a living Church*. "I will make *thee*," etc. The Israel which is to "thresh" these mountains is "the Israel of God," the Church of Jesus Christ; not, indeed, any one organization so called or calling itself by that name, but the whole "host of God's elect"—the unnumbered multitude of souls that, under every sky, accept his truth, trust in his Name, love his appearing, toil in his vineyard.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF THE TRUTH. This is twofold. 1. The disappearance of all that is evil, the scattering of the chaff (ver. 16). 2. The exaltation of Christ: "Thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel." In the day of redemption men will glory in no one and in nothing but in the Lord that redeemed them; they will enthrone him in their hearts and in the world.

IV. THE PRIZE OF VICTORY. "And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord." The Church will not be filled with a perilous complacency; it will rejoice in the Lord its God—in the *honour* in which he is universally held; in the *love* with which all hearts are filled toward him; in the *service* which every human life is paying him. These ingredients will fill to the brim its pure cup of joy.—C.

Vers. 17—20.—*The pity and the purpose of Christ and his Church: a missionary sermon.* With what different eyes do we look out on to the world, and how varied a spectacle it presents, according to our views, our spirits, our aims! To the geographer and discoverer it appears in one aspect, to the statesman and the historian in another. The artist sees it in one light, the man of science in a different one. The sportsman and pleasure-hunter has his view of it, the trader has his, etc. But from the standpoint of the sanctuary, and so far as our minds are filled with God's truth and our hearts with the love of Christ, we shall look at the vast, outlying human world with very different eyes. We shall see before us—

I. A POOR AND NEEDY WORLD ATHIRST FOR THE TRUTH AND LOVE OF GOD. 1. We think of those multitudes of our race, beneath every sky, of every hue, of every clime and tongue, who are utterly dissatisfied with their life, their creed, or their character; the many millions who are the *victims of human oppression*, of intolerable tyranny, or of heartless cruelty (social or domestic), or abject slavery; those who are the *heirs of grinding poverty*, seeking for the bare sufficiency or the comfort or the success which they never gain, which perpetually eludes them; those who are *vain seekers after happiness*, the voice of whose life is this, "Who will show us any good?" whose experience is one long sad heart-ache; those who are *unsuccessful inquirers after God*, after truth and righteousness, who say, not in sarcasm, but in sadness, "What is truth?" "Oh that we knew where we might find him!" "What shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?" and to whom no answer comes from the deep void, who have to go groping on in the darkness. These are the poor and needy, seeking water and there is none, "whose tongue faileth for thirst." 2. We include in our view that other multitude who lack the water of life, but who are not conscious of their need. Did it *enfeeble* the argument for emancipation that so many of the slaves, before their liberty was given them, were content to wear their bonds and to be deprived of the rights of manhood, the claims of womanhood? Or did it not, on the other hand, immeasurably strengthen the case of the emancipators and the cause of the slave? And does it *relieve* the situation that millions of Chinese are content to live the sordid, selfish, godless lives they are living, and to die the hopeless deaths they are dying? Does it make *less* pitiful and pathetic the fact that millions of our fellow-subjects in India are content to bow down before images their own hands have carved, and to worship gods and goddesses to honour whom is to be dishonoured and degraded in and by the very act of devotion? Surely this fact only multiplies the reasons for regret and for sympathy. The very muteness of the appeal is the most eloquent plea on their behalf.

II. THE PITY AND THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST ON ITS BEHALF. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, . . . I the Lord will hear them, . . . I will not

forsake them. I will open rivers . . . I will plant trees," etc. If this be primarily applicable to the Israelites in captivity (or on their way home), it must be true of all God's children. He who pitied the thousands of bodily sufferers will *much more* pity the millions of his sons and daughters who are in the last extremity of spiritual destitution. When Christ "saw the multitude," hungry and weary, he was "moved with compassion" for them. With what profounder pity and intenser feeling does he look down on these far greater multitudes, who are pining and perishing in the famine of the soul! And then does the Church of Christ enter into his spirit and rise toward his stature when it also is stirred to strong, deep sympathy with these poor and needy ones, hungering and athirst for the truth and love of God. And as Christ's purpose answered to his pity, and he came, by the sacrifice of himself, to put away our sin and to take away our sorrow, so must ours also. Pity must end in provision, in causing the rivers to flow and the fountains to spring and the trees to bear their fruit. Such sources and springs of health and life are our mission Churches. Heathenism is a desert place, a wild waste, where there is no provision for human need. But our Christian Churches, planted in the midst of the ignorant and idolatrous, are rivers in the high places, fountains in the valleys, trees in the desert; *there* is bread for the hungering, water for those who are perishing with thirst, life for dying souls.—C.

Vers. 21—29.—*A true test of Divinity.* When these words were written the question to be solved was—Which god, of all the rival deities, is worthy of human trust and worship? The question now is—What is the authority to which we shall submit our judgment and in which we shall rest?—is it human nature, or is it the forces of the material world, or is it the Lord God? The verses before us suggest to us that one criterion in this state of inquiry is to be found in the consideration that we cannot find rest in anything which does not tell us what *we most want to know* as dependent, struggling, sorrowing, sinning, dying men. The idols of the heathen were valueless; they could not tell "things to come hereafter;" they were utterly ignorant; they had no voice to answer the most urgent and pressing questions which men were asking. Those great and profound inquiries which we are now putting are beyond the reach of nature and of man. *Nature*, at the demand of science, can shed no light at all on the most sacred problems, the solution of which is everything to us. It makes no sign, it leaves us as we were. Its teaching is as consistent with one conclusion as with the opposite. *Man*, unaided by special illumination, can reach no certainty, can attain to nothing like assurance; he can guess, can argue, can hope, but he cannot *know*. God alone, the Author of our being, the Lord of our life, the Arbiter of our destiny, can tell us whence we came and whose we are and whither we go. He can tell us "things to come hereafter," and much else which it is as urgent that we should know. He makes plain and sure to us the truth concerning—

I. THE ORIGIN, SUSTENANCE, AND GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

II. OUR HUMAN NATURE. That it is not what it was when it came forth from his creative hand; that it has fallen through sin; that there is a way *back* which is a way *up*, toward himself and his favour.

III. HIMSELF—HIS NATURE, CHARACTER, AND WILL.

IV. THE FUTURE. 1. Future things here. 2. The great future—the fact of another life, of a day of account—eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The eternal Alpha and Omega.* The idea of these verses seems to be this—look back, if you will, to the very beginnings of nations: God is there. Watch the changes of nations, the uprising of great kings and leaders: God is presiding over all. Peer into the dim mysteries of the future, and still God is controlling and overruling all. The thought here set before the nation finds expression in the private meditations of the psalmist (Ps. cxxxix.). Nowhere can he get away from the sense of God's presence, and nowhere would he if he could. How fully the Apostle John was imbued with the spirit of the great prophets is well illustrated in the fact that his thought of the manifested God is the old prophetic thought. The glorified and living Christ is revealed to him as saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. i. 8). Some think the "righteous man," referred to in ver. 2, is Abraham, regarded as the first father of the

Hebrew nation; and this view finds some support in the expression found in ver. 4, "calling the generations from the beginning;" but it is evident that the mind of Isaiah was at this time filled with the return from captivity, and with the Divine raising up of Cyrus as the human agent in effecting that return. And this Cyrus is to him the suggestion of the glorious spiritual Deliverer, who should appear later on to redeem his people from their sins; not first from their sorrows, but first and chiefly from their sins. So we may cover the long ages in our thought. Abraham raised up by God. Moses set forth by God. Cyrus called out by God. Messiah the Sent One of God. "I the Lord, the First, and with the last, I am he." This view of our God may be taken as—

I. A CONTRAST WITH ALL MAN-MADE GODS. This is the prophet's great point. A man-made, or man-conceived, god comes *second*. Man, in that case is first; the god is his creature, and the creation of a being involves that it is inferior to its creator. God comes first; he is before man. Man is his creature, and set under his conditions.

II. A HOPE WHEN MAN CAN MAKE NO MORE GODS. That time comes by dissatisfaction. None of his gods bring him rest, and at last he will try to make no more. Then God lives, and may be the soul's Rest. That time comes by the ending of the earth-life; but even then God lives, and we may live in him.

III. A SATISFACTION FOR ALL BETWEEN TIMES. If he is first, and is last, then surely he covers and includes all the space between, and we may well turn from all self-trusts and idol-trusts, and seek now the rest, the joy, of his love and favour and service. "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our Guide unto death."—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Man's devices to do without God.* A curious and interesting fact is connected with the reference in this passage to *hammering* an idol into shape. Ancient hammers had no handles; the workman held *in his hand* the metal piece with which he worked. In all the copies of Egyptian figures engaged in various arts, there does not appear to be one representation of a handled hammer. Mr. Osburn, remarking on this, says, "The jar occasioned to the nerves of the hand by this violent contact of metal with metal, without the interposition of a wooden handle, or other deadening substances, would be intolerable to a modern workman, or, if he had resolution to persevere, would probably bring on tetanus. Long practice from an early age had habituated the robust frames of the ancient mechanics to these rude concussions." This passage is of a satirical character; the folly of idolaters in trusting to gods made by common workmen, and dependent on the most trivial mechanical operations for their form and their stability, is vigorously presented. We regard all this idol-making as man's device to do without the one living and true God; and, so regarded, it is suggestive of applications which may be made to our own times. Now men try to do without God because—

I. THE CONCEPTION OF HIM IS TOO SPIRITUAL. We are not permitted to think of him through any material associations, or to image him in any creaturely shapes. He is to be to us a *Spirit*. But that sets him out of reach; and since men will not cultivate their spiritual faculties for the apprehension, they put him aside, and try to find what they may put in his place in art-creations, art-ideals. This is their device—let us create the "beautiful," and make it do for us instead of the spiritual God. The "beautiful" is their idol.

II. THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOD ARE TOO STRICT. He gives no chance to self-willedness, no opportunity for the pleasantness of doing wrong. So their device is to arrange a training of the body, a system of rules and restraints, by which they may regulate themselves and their relationships. Because religion is too severe they try to be satisfied with a morality which reaches no higher than a man's idea of goodness. Morality is their idol.

III. THE ATMOSPHERE OF GOD IS TOO PURE. "Nothing entereth his presence that defileth;" and it is characteristic of him that he "desireth truth in the inward parts." There man finds the demand too great, and is set on the endeavour to satisfy himself with a ceremonial purity, which does not disturb the inward corruptions. Ceremonies may express heart-piety; but they may be put instead of heart-piety. Ceremonies and ritual too often become men's idols, whose worship is easier and more comfortable to the

natural man. So men help one another to make their own idols, and shift the one true God into the background.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The Divine choices are wise selections.* Abraham and Jacob are God's *chosen ones* as founders, and first fathers, of the Israelite race. By this we are to understand that they were selected, in the Divine wisdom, as having just the qualities which, developed in a race, would make a people precisely fitted to carry out his purposes. We are not to understand that, in a way of accident, or in a way of mere sovereignty, these first fathers were picked out. God's choices are never arbitrary; they are always judicious selections. "The race is described as God's *servant* and his *elect*, or, combining the two characters, his chosen servant, chosen to be his servant." This special relation to Jehovah is the thing which distinguishes the people of Israel from the heathen nations around them. "What advantage then hath the Jew? . . . Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 1, 2). The truth that the Divine choices are selections, on the ground of recognized fitness, may gain illustration from three distinct spheres.

I. FROM THE SPHERE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES. These cover long spaces of the earth's history, and the most marked feature of them is the way in which individuals are set forth prominently; we are shown the precise work they did, and then it is impressed on us that these are the Lord's chosen ones. In the light of that view we read again their story, appraise their qualities and gifts, set their endowments alongside their life-mission; and then we can see clearly that they were selected because they were precisely fitted for their particular work. If we think that subtle laws of heredity have gone to the making and endowing of men, we may also think of God as watching the fitnesses of men, and taking them out for the doing of certain parts of his work. Illustration may be taken from Moses, who was characteristically patriotic and disinterested; or David, whose poetical genius sanctified song for Divine worship; or Paul, whose natural impetuosity adapted him for his service as the first Christian missionary.

II. FROM THE SPHERE OF COMMON LIFE. For Scripture is but the illustration "in the small" of what God is ever doing "in the large." The mistake is so often made of thinking that God exhausted himself, or limited himself, to the spheres dealt with in Scripture. The true view is that God *illustrated* himself there. Cyrus is the man in common life of whom God says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." We see God's selections in the fitting of men to places, men of genius and common men, the Tennysons and ourselves.

III. FROM THE SPHERE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Here too there are evidently *elect* men and women; but we need to see that God has no "pets," only "servants"—men whose fitnesses are recognized, and who are consequently selected for office to praise, to preach, to pray, or variously to minister to the Church's needs.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The supreme promise.* "I am with thee." This assurance is the application of that truth of God's infinite superiority to all idols on which the prophet has been, sometimes so seriously, and sometimes so scornfully, dwelling. Here is the argument—God is God alone. He is your God. He is with you. It is a promise specially adapted to the apparently helpless and hopeless condition of Israel in Babylon. There was no relief to the darkness that hung about them, but there was this comfort in the darkness—the almighty, all-wise, all-creating, all-controlling God, was *with them*, and their trust in him was security for their safety, and for their coming out into the light by-and-by, for he was *their God*. Matthew Henry paraphrases the text in this way, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those who are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will keep thee in time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments." The verse, setting before us such varied assurances of Divine help, upholding, and strengthening, seems to bid us think of all that the presence of God with us may be thought to include. If he is, indeed, our God, then—

I. HE KNOWS US. We often distinguish between the outside person, who is interested in us and knows *about us*, and the friend in intimate personal relations, who *knows us*. We are permitted to think of God as the Friend in close fellowship, from whom none of our secrets are hid. He is the safe Friend, of whose wise help we are always assured, and in whom we may fully trust, because of the knowledge which his love brings.

II. HE PROVIDES FOR US. This is the work of him who is our *God*, and on whom we are dependent. But it is precious to be assured that he is in gracious relations with us, and will do for us his good work.

III. HE DEFENDS US. If with us, then "greater is he who is with us than all who can be against us." "What terror can confound me, with God at my right hand?"

IV. HE CORRECTS US. When we know ourselves, and our own frailties and inability to walk alone, we find that God, who can chasten and will chasten, who "corrects in measure," and "scourges every son whom he receives," is the God in whose constant presence we can rejoice.

V. HE GUIDES US. If with us, he must go first, for he is our God. And the darkness does not matter if he is first—on before, only just before. It must be a plain path, and a safe path, when we simply follow his footsteps.

VI. HE REDEEMS US. This is the large word which embraces all the material and spiritual needs we can know. Israel wanted redemption from captivity: God gave that. Israel wanted redemption from idolatry: God gave that. Israel even wanted redemption from "bad self," and, if they would have it so, God would give even that.—R. T.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The supreme prayer.* "Lord, help me;" responded to by God in the gracious assurance, "I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Likening Israel to a worm, reminds us of its despised and depressed condition in captivity. "However weak and despised and trodden underfoot thou mayest be, in thy captivity and exile, yet fear not, I will help thee." It is a painful suggestion of hopelessness and helplessness that no cry can now rise but the brief, intense, "Lord, help me." And yet it is full of hope that any cry at all can rise, and that, even in despair, men are turning yearning eyes toward God. Of this we may be assured, when man cries, out of the depths, his cry, "Lord, help me," God will answer, out of his heavens, "I will help thee." The associations of the ancient *goêl*, or family avenger, may be used in illustration, as the word translated "Redeemer" is in the original *Goêl*. And the certainty of response to prayer by him who liveth, and is our God and Father, may be illustrated by an incident in the life of Luther. Usually he was of a cheerful temperament, but he was subject to occasional fits of severe depression. Once, when nothing seemed to avail, he was induced to leave home for a few days, in the hope that he might recover his cheerfulness; but he returned with a cloudy and dejected countenance. How great was his surprise, on entering the house, to find his wife seated in the middle of the room, attired in black garments, and with a mourning cloak thrown over her, while she pressed to her eyes her handkerchief, as if weeping bitterly! He eagerly inquired the cause of her distress, which she seemed loth at first to communicate; but on his again imploring her to speak, she answered, "Only think, dear doctor, our Father in heaven is dead! Judge if I have not cause for my grief." Upon this, immediately comprehending her riddle, he laughed, and embracing her, said, "You are right, dear Kate; I am acting as if there were no God in heaven;" and from that hour his melancholy left him. Only two points are suggested for elaboration and illustration.

I. PRAYER NEVER REACHES ITS FULL INTENSITY WHILE IT CAN BE SET IN HUMAN WORDS. We say the same of grief. It never hurts, or imperils reason or life, while it can find expression. Silent grief hurts. A man is not utterly broken down while he can make a prayer and express his wants.

II. PRAYER REACHES ITS INTENSITY WHEN IT CAN BE NO MORE THAN A VOICELESS CRY. A simple "Lord, help me." When the soul is quite full there can be no utterance. A man must go into the presence of God, and leave him to read heart, thought, and desire. Such experiences only come at times into any life. Yet they are the times when we are most really, most wholly, cast on God. Here is a sacred paradox—our best times of prayer are the times when we cannot pray.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Doing surprising things in the strength of God.* Compare with the very

striking figure of this text, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." While there may be designed prophetical allusion to the mastery of Babylonian evils, to the triumphs of the Maccabean era, and to the spiritual victories of Messiah, the general meaning of the figure is that Israel, in the strength of Jehovah, shall overcome all the obstacles to the fulfilment of his destiny. Porter describes the "threshing-instruments" as "flat, heavy, wooden slabs, some five feet long by three wide, slightly turned up in front. The under surface is thickly studded with nobs of hard stone or iron. A massive prison door, with its rows of projecting nail-heads, will give the best idea of a *mowrej*, as the instrument is now called. Each is drawn by a 'yoke of oxen.' The driver stands on the *mowrej*, urging the oxen on with his formidable ox-goad. The oxen advance in front, 'treading out the grain,' and the *mowrej* follows, crushing and cutting the straw with its 'teeth,' till it is reduced almost to dust." With this instrument the Roman *tribulum*, from which we get our suggestive word "tribulation," should be compared. There is a marked poetical exaggeration in the association of a threshing-instrument with hills and mountains, designed to impress on us that "nothing is too hard for the Lord," or for his people when they are strengthened by him. Making application of the text to our own circumstances, we note—

I. LIFE AS A WHOLE OFTEN SEEMS BEYOND US; out of our control; we fear to enter on it—we feel we cannot make the best of it. It is so with only such expectations as we can form, on the basis of what is known of other men's lives. It would indeed be so, if God were to show us beforehand the scenes through which we were to be led. Yet let us but lay hold of the strength of God, and our whole life shall be a mountain which we shall thresh and beat small. It shall not master us; we will master it, and make it yield its best.

II. THE SPECIAL DEMANDS OF LIFE OFTEN SEEM BEYOND US. Face to face with duty, we anxiously say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" For us to undertake these duties seems as absurd as for a *mowrej* to think of threshing a mountain. And yet experience abundantly confirms the fact that, when a man is called of God to do anything, God surely gives him strength for the doing. What is "impossible with men is possible with God," and with all those whom God aids. For things that are *right* there is no such word as "impossible" in a Christian's vocabulary. Compare Jonathan defeating the Philistines, David overcoming Goliath, and the Apostle Paul saying, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." We have often seen the marvel of God's overcomings when the pressure of circumstances was extreme, and the thwarting of enemies painful. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [the God-helped man] thou shalt become a plain."—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The helplessness of idols.* Before God can hopefully intervene on behalf of man, man must have become thoroughly convinced of his own helplessness, and of the insufficiency of all on whom he is disposed to rely. In the time of the Babylonish captivity, many, surrounded day by day with idolatrous sentiments and associations, would incline to reliance on these idols, and to seeking help and deliverance from them. Therefore the prophet, by solemn warnings, by satire and taunt, strives to break God's people away from all such vain confidences. We have some idea of the boastings of the Assyrians in the power of their idol-gods given in the Rabshakeh's messages to Hezekiah. He glories in the superiority of the Assyrian gods over all the gods of the conquered nations; and the discouraged exiles might be tempted to say, "Even our God, Jehovah, could not stand against these Assyrian gods; then let us seek to them for help and deliverance." And if such formal idolatries belong to the past, answering spiritual idolatries belong to the present; and we also are ready enough to turn away from God, when he does not let things be "according to our mind," and we easily take up with idol-devices of our own hearts. So Israel and we may profitably be reminded that all self-made idols are vanity, and must utterly fail all who put their trust in them when the testing-day comes. In our text the idol-claimants are put to a test. Let them *do something.* Helpless things! A great deal is *done for them;* now let things be turned about, and let them do something. We need not be over-particular. If it is inconvenient for them to do something good, let them do something evil—only let it be

something. But they cannot. "They are of nothing, and their work of nought" (see 1 Cor. viii. 4). Cheyne says, "The Divine Speaker waives the question of foreknowledge, and makes the least requirement possible. 'Prove that you are alive, by performing some act whether good (for your friends) or bad (for your foes).' Or, we may empty the terms 'good' and 'evil' of their moral meaning, and suppose them to be used proverbially to express the one simple notion of *anything*, exactly as the two words 'right and left' merely conveyed the idea of *anywhere*." Matthew Henry paraphrases thus: "Let them do, if they can, anything extraordinary, that people may admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse, with power. Let us see them inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt, or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God." The point suggested for illustration is that it would be well to put nineteenth-century idols also to the test, and see whether they are worthy of confidence because they have power to do either good or evil. What may be regarded as idols must be decided by each teacher of men for himself. We can only venture to hint that the following may come under the denomination. Indeed, an idol is anything which so occupies the interest of man as to push God out of his supreme place in man's affection and service.

I. THE IDOL OF SCIENCE. Worshipped by many in our day. What can it do? What can it do towards meeting the spiritual need, the sense of sin, the soul-cry, of man? And it can do nothing if it can bear no relation to them.

II. THE IDOL OF LUXURY. Pleasure has numberless votaries, who delight in her service. Yet is she but the syren, who floats on, just a little in front, luring her worshippers into heedlessness of the black storms that are gathering in the sky. What can she do in the day of calamity? Then her votaries find she is "all vanity, and her works are nothing."

III. THE IDOL OF SELF. Taking often very interesting shapes, as socialistic theories of man's regeneration by man. Very attractive is the notion that all earth-woes would fade away if only men would bind themselves together in a universal "Help-Myself" Society. And yet the story of the ages is the ever-fresh illustration of the fact that it is not, and it never has been, in "man that walketh to direct his steps." Ask "Self" what it can do for our best and highest interests, and it is as dumb as any idol-block. None hear, and there is no one to answer. Only when the claims of idol Self had been thoroughly worked out, and "man by his wisdom evidently knew not God," did Divine love intervene and send the Son. The "fulness of times" was precisely the time when helpless "Self" was proved to be of nothing, and his works of nought. And yet round these and other idol-shrines men crowd to-day, and need to hear the solemn appeal of the last of Christ's apostles, "Little children, *keep yourselves from idols*."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLII.

Vers. 1—8.—ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, AND THE WORK WHICH HE WILL PERFORM. There are comparatively few who deny that, in this place at any rate, the "Servant of the Lord" is the Messiah. (So the Targum on the passage; so Abarbarnel; so, among moderns, Oehler, Delitzsch, and Mr. Cheyne.) The portraiture has "so strong an individuality and such marked personal features, that it cannot possibly be a mere personified collective;" and it goes so "infinitely beyond anything of which a man was ever capable that it can only be the future Christ" (Delitzsch). It may be added that St. Matthew (xii. 17—21) distinctly applies the passage to our Lord.

Ver. 1.—**Behold.** "Behold," as Mr. Cheyne says, "invites the attention of the world—both of the Jews and of the nations—to a new revelation." It looks back to the similar expression of vers. 24 and 29 of the preceding chapter, which draw down the curtain upon the idol-gods, while this "behold" reveals One who is to occupy their place, and to be a worthy object of the worship of mankind. **My Servant**; *i.e.* my true and perfect servant, utterly obedient (John iv. 34; Heb. iii. 2); not, like Israel, my rebellious and faithless servant; not, even, like my prophets, yielding an imperfect obe-

dience. **Whom I uphold.** "As the Father hath life in himself, so *hath he given* to the Son to have life in himself" (John v. 26). As the fount or origin of Divinity (*πηγὴ Θεότητος*), the Father supports and sustains even the Son and the Spirit. **Mine Elect** (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 6). Christ was "chosen" from all eternity in God's counsels to the great work of man's redemption, and to be the Mediator beween God and man. **I have put my Spirit upon him** (see ch. xi. 2; lxi. 1; and for the fulfilment, comp. Luke ii. 40; iii. 22; iv. 18—21; iii. 34). **He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;** *i.e.* "he shall publish," or "cause to be published, to the Gentiles, the true Law of God—religion on its practical side." The publication of Christianity throughout all the world has abundantly fulfilled this promise or prophecy. The call of the Gentiles had been already declared by Isaiah in his earlier preaching (ch. ii. 2; **xi.** 10; **xix.** 22—25; **xxv.** 6; xxvii. 13, etc.).

Ver. 2.—**He shall not cry, nor lift up.** Supply, after "lift up," "his voice" from the next clause. His methods shall be quiet and gentle. He shall not seek to recommend his teaching by clamour or noisy demonstrations. There shall be a marked unobtrusiveness in all his doings (comp. Matt. viii. 4; ix. 30; xii. 15; xiv. 13; John v. 13; **vi.** 15; vii. 3, 4; viii. 59; **x.** 40, etc.).

Ver. 3.—**A bruised reed shall he not break.** Egypt was compared to a "bruised reed" by Sennacherib (ch. xxxvi. 6), as being untrustworthy and destitute of physical strength; but here the image represents the weak and depressed in spirit, the lowly and dejected. Christ would deal tenderly with such, not violently. **Smoking flax shall he not quench;** rather, *the wick which burns dimly* (margin) *he shall not quench.* Where the flame of devotion burns at all, however feebly and dimly, Messiah will take care not to quench it. Rather he will tend it, and trim it, and give it fresh oil, and cause it to burn more brightly. **He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.** But with all this tenderness, this "economy," this allowance for the shortcomings and weaknesses of individuals, he will be uncompromising in his assertion of absolute justice and absolute truth. He will sanction nothing short of the very highest standard of moral purity and excellence. (For an instance of the combination of extreme tenderness with unswerving maintenance of an absolute standard, see John viii. 8—11.)

Ver. 4.—**He shall not fail nor be discouraged;** literally, *he will not burn dimly nor be bruised.* He will himself show no signs of that weakness which he will compassionate in others. As a "Light" (Luke ii. 32; John i. 4—9), he will burn brightly and strongly; as a Reed, or Rod, he will be firm and unbroken. **Till he have set judgment in the earth;** *i.e.* till he has succeeded in establishing true religion upon the earth (compare the last clause of ver. 1). **The isles;** or, *the countries* (comp. ch. xli. 1, 5). **Shall wait for his Law;** or, *shall long for his Law. Yákhal* is "to wait longingly." It is, as Delitzsch observes, "an actual fact that the cry for redemption runs through the whole human race." They are possessed by "an earnest longing, the ultimate object of which is, however unconsciously, the Servant of Jehovah, and his instruction from Zion" ('Comment. on Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 177).

Ver. 5.—**Thus saith God the Lord;** literally, *thus saith the (One) God, Jehovah.* The entire utterance, vers. 1—4, is the utterance of God; but, as that fact is gathered by inference, not asserted, the prophet suddenly stops, and makes a new beginning. It must be made perfectly clear that the announcement of the "Servant of the Lord" and his mission are from the Almighty; and so we have the solemn announcement of the present verse. **He that created the heavens,** etc. (comp. ch. xl. 12, 22). **The earth, and that which cometh out of it;** *i.e.* all that the earth produces—gold, and silver, and precious stones, and corn, and wine, and luscious fruits, and lovely flowers—all that sustains life, and all that makes life delightful—nay more, *life* itself—the breath and the spirit that make men living beings.

Ver. 6.—**I the Lord have called thee in righteousness.** The "Servant of Jehovah" is addressed. God has "called" him; *i.e.* appointed him to his mediatorial office "in righteousness," in accordance with the righteous purpose which he has entertained towards his fallen creatures from the beginning of the world. **And will give thee for a Covenant of the people** (comp. ch. xlix. 8). The covenant between God and his people being in Christ, it is quite consistent with Hebrew usage to transfer the term to Christ himself, in whom the covenant was, as it were, embodied. So Christ is called "our Salvation" and "our Peace," and again, "our Redemption" and "our Life." This is the ordinary tone of Hebrew poetry, which rejoices in personification and embodiment. A prose writer would have said that the Servant of the Lord would be given as the Mediator of a covenant between Jehovah and his people. **For a Light of the Gentiles** (comp. ch. xlix. 6; li. 4).

Ver. 7.—**To open the blind eyes.** The Messiah was to cure both physical and spiritual blindness (see ch. xxix. 18; xxxii. 3; xxxv. 5, etc.). Here it is spiritual blindness that is specially intended, as appears both by the symbolic language of the two

conjoined clauses, and by the comment of vers. 16—19. **To bring out the prisoners from the prison**; rather, *to bring out prisoners*. To deliver from the bondage of sin such as are its slaves, and shut up in its prison-houses. The promise is general, but, like all spiritual promises, conditioned by the willingness of those who are its objects to avail themselves of it. **Them that sit in darkness** (comp. ch. ix. 2).

Ver. 8.—**I am the Lord**; rather, *I the Lord*. The sense runs on from the preceding verses: "I, the Lord, will do all this, I who am all that the Name 'Jehovah' signifies—self-existent, eternal, self-sufficing, independent, omnipotent, and therefore unique, one whose glory cannot be shared with any other being that exists—least of all with **images**, which are mere vanity and nothingness."

Vers. 9—17.—ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COMING DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL FROM BABYLON, AND CALL ON THE NATIONS FOR A SONG OF PRAISE AND JUBILATION. Jehovah is still the speaker. He begins by promising a new revelation (ver. 9). Then, before the revelation is made, he calls upon the nations—especially those in the vicinity of Palestine—to rejoice at what is about to happen (vers. 10—12). After this he proceeds to make the announcement promised in ver. 9—an announcement that he is about to deliver his people (ver. 16) and to execute vengeance on their enemies (vers. 13—15 and 17).

Ver. 9.—**Behold, the former things are come to pass**; *i.e.* former prophecies have been fulfilled. Israel has been led into captivity, and in her captivity has suffered grievous things. The reference is, perhaps, especially to such prophecies as ch. xxxix. 5—7. **And new things do I declare** (comp. ch. xliii. 19). The voluntary restoration of a captive people to their own land by the power to which they were subject, and which could compel their services, was emphatically a "new thing" in the world's history. How unwilling the sovereign power was ordinarily to lose such services may be seen by the narrative in Exodus (v.—xiv.), and again by the account which Herodotus gives (i. 73, 74) of the ground of quarrel between Alyattes and Cyaxares. **Before they spring forth**; or, *shoot forth*. The metaphor is one taken from the vegetable world (comp. ch. xliii. 19; xlv. 8).

Ver. 10.—**Sing unto the Lord a new song**. The call for a "new song" is based upon the ground that the mercy vouchsafed was a "new" one (see ver. 9). The expression is frequent in the Psalms (xxxiii. 3; xcvi. 1; xcviii. 1; cxliv. 9; cxlix. 1). **His praise from the end of the earth**; *i.e.* "let his praise be sung by all the inhabitants of the earth to its remotest bounds." **The sea.** Sea and land are called upon equally to proclaim God's praise; the sea, "and its fulness" (margin)—those who frequent it in ships, and those who dwell on its shores and islands. The last clause, "the isles and the inhabitants thereof," is exegetical of the preceding one—"all that is therein."

Ver. 11.—**The wilderness and the cities thereof.** The desert had its cities, built on some more or less fertile oases, where at any rate water was procurable. Instances of such cities are Tadmor, Petra, Kadesh (Numb. xx. 1). Its villages were probably collections of tents, which were moved from time to time, since the Beni-Kedar were nomads (ch. xxi. 16; Ps. cxx. 5). The call is upon both the stationary and the wandering inhabitants of the Syro-Arabian desert to join in the song of praise. **The inhabitants of the rock**; rather, *the inhabitants of Sela*, or Petra, the rock-city, which was the capital of Idumæa, or Edom (see the comment on ch. xvi. 1). It is assumed that the return of the Israelites to their land *ought* to be a subject of rejoicing to all their neighbours.

Ver. 12.—**Let them give glory unto the Lord . . . in the islands**; *i.e.* "let those who are in the islands," or the maritime tracts, "give glory to God"—a repetition of the last clause of ver. 10. The persistency with which the islands, or the maritime tracts of the west, are mentioned (ch. xli. 1, 5; xlii. 10, 12; xlix. 1, etc.) may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Christianity was to obtain its earliest and its most enduring triumphs in these regions.

Ver. 13.—**The Lord shall go forth.** The exhortation to "sing unto the Lord a new song" ends with ver. 12, and now the reason or groundwork for the exhortation has to be declared. God is about to make one of the great manifestations of his power upon the earth—to "go forth" against his enemies, and **destroy and devour, and easily prevail against** them—not, however, simply in the way of punishment and vengeance, but with a further merciful object. He will punish Babylon, that he may deliver Israel. He has promised not to forsake his people (ch. xli. 17). He is now about to give effect to his promise by a "new" and strange deliverance. He "will bring his people by a way that they knew not, and lead them in paths that they have not known" (ver. 16). It has been said that "in effect it is the day of judgment which is here described" (Cheyne); but this seems to be only so far true as every manifestation of God's wrath towards his enemies is a foreshadowing of

the great and awful day. The event directly in view is the destruction of the Babylonian power by the irresistible arms of Cyrus. Hence the allusion to idolaters and images in ver. 17. **As a mighty man . . . like a man of war.** (For similar anthropomorphisms, see Exod. xv. 3; Ps. xxiv. 8.) **He shall stir up jealousy**; *i.e.* his own jealousy. God is "a jealous God" (Exod. xx. 5), so much so that his very "name is Jealous" (Exod. xxxiv. 14). He is jealous for his own honour (*supra*, ver. 8), and jealous also for his people's honour and reputation and happiness. Occasionally he allows his jealousy to slumber (comp. Acts xii. 30, "The times of this ignorance God winked at"); and this he had now done for some fifty or sixty years, since his people were carried into captivity. But the time of acquiescence has gone by—he is about to waken up his "smouldering jealousy, and stir it, till it burns up into a bright flame" (Delitzsch). **He shall cry, yea, roar**; rather, *yea, shout*; i.e. utter his battle-cry with a clear, loud voice.

Ver. 14.—**I have long time holden my peace**; literally, *for an eternity*. God's love for his people is forcibly expressed by his saying that he has felt it "an eternity"—though it was but some five or six decades—while he was waiting for his chastisement to have such due effect as would allow of his bringing it to an end, and showing them mercy. He has chafed, as it were, under the necessity of inaction, and has with difficulty **refrained** himself. Now he will refrain no longer. **A travailing woman.** A woman in her travail, after long endurance, at last gives free vent to her natural feelings, and utters loud cries (compare the preceding verse). **I will destroy and devour at once** (so Gesenius, Kay, and the ancient versions). But the bulk of modern commentators render, "I will pant and gasp," as does a travailing woman.

Ver. 15.—**I will make waste mountains and hills.** The result of God's "stirring up his jealousy," and giving a free vent to his feelings, will be the destruction of the great and mighty ones of the earth (comp. ch. ii. 14). These are probably, in this place, the Babylonian kings and nobles. **Dry up all their herbs**; *i.e.* turn Babylonia, temporarily, into a desert. **Make the rivers islands, and dry up the pools.** Invert the established order of things—turn the rivers into dry land, and empty the reservoirs. There is, perhaps, some allusion to those dealings with the river-beds, which the Greek historians ascribe to Cyrus (Herod., i. 189, 191; Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 5, § 10), and which are not disproved by the fact that the one native account of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, which has come down to us, makes no mention of them.

Ver. 16.—**I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.** "The blind" here can only be captive Israel, still dim-sighted from the effect of its old sins against light, and therefore greatly needing God's guidance. God promises to "bring them" out of captivity "by a way not hitherto known to them"—the way of voluntary release by the favour of a new king (see the comment on ver. 9). **I will make darkness light before them**; either, *I will illuminate with rays of light and hope the dark and cheerless life that they have been leading* (Delitzsch), or, *I will throw light upon that dark future which has hitherto stretched before them, and allow them to penetrate its obscurity, and see what is about to happen.* **Crooked things**; rather, *rough places*; i.e. difficulties of any and every kind. **Straight**; rather, *smooth, level, plain.* **These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.** Dr. Kay translates, "These things *have I done*, and *have not forsaken* them;" Mr. Cheyne, "These are the things that I will do, and will not let them slip;" Delitzsch, "These are the things that I carry out and do not leave." According to the two latter renderings, the clause is a mere solemn confirmation of the previous promises.

Ver. 17.—**They shall be turned back**, etc. While the people of God are led by God's hand through new paths, and are illumined with abundant light, and have their difficulties smoothed away from before them, their idolatrous oppressors will be "turned back" or suffer defeat, and be put to shame, finding no help from their idols, whose powerlessness will be openly shown, to the utter confusion of their votaries.

Vers. 18—25.—ADDRESS TO CAPTIVE ISRAEL, CALLING UPON THEM TO TURN TO GOD, AND REMINDING THEM THAT THEY HAVE DESERVED THEIR AFFLICTIONS. By some critics the earlier verses of this passage (vers. 19—21) are regarded as having reference to the "Servant of the Lord" depicted in vers. 1—7, and as calling on the captive Jews to consider his voluntary humiliation, and the object of it But this view seems to be strained. It requires "deaf" and "blind" to be taken in completely different senses in the two consecutive verses, 18 and 19. Probably Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne are right in taking the whole passage of captive Israel, and especially of that "outer circle" which was least deserving of God's favour and most open to rebuke and reproach. These "blind" and "deaf" ones are warned that it is high time for them to unclose their eyes

and open their ears, and are reminded that all their recent and present sufferings arise from their former "blindness" and disobedience.

Ver. 18.—**Hear, ye deaf.** The "deaf" are not absolutely without hearing, nor the "blind" absolutely without sight. They can "hear" and "see," if they choose to do so. When they do not see, it is because they "wink with their eyes" (Matt. xiii. 15); when they do not hear, it is because, like the deaf adder, they "stop their ears" (Ps. lviii. 4). This, at any rate, is the case with the majority. There may be some who have deadened their moral vision altogether, and have no longer any "ears to hear." God, however, addresses the mass of Israel as still possessed of moral discernment, if they will but use it, and calls upon them to wake up out of sleep—to "hear" and "see."

Ver. 19.—**Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger?** God's original "servant" and "messenger" to the nations was his people Israel. It was only through their default that he needed to send another and truer messenger. He now asks, having regard to their opportunities, who are so blind and deaf as they are? The object of the question is to wake a feeling of shame in the hearts of those who are not shameless among the Israelites. **That I sent**; rather, *whom I will send.* Israel's mediatorial office was not yet over. They were still, for above five hundred years, to be God's messenger to the nations. **As he that is perfect**; rather, *as he that receives reward from me* (see Prov. xi. 31; xiii. 13). The word used is connected etymologically with the Arabic *muslim* (our "Moslem"); but it does not appear to have had the sense of "surrender" or "submission" in Hebrew.

Ver. 20.—**Seeing many things, but,** etc. Israel had "seen many things;" *i.e.* passed through a long experience, but not profited by it—not been "observant," as they should have been. They had had their ears open in a certain sense, and heard the words that the prophets addressed to them, but had not taken in their true import. (The mixture of persons is like that in ch. i. 29 and xiv. 30.)

Ver. 21.—**The Lord is well pleased**; rather, *the Lord was pleased,* or *it pleased the Lord.* **For his righteousness' sake**; "because of his own perfect righteousness." **He will magnify the Law**; rather, *to magnify the Law*—to set it forth in its greatness and its glory before his people. It is not the original giving of the Law at Sinai only that is meant, but also its constant inculcation by a long series of prophets. Israel's experience (ver. 20) had included all this; but they had not profited by the instruction addressed to them.

Ver. 22.—**But this is a people,** etc.; *i.e.* yet, notwithstanding all that has been done for it, see the condition into which this people has brought itself. For their sins, here they are in Babylonia, **robbed and spoiled**—*i.e.* suffering oppression and wrong—**snared in holes,** or taken in their enemies' pits (Ps. cxix. 85), and, some of them, **hid in prison-houses** (see 2 Kings xxv. 27), expiating by their punishments the long series of their offences.

Ver. 23.—**Who among you will give ear?** Surely there are some among you, less hardened than the rest, who will take advantage of my warning, and repent at this, the eleventh hour. God's arm was straitened; the people could not be delivered out of captivity unless they ceased in large numbers to be "blind" and "deaf"—unless they listened to the prophet's words, and profited by them.

Ver. 24.—**Jacob . . . Israel** (comp. ch. xl. 27; xli. 8, 14; xliii. 1, etc.). **He against whom we have sinned.** The prophet identifies himself with his people in loving sympathy, just as Daniel does in ch. ix. 5—15, and Ezra in ch. ix. 6—15, of their respective books (comp. also ch. lix. 9—13).

Ver. 25.—**Therefore he hath poured upon him . . . the strength of battle**; *i.e.* for this cause, on account of their iniquities, did God bring upon his people the scourge of foreign war, and allow the Babylonians to waste Judæa, to destroy Jerusalem, and to lead into captivity the entire nation (comp. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—17). **It hath set him on fire**; rather, *it* (*i.e.* the war) *set him on fire.* The reference is, perhaps, especially to the burning of Jerusalem by Nebuzar-adan (2 Kings xxv. 9); but the phrase will cover also the general devastation of the land both before and after this event (Jer. xxxix.—xlii.). **He knew not**; rather, *he took no notice;* he did not change his ways on account of the chastisement. The prophet's view is that Israel, as a whole, was not greatly bettered by the Captivity, at any rate up to the time which he takes for his standpoint, and at which he supposes himself to be addressing them.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The servants of God, and the one true Servant.* It must be admitted by all that the expression "Servant of God," or "Servant of Jehovah," is used in

Scripture in various senses. All who work out God's purposes, however unconsciously or even unwillingly, are called by the sacred writers "God's servants," in respect of the service, albeit unconscious or unwilling, which they render him. Thus Jeremiah calls Nebuchadnezzar "God's servant" (xxv. 9; xxvii. 6, etc.), and Ezekiel speaks of the "wages" due to him because he and his army "served a good service" on God's behalf against Tyre (xxix. 18). In quite a different sense, the Israelites generally are called God's servants, not as actually rendering him any service at all, but as bound by covenant to be his servants, engaged in his service by contract, however they might break the contract, reject his service, rebel against him, and choose for themselves "other lords" (ch. xxvi. 13). In a third sense, different from both of these, the faithful Israelites, those who earnestly endeavoured to serve God, are called his servants, partly as bound by covenant, like the unfaithful servants, but mainly as consciously and intentionally working for God, and doing him "true and laudable service." Such service, however, must always have been, at the best, imperfect, falling very far short of that entire fidelity and complete obedience which God requires and which man ought to render. Hence, when a servant is spoken of with whom no fault is found—a servant who never "fails" (ver. 4), whom God holds always by the hand (ver. 6), who is to give a law to the nations (ver. 4), and to "bring forth judgment unto truth" (ver. 3), in whom, moreover, "God's soul delighteth" (ver. 1),—we may be sure that it is not faithful Israel that is intended. Of faithful Israel—even of the faithfullest in Israel, whether prophet, priest, or king—none of these things could be predicated. Isaiah would not speak of any prophet, least of all, of himself, in the terms wherewith he describes "the Servant of Jehovah" in this passage. No; One is proclaimed to us greater than the sons of men—the perfect model of a "servant of God," obedient in all things, unceasingly active in God's service, never fainting, never wearying. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Jesus (John v. 17); "My meat is to do the will of my Father which sent me, and to finish his work" (John iv. 34); "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49).

Vers. 10—12.—*The duty of sympathizing with the joys of others.* Compassion for those who suffer is a strong and powerful feeling, well developed in human nature, and widely spread among all classes and conditions of men. A real feeling of glad sympathy with those who are exceptionally prosperous is a far rarer emotion, and seldom attains any great intensity. Yet, in the nature of things, the two duties would seem to be co-ordinate and to balance each other. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). In the present passage of Isaiah the whole world seems to be called upon to sympathize with Israel's deliverance from captivity, and its consequences, which were the re-establishment of a visible Church of God upon the earth—a Church which would be a perpetual witness for him, and out of which, in a certain sense, would be developed that "Church of Christ," against which the gates of hell would not prevail, and which would continue "even to the end of the world." No doubt the whole world was interested in these results, and might thus be regarded as having reason to rejoice for their own sake; but the call made upon them is not rested on any such grounds. It bases itself simply on the general duty of good will which men owe to their fellows. Here we may note two forms of the duty.

I. AS INDIVIDUALS, WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE JOY AND PROSPERITY OF OUR NEIGHBOURS. Condolence is common; congratulation is less frequent. Our neighbours' successes and triumphs too often raise in us a certain feeling of jealousy and discontent, which prevents us from offering congratulations, or makes those that we offer insincere. "Why are they so much more favoured than ourselves? What have they done to deserve their advancement?" All such thoughts ought to be put aside. "It is God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the earth." All prosperity is from God—at the least, allowed by him. We are bound, by the love that we ought to bear to our fellow-men, to be glad when good befalls them—to put ourselves and our own claims and deservings out of sight, and simply to rejoice in their joy.

II. AS MEMBERS OF A NATION, WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE JOY AND PROSPERITY OF NEIGHBOURING NATIONS. The indifferent Beni-Kedar, the hostile Idumæans, are required by God to sing a song of praise for Israel's restoration to their own country. The isles and maritime tracts of the West are to do the same. Nations are, all of

them, members of the one human family, intimately connected one with another, and bound to have friendly feelings one towards another. Petty quarrels and differences, such as crop up between near relations, and still more between neighbouring peoples, should not be allowed to overpower the general sentiment of good will, or to prevent the exhibition of sympathy when occasion arises. National enmities would be greatly softened if nations generally would show satisfaction in each other's successes and prosperity, even if such an exhibition of satisfaction were limited to cases where the success gained by the one in no way interfered with the interests of the other.

Vers. 18—25.—*The blindness of Israel.* The "blindness" of Israel is a subject of continual remark in Scripture from the time of Moses (Deut. xxviii. 28, 29) to that of St. Paul (Rom. xi. 25). Four things may be noted of it.

I. IT IS SELF-CAUSED. The Israelites "blinded themselves," and so became blind (ch. xxix. 9, with the comment). They "winked with their eyes," closed them against the light which shone on them from on high, and thus gradually by disuse lost the power of spiritual discernment (see the homiletics on ch. xxix. 9, 10). The process is a natural one. It is a law of nature that every disused part of an organism shall dwindle away and decay. "There are certain burrowing animals—the mole, for instance—which have taken to spending their lives beneath the surface of the ground. And Nature has taken her revenge upon them in a thoroughly natural way—she has closed up their eyes. If they mean to live in darkness, she argues, eyes are obviously a superfluous function. By neglecting them, these animals made it clear that they did not want them. And as one of Nature's fixed principles is that nothing shall exist in vain, the eyes are presently taken away, or reduced to a rudimentary state. There are fishes which have had to pay the same terrible forfeit for having made their abode in dark caverns, where eyes can never be required. And in exactly the same way the spiritual eye must die and lose its power by purely natural law, if the soul choose to walk in darkness rather than light" (see Mr. Henry Drummond's 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World,' pp. 110, 111).

II. IT IS NEVERTHELESS A DIVINE JUDGMENT ON THEM. Nature's laws are God's decrees. In making it a law of nature that destruction of an organ or a function should follow disuse, God was passing a sentence on those who wilfully scorned any of his gifts. Hence he is constantly said in Scripture to "blind men's eyes" and "harden their hearts" (Exod. iv. 21; ix. 12; Deut. xxviii. 28; Matt. xii. 16; John xii. 40; Rom. xi. 8, etc.), and Israel's "blindness" is distinctly ascribed to him in ch. vi. 10; xxix. 10. "*Because* they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 28).

III. IT IS PARTIAL. "Blindness *in part* is happened unto Israel" (Rom. xi. 25). At no time did God leave himself without a witness. At no time did the whole of Israel become blind. At the worst period of the Phœnician idolatry, there were yet in Samaria seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings xix. 18). In Isaiah's time, God had still left him in Judah a "remnant" (ch. i. 9; x. 20; xlvi. 3). When our Lord came, it was from among the Israelites that he gathered his "little flock" (Luke xii. 32). Since then in every age there have been converts—many of them "shining lights"—to Christianity from Judaism. Even now the Christian will not lightly let fall the hope of an ultimate great in-gathering of Israel into the one fold. "The veil shall be taken away" some day (2 Cor. iii. 16), and then shall Israel "turn to the Lord" and worship his Christ.

IV. IT IS, TO SOME EXTENT, CURABLE. Isaiah calls upon the blind to "look, that they may see" (ver. 18). There are infinite intermediate conditions between perfectly healthy sight and absolute blindness. Comparatively few of the Israelites were at any time absolutely blind. The great majority were more or less *dim-sighted.* So long as this is the case, whether physically or morally, there is a possibility of recovery. The organ is not destroyed; it may by care and use be rendered capable of once more properly performing its function. Isaiah speaks of a time when "the eyes of the blind would see out of obscurity and out of darkness" (ch. xxix. 18). May it not be hoped that the time is approaching for the Jewish people—the time when "Israel after the flesh" will once more become an important portion of the "Israel of God"?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The Servant of Jehovah.* "Behold!" Let all the world hearken and attend to the new revelation. It is admitted that the conception is substantially that of Christ in the Gospels. According to one critic, indeed, the prophetic passage springs from the time of Herod II. Let us think, then, of Jesus and his mission.

I. THE ELECT OF GOD. Six times does the word occur in this portion of Isaiah; it is found also in Ps. lxxxix. 3; cv. 6, 43; cvi. 5, 23. He has been endowed with God's Spirit, anointed for a special mission, for a high and arduous task; and this is to publish the Law, the practical religion of Jehovah, to the nations of the earth. "All religions claim to be laws; biblical religion dwells with increasing earnestness on the moral as opposed to the ritual law."

II. HIS METHODS. They are gentle, quiet, spiritual. He speaks, not in the loud voice of passionate debate and contention, but with the still small voice of reasonable persuasion. He does not come to crush life, but to develop it; not to despise the weak, but to encourage and raise them. The crushed reed is the very type of helplessness; the dimly burning wick of ignorance of the best. It has been designated as the religion of condescension. When it came into the world, it found the multitude crushed beneath the yoke of political oppression, exhausted by the demands of heathen ritualism, yet longing for health and salvation; it stooped to them and blessed them. He himself is as a brightly burning Lamp, and a Reed, "a humble Plant;" unlike others, "covered with leaves, or hardened in their stalk." In a spirit of strict truthfulness, for this end born and brought into the world, he shall proceed to establish justice and true religion on the earth. He shall be the nations' Desire; and they shall wait in longing upon him (cf. Matt. xii. 17—21). Such is Christianity, as it exists in the mind of its Author, and as it appears in the world, pursuing its beneficent way, in spite of all revolutions, and of all religious changes and controversies.—J.

Vers. 5—9.—*Mission of Jehovah's Servant.* "A new revelation defines the mission of the Servant with greater precision. The plan of the mission requires an exhibition of the Divine wisdom and power on as large a scale as in creation and preservation (cf. Zech. xii. 1)" (Cheyne).

I. THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD. He is *the* God—the only God (cf. Ps. lxxxv. 9). He can admit no rival; he stands in a unique relation to the world—is alone to be worshipped. He is the Creator: his work is the heaven and the earth, and the people. The breath of life is by him breathed into his creatures. The universe is entirely subject to him, and he has the right to appoint whom he will to be the minister and channel of his favours to men. To the appointed Messiah, then, due reverence is to be paid.

II. HIS COVENANT WITH ISRAEL AND MANKIND. There is a covenant with the chosen people, and through them all nations are to own him as God. Generally the righteousness of God stands for the goodness of God, manifested to his world in the whole scheme and agency of salvation. "I have done this as a righteous and just God, and in accomplishment of my righteous purposes. I am the just moral Governor of the universe, and have designated thee to this work, in the accomplishment of those purposes."

III. THE MEDIATOR OF THE COVENANT. God holds his hand in his. What strength, then; what grace and Divine communication must there not be with the Mediator, who will be guided and guarded, will be visibly in the enjoyment of the Divine favour! And so the Mediator himself is called a Covenant—the personal realization of God's thought and purpose to the people—the embodiment of that spiritual relation announced in vers. 30, 31, etc. Another of his names is Light. Being Intelligence in himself, the Wisdom of God, he will diffuse it among the nations: bringing men out of their spiritual blindness and the prison-house and confinement of spiritual distress (Ps. cvii. 10; Job xxxvi. 8). "Such is the freedom the gospel imparts; nor can there be a more striking description of its happy effects on the minds and hearts of darkened and wretched men" (1 Pet. ii. 9).

IV. THE SOLEMN ASSURANCE. Jehovah now turns to the people, and assures them

that he is the only true God, and jealously claims a sole and undivided homage. He is "the Eternal." The name includes "the unique reality, and power to confer reality, of the Divine Being." His glory he will not give to another; for were such a God's prediction to fail, he would sink to a lower level than the imaginary deities, who have, at any rate, not deluded their worshippers. But the earlier predictions have been fulfilled—those against the Babylonians or Assyrians; and the new things, later and more splendid—the deliverances of the Jews—will in like manner be fulfilled. The plant is contained in the seed; the event in the mind; the fulfilment in the Word of Jehovah (ch. ix. 8; lv. 10, 11; Amos iii. 7).—J.

Vers. 10—25.—*A new song to Jehovah.* Caught up in his ecstasy to a high place of vision, the prophet sees all the nations of mankind deriving blessing from the ministry of Israel, and calls upon them to join in a song of praise. God's goodness in providing a Redeemer demands the thanksgiving of all the world.

I. THE SONG AND THE SINGERS. The new song is named in the Psalter (xcvi. 1; xcviii. 1), meaning a song inspired by the sense of new mercies. All parts of the earth are to join in the chorus: the sailors, and even all the finny inhabitants of the deep (Ps. xxxiv. 1); the nomads and the dwellers in cities and among the rocks,—shall join to swell the volume of this mighty song.

II. THE GREAT DEEDS OF THE ALMIGHTY. It is a great and terrible day of Jehovah. He, breaking his long silence and reserve, will march forth like a mighty hero, with a loud battle-shout, and put forth all his prowess. (For similar pictures of the God of war, see ch. xxviii. 21; xxxi. 4; lix. 16, 17; Zech. ix. 13, 14; xiv. 3.) The whole imagery bespeaks the most intense emotion. God may be silent, may seem to disregard the prayers of his people; but he is not dead, nor is he sleeping, like a Baal. He is waiting; he is ripening his purposes. He is looking for his opportunity. When he comes forth his progress will be marked by *judgment* and by *redemption*. These are the two sides, the dark and the bright, of his work. As Judge and Avenger, he will devastate the mountains and hills—the high places of heathendom; and the fertile vineyards on their slopes, and all the temples, fanes, and altars, will be demolished. Under the figures is expressed the coming of a great spiritual revolution. The old corrupt order and custom of the world must first give way before the new and holy can come in. And then, amidst the dismay of the false worshippers, light will at the same time appear to the righteous. "I will lead the blind by a way which they knew not; through paths they have not known I will make them to go: I will turn darkness into light before them, and rough places into a table-land. Those things I will surely do, and I will not let them slip." By the "blind" appears to be meant, not so much the spiritually ignorant as the perplexed, distressed, desponding—those who "walk in obscurity" (ch. lix. 9, 10). It is the language of *tenderness*, and the language of strong assurance, founded on superior knowledge. What more common than the experience of the Christian, "Darkness is about me; my way is hedged in; there is no outlook, no prospect"? Yet suddenly—it may be while he is on his knees, it may be in some moment of refreshing sleep—a change comes. The clouds lift; the hosts of the enemy fall back; the "large place" is reached. Then he sees how blind, how "faint-hearted, incredulous, and undiscerning" he has been. Let us tread the path of duty, which is the path of faith; it will surely lead, before our journey closes, out to those "shining table-lands to which our God himself is Sun and Moon." And let us lay the reproach of the "blind and deaf servant" to heart. We are among the faint-hearted and the incredulous—despite all our experience of God's goodness—whom he here addresses. We are like "the man of mature years and experience, by which he has failed to profit." And thus we are reduced to that mood of humility in which there is every hope. Why this contrast between the design of God to exalt his law of righteousness by means of Israel, and Israel's despoiled and captive estate? Clearly it is because of Israel's sins—because, though chosen of God, they would not walk in God's ways. So let every argument end between ourselves and God "that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Let us return unto him and be saved.—J.

Ver. 3.—*The tenderness of God.* "A bruised reed shall he not break." Then he is very unlike us. We are often over-indignant with wrong done to ourselves. We

find that there is an imperious temper in humanity, and that even parents sometimes "break" the spirit of their children. How many are discouraged and disheartened in life through a want of sympathy, through the coldness and hauteur of others!

I. THERE ARE BRUISINGS OF SIN. Christ will heal these. He never drives to despair. He might, indeed, *condemn*; for he knows all the subtle intricacies of evil in our hearts. But the Son of man is not come to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

II. THERE ARE BRUISINGS OF DOUBT. St. Thomas felt these, and he expresses his doubts with startling emphasis and boldness. But Christ is sympathetic even then—shows Thomas his hands and his side, and tells him to reach hither his hand. Alas! many have been driven into infidelity because their doubts have been treated as sins, and the bruised minds have been broken!

III. THERE ARE BRUISINGS OF SORROW. But God knows when godly sorrow has worked repentance not to be repented of. He knows when the poor heart is well-nigh crushed with grief at its departure from him. He does not delight in pain. The Roman emperors *did*. But he whose throne was a cross, and whose sceptre is love, he loves to *heal*.

In sin and doubt and sorrow, let us go to Christ alone.—W. M. S.

Ver. 4.—*Christ's sure conquest.* "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." We study this text in relation to our Saviour. *We* may be, and often are, discouraged; but the *Son*, he in whom, says Jehovah (ver. 1), "my soul delighteth," he never is. He *must* reign. All the infinite forces of love and righteousness are on his side. In God's world error can never be supreme over truth. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

I. THE SAVIOUR AND DIVINE CERTAINTY. He is expecting. All the true triumphs of the ages have been victories for him. What elevation to humanity has come with his truth! What beneficent enterprises have all had their inspiration from his cross! What fetters he has snapped! What prisons he has opened! All the vital forces of to-day are the forces he started in Judæa eighteen centuries ago. "He shall not fail;" for he lives to-day in ever-growing influence over the hearts of men. Madagascar has recently even, been won for his crown. We must, of course, take time into our estimate. "A thousand years are with the Lord as one day." It is a great work. His empire is the world. His kingdom is everlasting. The law of *preparation* seems related to the law of *duration*. A gourd springs up in a night but it lasts only for a day; whereas the oak, that monarch of the centuries, attains its perfection through the long course of years. We need not wonder that an "immortal kingdom" is of steady growth.

II. THE SAVIOUR AND TRIUMPHANT ENDURANCE. "He shall not . . . be discouraged." There is, indeed, much that might discourage—the slow victories of goodness, the enmity of the carnal mind! But Christ sees of the travail of his soul. He is not like us. We have need of the counsel, "Judge nothing before the time;" but he sees the end from the beginning.

What comfort this should be to all Christians! Why should *we* be discouraged? If the Leader is consciously invincible, how valiant and constant ought his followers to be! Discouragement means, on our part, unbelief.—W. M. S.

Ver. 4.—*The Christian's conquest.* "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." We study this next in relation to ourselves. The words suggest difficulties that task strength and patience. He, our blessed Lord, has a work, not only of Divine impulse, but Divine patience. The second verse describes the quiet work of Christ; the third describes the solicitous heart of Christ; the fourth describes the spirit which sustains him.

I. THIS PROPHECY SUGGESTS A DIFFICULT PATH OF PROGRESS. Why say this? 1. *There will be much that looks like failure judged by appearances.* 2. *There will be much that would exhaust human resources.* The strongest man would say, "I feel that, if left to myself, I could not continue."

II. THE PROPHECY STATES THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST. "He shall not fail." 1. *Preparative processes are related to permanent work.* 2. *Preliminary hindrances are nothing to the eye that sees the end.* 3. *Discouragements are overmastered by the infinite power of love.*

III. THE PROPHECY TEACHES US THAT THERE WILL BE AN ENTHRONEMENT OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY. Judgment. 1. *Christian judgment concerning sin.* A right estimate of its heinousness and its influences. 2. *Christian judgment concerning salvation.* What we mean by the power of Christ, not only to pardon, but to redeem life from evil.

IV. THE PROPHECY IS SUGGESTIVE OF WARNING TO US. 1. *How soon our energies get enfeebled!* 2. *How soon our hearts get discouraged!* 3. *How soon we lose the spirit of Christ!*

V. THE PROPHECY CLOSES WITH THE WAITING OF THE ISLES. Yes; they wait. 1. *Unconsciously seeking.* 2. *Can find no other Saviour.* 3. *Ultimately to be won to Christ.*—W. M. S.

Ver. 16.—*Light and right.* "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." These words are prophecy and history also; for Christ has fulfilled these words.

I. DARKNESS ILLUMINED. There was: 1. *Darkness over the face of God.* 2. *Darkness over the destiny of man.* But Christ has revealed the Divine fatherhood, and brought life and immortality to light.

II. WRONG RIGHTENED. Crooked or warped things have been twisted or "wrung"—from which our word "wrong" comes; and Christ Jesus has brought in an everlasting righteousness. 1. *Man's way was wrong.* 2. *Man's ideal was wrong, it was self instead of God.* 3. *Man's heart was wrong.* And there are "crooked" things in experience, in addition to crooked tastes and tempers. And Christ makes the path of duty clear to us, and removes the mountains from our paths.—W. M. S.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Spiritual blindness.* "Who is blind, but my servant?" It is said, "None are so blind as those that won't see." Can any be so blind as those who have been illumined of the Spirit, and who have seen the beauties of holiness, and the deformities of sin, whilst yet *they* turn back to their old paths?

I. THE BLINDNESS OF INDIFFERENCE. The heart has lost its first love, and the King is not "beautiful" now. Like human love sometimes, which does not know how blessed it is in its estate of home, until it is aroused by accident, danger, or death to a sense of the value of the heart it has slighted. So at times even the Christian becomes indifferent. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

II. THE BLINDNESS OF INATTENTION. (Ver. 20.) "Seeing many things, but thou *observest* not." 1. Christians do not always see the value of their principles. 2. Nor do they mark the privileges and comforts which are the outcome of faith. 3. Nor do they *observe* the misery of the men of this world. 4. Nor do they see the slave's fetters beneath the false liberty of the sinner. Others are blind by nature and habit. But who *so blind* as the Lord's servants?—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*The characteristics of the true Leader.* Taking these words as applicable to the Anointed of the Lord, and then, secondarily, to every one who is equipped and sent of him to lead and save men, we have the following features indicated.

I. THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE. "My Servant" (ver. 1). Jesus Christ was the Servant of Jehovah; he was "about his Father's business" from the beginning. He came "to work the work of him that sent him." It was his "meat to do the Father's will, and to finish his work." It was his joy to know, at the end of his career, that he had "finished the work which the Father had given him to do." The spirit of obedience, of active conformity to the known will of "him that sent him," possessed and characterized our Lord in a very marked degree.

II. THE EXCELLENCY WHICH ATTRACTS. "Whom I uphold; my Chosen, in whom my soul delighteth;" in other words, that One "in whom I am well pleased." There was in our Lord everything which satisfies and attracts. Excellency is often found in conjunction with characteristics which are so uninviting and even repelling that there is a measure of admiration felt, but no delight, no good pleasure; the soul is not drawn in affection and attachment. Jesus Christ was One in whose spirit, attitude, behaviour, was everything that called forth the pleasure of the Father, and that now evokes the love and the delight of his disciples.

III. RECIPIENCY OF THE HIGHEST GIFT. "I have put my Spirit upon him." God "gave not the Spirit by measure" unto him (John iii. 34), because he had an immeasurable capacity of receiving it. God's highest gifts to us depend, not on his willingness or ability to bestow, but on our readiness and capacity to receive. God dwelt, by his Spirit, perfectly in his Son, our Saviour, and according to our *faith* and *purity* he will dwell in us.

IV. QUIETNESS OF METHOD. "He shall not cry," etc. (*vide* next homily).

V. PATIENT HOPEFULNESS. "A bruised reed," etc. (*vide* next homily).

VI. PERSISTENT ENERGY. "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth;" "He shall not fail," etc. 1. *The disregarded and despised Son of man* did not fail to speak, to suffer, to work, until his task on earth was complete. 2. *The neglected and unknown Son of God*, dwelling in the heavens, will not be discouraged until the race has been regenerated and renewed. Through the instrumentality of his Church he will work on this sin-distracted world until its *ignorance* be displaced by knowledge, its *iniquity* yield to holiness of heart and life, its *indifference* give place to earnest interest and all-constraining love.—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Quietness of method and hopefulness of spirit.* That these words are rightly referred to our Lord we have the assurance of Scripture (Matt. xii.), as well as the evidence of their perfect applicability. They remind us of—

I. THE QUIETNESS OF HIS METHOD. With a task before him the surpassing greatness of which completely dwarfs every human enterprise, it was a matter of vital consequence that our Lord should adopt the method which would be permanently effective. He might have chosen the *loud and violent* method. He might have taken (1) the way of the warrior, who seeks to secure his ends by the clash of arms and thunder of cannon; or (2) the way of the vehement and noisy agitator, of the tempestuous rhetorician, of the man who terrorizes over his audience by threats and denunciations. But "*he* did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." He chose the *quiet and spiritual method.* He adopted the way of God in nature and in man—the way by which God built the mountains and laid down the soil, by which he makes the spring to succeed the winter and the summer to replace the spring, by which he makes the grass to grow in our meadows and the flowers to unfold in our gardens and the corn to ripen in our fields. It is the way by which God constructs the human mind, building it up from the opening intelligence of the child to the full strength and ripe wisdom of manhood; the way by which he develops human character and national strength—by quiet, silent, gradual processes that no eye can see, no ear can hear, no hand can measure. Jesus Christ deliberately adopted (1) *a peaceful* method; he emphatically declined and even severely forbade the use of force in his service (Matt. xxvi. 52). He thus discouraged and disallowed compulsion and constraint in the furtherance of his kingdom. (2) He also decided upon a *quiet* method. He shunned rather than sought notoriety (Matt. xii. 16). He did not believe that a tempest of applause or that the fresh breeze of fame would carry his vessel of righteousness and peace to her harbour. He wanted to persuade, to convince, to *win* men; to prevail over their judgment, to subdue their will, to hallow their mind, to gain their conscience, to conquer *them, themselves.* So he went quietly to his work, speaking golden truths to obscure and unlearned men, opening rich stores of heavenly treasure to one man who stole to see him under the shadow of the darkness; to one woman whom he chanced to meet and talk to at the well. Shunning the crowd, disliking noise and tumult, the incarnation of quiet strength, the Son of man did his work, lived his life, spake his truth, bore his sorrows.

II. THE PATIENT HOPEFULNESS OF HIS SPIRIT. At what point must we give a man up? Regarding his physical nature, there is a point where medical skill can do no more and "gives him up" to die. Is there such a point in his spiritual course? 1. *In nations.* Men have contended that some races have been reduced to such a depth of demoralization and brutality that they are irrecoverably lost to virtue and piety. But Christian missions have effectually and finally disposed of this contention. 2. *In individual men.* The idea of the restoration of fallen and degraded men is essentially *Christian.* The most pious and charitable Jew never thought of praying for the redemption of the publican he saw at the counter or the harlot he met in the street;

he was astonished and indignant that the great Teacher should address himself to such as these. But as there was no one too far gone in sickness for the Lord to heal, so was there no one too foul or too guilty for him to save and to restore. He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. To the repentant publican he said, "This man is a son of Abraham;" to the weeping woman, "Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace." This spirit of patient hopefulness is to be our spirit: (1) *In our treatment of others.* Tempted to abandon those to whom we have long made our appeal in vain, inclined to regard them as hopelessly deaf, hard, unresponsive,—we must break away from our despondency and enter into the patient hopefulness of our Lord and Leader. (2) *In the view we take of curselves.* No man need despair of himself, for Christ does not despair of him. He hopes good and even great things of those who are ready to abandon themselves to sin and ruin. Look not in, but *up.* Above is a patient, hopeful Saviour, who still says to you, "Wilt thou be made whole?"—C.

Vers. 5—8.—*God and man: refusal, retribution, restoration.* I. THE DIVINE COMMAND. God demands the glory which is his due (ver. 8). His claim is based on: 1. *What he is in himself.* "I am the Lord (Jehovah); that is my Name." As the Eternal One, who only hath immortality, the Underived and Everlasting One, who in the very fullest, deepest, and highest sense is God over all, he rightly demands our reverence, our homage, our worship. 2. *What he has done for our race.* He has "created the heavens," etc. (ver. 5). He is the Divine Author of our own human spirits, the Divine Originator of all material things, the Divine Giver of all surrounding comforts. As the Father of our souls and as the Source of all our good of every kind, God righteously demands our thought, our gratitude, our love, our service.

II. OUR GUILTY REFUSAL. Of whatever crimes, or vices, or follies we are guiltless, there is one sin which we must all acknowledge—we have not rendered unto our God "the glory due unto his Name." "The God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we have not glorified" as we might have done and should have done. In this matter all, even the best, have "come short" (Rom. iii. 23). The great multitudes of mankind have been sadly and guiltily negligent, and we have had to pay—

III. THE PENALTY OF OUR GUILT. This penalty is very severe; it is manifold; it comprises: 1. Forfeiture of the Divine favour. 2. Fear of final condemnation and banishment from the Father's presence. 3. The various ills and evils, including sickness, and sorrow, and death, which befall us here. 4. Spiritual deterioriation. This is, perhaps, the saddest and most serious part of our penalty. He that sins against God "wrongs his own soul;" he does that which inflicts on himself most grievous wounds; his own soul suffers harm, the extent and the pitifulness of which no mind can measure, no words express. The text (ver. 7) points to two of these spiritual evils. (1) *Mental blindness.* The commission of any sin has a far worse result than that of enfeebling bodily health or injuring the circumstances of a man. It clouds his mind; it dulls his spiritual apprehension; he gradually loses his power of distinguishing between what is right and wrong, pure and impure, reverent and profane, kind and unkind, true and false. Ultimately his vision is confused, and mental obliquity takes the place of clear perception. "His eye is evil, and his whole body is full of darkness;" he "calls good evil, and evil good;" he has "blind eyes" (ver. 7). (2) *Bondage of the soul.* Sin leads down to servitude—to a bondage of which all bodily slaveries and imprisonments are only types and shadows. For, to be held in the bars of a spiritual captivity, of an unholy lust, of a depraved habit, of an irresistible tendency of mind, to struggle more and more feebly and ineffectually against this, and at last for the soul to surrender itself a hopeless captive,—this is a degradation beyond and beneath which it is impossible for man to pass. But we have the promise of—

IV. DIVINE RESTORATION. "I have called thee . . . to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners," etc. (vers. 6, 7). Jesus Christ came "to preach deliverance to the captives" (Luke iv. 18). This he does by (1) his enlightening truth; (2) his renewing and redeeming Spirit.—C.

Ver. 16.—*The unrecognized path.* "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." The general truth here is that the all-wise God is working on our behalf in ways which are mysterious at the

time. If we consider our finiteness and his infinity, our ignorance and his omniscience, we shall see that this *must* be so. If we consider how little we can understand of the great designs of the wisest of mankind when we have but a partial view of them, we shall cease to wonder at the mystery which attends the providence of God. How can we be otherwise than "blind" to the large and long purposes of him "whose way is in the sea," and to whom "a thousand years are as one day"? The thought of the prophet is illustrated in—

I. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL. At one period, when languishing in captivity, it was black night to the people of God. It was dark twilight to Isaiah, looking on and down from the peaks of prophecy. It was early morning when the Israelites entered Jerusalem on their return. It was later morning yet when Paul caught a glimpse of God's large purposes in all the way he led them (Rom. xi. 33). But all along he was leading the blind by a way they knew not.

II. HIS DEALINGS WITH MANKIND. Through what dark days has the Church of Christ passed as it has come through the centuries! How many times has God *seemed* to have forsaken it, when it has undergone a threatening eclipse from: 1. *Savage attack from outside;* the trials and perils of unrelenting persecution. 2. *Chilling coldness within;* spirituality of worship, consistency of life, evangelizing zeal, having declined and almost expired. 3. *Depressing faithlessness around;* a dark shadow of scepticism surrounding, and, at points, invading and infecting it. Yet out of these miseries and temporary defeats God has brought it, turning darkness into light and making the crooked things straight.

III. HIS LEADING OF OUR INDIVIDUAL LIFE. Dark days come to us all; we fail where we counted on success; they become unfriendly on whose faithfulness we had confidently reckoned; the road which promised to lead up to prosperity and joy takes a sudden turn down into adversity and sorrow. We have been seeking Divine direction, but the guiding hand seems to have been withheld; God seems to have forsaken us. But we must not "speak thus, or we should offend against" the truth of God's word and the ultimate experience of his children. Others before and beside us have gone down into the darkness and come up into the light. Once the Master himself went a way he knew not; the Divine Father seemed to have forsaken him. And many a one, since that scene at Calvary, has been inclined to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken *me*?" It is for us to remember that we are as blind men before the all-seeing God, discerning but a mere speck of all that has to be surveyed. God is leading us by a way that we cannot recognize now; but soon the darkness will be light and the crooked straight. *It is the hour for trusting.* Any one can trust God in the sunshine; we have to show our sonship by trusting him wholly in the deep shadows.

> "When we in darkness walk,
> Nor feel the heavenly flame,
> *Then* is the time to trust our God,
> And rest upon his Name."

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Vers. 19—25 (latter part).—*The hidden hurt.* I. THERE ARE PENALTIES WHICH ARE PALPABLE TO EVERY EYE. When vice or crime leads down to poverty, or to serious sickness, or to desertion and consequent loneliness, or to confinement in prison, there is no possibility of mistake. God is "pouring out his anger" against the transgressors of his Law; he is "magnifying his Law, and making it honourable" (ver. 21). But—

II. THERE ARE PENALTIES WHICH ARE UNDETECTED EVEN BY THOSE WHO PAY THEM. As bodily privations—deafness, blindness, feebleness,—come on and sometimes reach even an advanced point before their subjects will allow it to be true, so is it with mental and moral evils, which are the righteous penalties of sin. 1. *Mental.* The gradual but serious decay of the intellectual powers—of memory, of judgment, of the creative faculty. 2. *Moral and spiritual.* Loss of self-control; an increased absorption in self; a growing eagerness for fleshly enjoyments or worldly advantages; withdrawal of interest from those things which are spiritual and Divine; in fact, deterioration of soul.

III. THIS UNDETECTED PENALTY IS DECIDEDLY THE MOST SERIOUS. For: 1. It is the *most inward.* It affects our very selves; it means that *we,* ourselves, are "set on fire,"

are being consumed, are perishing. 2. It is *likely to be the most lasting.* What evil thing a man sees and recognizes he takes care to expel; that which escapes his notice he leaves to itself, and, left undisturbed, it spreads and grows, it becomes rank, ruinous, fatal.

IV. IT IS A PENALTY PAID BY THE APPARENTLY GOOD AS BY THE AVOWEDLY EVIL. "Who is blind, but my servant?" etc. (vers. 19, 20). The sons of privilege, the members of the visible Church, are sometimes found to be sadly deceived respecting their own condition; they are on the borders of bankruptcy when they think themselves rich and strong (Rev. iii. 17). Pride, or worldliness, or indulgence, or covetousness, has eaten into their soul, and made them degenerate and unworthy before God, and they "know it not."

V. IT IS A CASE WHICH CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE AND EARNEST EFFORT. When the truth is discovered, or even suspected, it becomes us (1) to strive with all strenuousness to escape; and (2) to entreat Divine help in our great spiritual peril: "Search me, O God," etc. (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).—C.

Ver. 1.—*The Lord's Servant.* Various suggestions have been made by way of explanation of this term. Some regard the Lord's servant as the Hebrew nation, distinguished from the heathen; or as a new Israel opposed to the old; or as the righteous part of the Hebrew nation; or as the Israel which suffered for its religious testimony to the heathen; or as an ideal Israel; or as the order of the Hebrew prophets. Bishop Wordsworth says, "The 'Servant of Jehovah,' as represented by Isaiah, is a Person; he is a Prophet, Priest, and King. He is more than a prophet, as teaching the world; he is more than a priest, as offering himself for all; he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; he is God." Dean Stanley finely says, "In the foreground of the future stands, not the ruler, or conqueror, but the *Servant* of God, gentle, purified, suffering—whether it be Cyrus whom he had anointed; or Jacob whom he had chosen; his people with whom after all their affliction he was well pleased; or Jeremiah and the prophetic order, the victim of their country's sins, led as a lamb to the slaughter; or One, more sorrowful, more triumphant, more human, more Divine, than any of these, the last and true fulfilment of the most spiritual hopes and the highest aspirations of the chosen people." Delitzsch says, "The conception of the Servant of Jehovah is, as it were, a pyramid, of which the base is the people Israel as a whole, the central part Israel 'according to the Spirit,' and the summit the Person of the Mediator of salvation who arises out of Israel." Cheyne says, "In the sublimest descriptions of the Servant I am unable to resist the impression that an historical Person is intended, and venture to think that our general view of 'the Servant' ought to be ruled by those passages in which the enthusiasm of the author is at its height. 'Servant of Jehovah' in these passages seems about equivalent to 'Son of Jehovah' in Ps. ii. 7 ('son' and 'servant' being, in fact, nearly equivalent in the Old Testament), viz. the personal instrument of Israel's regeneration, or the Messiah." The whole passage, vers. 1—4, is applied to Christ in Matt. xii. 17—21, as illustrating Christ's mild, silent, and uncontentious manner of working. We shall come again upon the representation of Christ as "Servant," when we reach the great chapter of this prophecy, the fifty-third. The passage now before us directs attention to three points in relation to this "Servant of the Lord," the Christ.

I. HIS ENDOWMENT. "I have put my Spirit upon him." The expression calls to mind the endowments of the Spirit, as a Spirit of rule and judgment, which followed the anointing of Saul and David. In precise adaptation to work required, God gives spiritual endowment. The scene of the baptism of Christ has been misunderstood, as the time when the special endowment of the Spirit came upon him for his life-ministry. It is a truer and deeper view of that scene of the descending dove and heavenly witness that sees in it only an outward manifestation and expression of a fact which already existed—the Spirit already dwelt in Christ beyond measure. The outward expression in symbol was graciously accommodated to the comforting of his humanity, and the conviction of those who believe in his Divine mission. It may be shown that every endowment of the Divine Spirit is (1) a seal, testifying that he on whom it rests is under commission of God; and (2) a fitness, ensuring the highest adaptation to that precise work which is given the agent to do. It involves *efficiency* and *authority.*

II. HIS COMMISSION. To "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." "Judgment"

here is not used in its magisterial sense. It is the equivalent of "righteousness," or, more precisely, of the "truth that makes for righteousness." That truth is conceived as having been for a time the special possession of Israel; but by Messiah it is to be opened to the whole world. "Every man that doeth righteousness is accepted of him." The point that Isaiah sets in such clear light is, that the commission of the great "Servant of Jehovah" is a distinctly *moral* one. It is only in a secondary or derived sense anything but moral. It concerns righteousness. It glorifies righteousness. It breaks soul-bondages. It dispels prejudices and errors. It proposes to bring men together in a brotherhood of common goodness, of which the bloom will be mutual love and helpfulness. The world's separations and woes can never be mastered until men are made right, and that is Christ's work.

III. HIS CHARACTERISTICS. Unpretentious, uncontentious, trusting wholly to moral influences for securing moral ends. "He shall not strive nor cry." As Matthew Arnold well expresses it, "He shall not *clamour*, shall not speak with the high vehement voice of the men who contend. God's Servant shall bring to men's hearts the word of God's righteousness and salvation by a gentle, inward, and spiritual method." Illustrating the parable of the *leaven*, Dr. Marcus Dods says, "According to the Head of the Church, his religion and Spirit are to be propagated by an influence which operates like an infectious disease, invisible, without apparatus and pompous equipment, succeeding all the better where it is least observed. Our Lord bases his expectation of the extension of his Spirit throughout the world, not upon any grand and powerful institutions, not on national establishments of religion or on any such means, but on the secret, unnoticed influence of man upon man." The characteristic silences of the great "Servant" may wisely become the characteristics of his servants. Moral forces make no noise.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The adaptations of Divine grace.* This verse describes the general spirit and tone of the Divine dealings with men; but, as it takes distinctly personal form, we are justified in seeing in Christ the type and specimen of such dealings. As God manifest, he illustrates the graciousness of God's ways. And this aspect of Christ is of special concern to us now. The time is coming when we shall think most of the *glory* of the Lord; in the time that now is we think most of his *grace*. We are still journeying under the clouds; we are still in the land of the fainting, the struggling, and the weeping. The night is passing, but it is not past; the victory is nearing, but it is not won; and therefore it is so precious to us that we may hear of the tender, compassionate, sympathizing Redeemer. We are little better than bruised reeds and smouldering flax; therefore it is good to hear of him who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

I. CHRIST'S WAY OF DEALING WITH BRUISED REEDS, OR HUMBLED SINNERS. The reed fittingly represents the sinner. It stands so straight, apparently so strong, and yet it is one of the weakest things that grow. It cannot endure the least rough usage. The passing storm will bend and bruise and spoil it. Of all the helpless things, perhaps a bruised reed is the most helpless. There is much confidence and apparent strength in the sinner, at least so long as life goes smoothly and blue sky is overhead. But let the clouds lower, let the burden of life press heavily, let God touch with the afflicting hand, let God try him with sore bereavements, and then the poor reed is bruised and hanging. And it is God's way to bruise such reeds. The beginning of hope for sinners lies in their humbling under God's mighty hand. See some of the ways in which this humbling work is done. 1. Sometimes God lets men run themselves tired and work themselves weary in the effort to gain a righteousness for themselves. Men are permitted to hurry after the flickering light, over moor and bog, until, fainting, they lose sight for ever of the vain hope. Men are permitted to build the house of their morality upon the sands of self-confidence, and then, just as they would enter and dwell in peace, they find the foundations sinking and the storm-floods overwhelming. Men are permitted to grasp at world-success and worldly wealth, and then they are led to ask all these things, "What can you buy for my soul's good?" And, sick at heart, they must hear the answer, "Not one word of peace; not one sun-glint of hope; not one cheer for the dark river and the darker beyond." Many a man has come, since the days of Solomon, out of the trial of all human offers of

happiness, to cry, bruised and humbled before God, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." 2. Sometimes God directs his providences to the humbling of men by heavy sorrows and cares. He lets their boasted strength bear the brunt of severe and subtle temptations. He finds the joints in the armour, and sends there the arrows that pierce. But he only *bruises;* he does not *break*. He may hold back awhile; he never utterly forsakes. He may hide behind a cloud, but he keeps on looking, even through the veil of the cloud, waiting until the response to his gracious dealings comes, "We will return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us."

II. CHRIST'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SMOKING FLAX, OR FEEBLE BELIEVERS. The best explanation of this figure is that flax was used in the East for the wicks of oil-lamps, and these wicks, unless well cut and constantly trimmed, gave but a flickering, smoky light. A striking illustration of feeble Christians, whose life is a smoke rather than a fire, a spark rather than a light, a glimmer rather than a glow, a name to live rather than a life. 1. The beginnings of Christian life are often very feeble; the smoking flax needs raising to a flame. In the case of Nicodemus there was a little desire, a little spiritual anxiety, a little longing after high and holy things, a little smoking of the flax. And most tenderly did the Lord breathe upon it, and blow upon it, and try to raise the flame. The rich young ruler had a little smoking of the flax, a little yearning after the "eternal life." And Christ sought to fan it into a flame that should consume even his love for his "great possessions." 2. The figure also represents those conditions of spiritual decline to which we are all exposed, and which make sad places here and there in the story of our Christian lives. Happy indeed is that man who does not know what it is for his spiritual light to become only a smoking wick. And he who has wrought so great a work in us must be sorely grieved when the flame grows dim, the oil of grace is not renewed, and no good atmosphere of trust and prayer nourishes and clears the light. And yet, though grieved, he does "not quench." Bunyan tells us of the fire in the wall, and of one who poured water upon it to quench it. It was not Christ who acted thus. He pours on the oil of grace, until the flame is made to glow and blaze in power and beauty. But sometimes he holds back his grace, and lets the water *almost* quench the fire in the dull and careless soul. Many must confess that it is even so with them. Awhile ago the flame was all glowing; and now there are only a few curlings and wreathings of smoke, and scarcely one feeble flame —the waters of the world, self-indulgence, pride, and neglected Christian duty have nearly quenched it. Leave it but a little longer, and the last flicker will die out. Conclude by showing the way for such feeble believers back to Christ, who "waiteth to be gracious." "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy;" "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Divine persistency.* "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." "He shall not burn dimly nor be crushed." The figure prominent in the mind of the prophet is not the actual Israel, the ideal Israel, Cyrus, or Judas Maccabæus, but the Messiah who, in the deepest view of him, is the manifested God. And "though he meets with hard service and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, 'It is finished!' and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs, too, and not to fail nor be discouraged till they also have finished their testimony." Henderson gives the connection of the passages suggestively: "Mild and gentle as he would be towards the broken-hearted and the desponding, no power should depress his Spirit, impede his progress, obscure his glory, or thwart his purpose."

I. CHRIST HAS A GREAT END TOWARDS WHICH HE IS EVER, AND HAS BEEN EVER, WORKING. The largest view we can take of Christ regards him as God operating for high moral ends in the sphere of humanity. God's direct moral Agent, in all the ages, has been the Second Person of the sacred Trinity, the Angel-Jehovah, Jehovah ministering, or the Christ. So we link the great Incarnation with all the foreshadowing incarnations. God's end, in Christ, is (1) the setting up of truth, of judgment, of the sense of right, of righteousness; and this (2) is synchronous with the universal establishment of his Law, or living rule and authority. The kingship of Christ is the reign of righteousness—a reign than can be above and within all earthly kingships. In

reaching this end we can see a series of stages. 1. A preparatory work in the world. Letting men find out the value of righteousness by experiences of evil. 2. A stage of visible manifestation of the righteousness desired for the whole world, in the person of the righteous Servant of the Lord, the "Man Christ Jesus." 3. A stage, now incomplete, of the inward workings of the Holy Spirit, using agencies of human ministry and Christian influence and example.

II. CHRIST MIGHT, WE THINK, FAIL AND BE DISCOURAGED BY THE SLOW PROGRESS OF HIS KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The stages are long. The progress often rather seems backward. Each stage has, indeed, been misunderstood. We are only now getting glimpses of the importance of the first preparatory stage. We say, "How long?" and wonder that Christ does not. It is long waiting for the "travail of his soul."

III. IF CHRIST IS NOT DISCOURAGED, SURELY WE NEED NOT BE. Our imperfect knowledge, our passion for results, and our weak faith, may excuse our failing. We readily forget that the honour of God is far more truly bound up in the full redemption of the world, and the universal reign of righteousness, than ours. "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Master." Not until our living, loving Lord is disheartened and gives up his work of saving men, may we let the tools of our Christian service drop out of our hand.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The uniqueness of Jehovah.* "My glory will I not give to another." Wherein lies the separateness and distinctness of our God which makes it so impossible for us to find any likenesses for him? The uniqueness of Jehovah is embodied in his Name, which is the assertion of absolute and independent existence; and this can be predicated of only one Being. We can conceive of divinities having in their special charge certain forces of nature, or faculties and relationships of men; and of these there may be many. But if we can conceive of an uncaused Being, who is the cause of all being, there can be only one such. Jehovah stands alone. All others must say, "I was made;" he says, "I am." The distinction comes out very forcibly in relation to the idols which men worship. We know their origin in men's mental conceptions, or in men's handiwork. Of Jehovah we know nothing save that *he is*. But the prophet is far less concerned with the abstract nature of God than with his special and gracious relations with his people. He is here dealing with Jehovah's faithfulness to his predictions and promises. He is unique in this—he keeps his word. The glory of fulfilling his promises belongs to him alone. It was characteristic of idolatry that large promises were made to men by oracle and priest, for which there was no guarantee; and there is no more miserable chapter in the history of idols than the chapter of *excuses* for disappointed promise-holders. If the predictions of Jehovah ever failed, he would sink to lower levels than the idols. "The voice that moves the stars along speaks all the promises." The point on which to dwell is that, however tolerant idolatry may be of other conceptions and other ritual developed in other lands, and however attractive to men such latitude in religion and worship may be, not one jot of the absolutely supreme claims of Jehovah can be removed. In this no concession can be made. Here there can be no rivalry, no sharing of honours. God is God alone. He is above all. It is absolutely essential to the worship of Jehovah that it should be wholly exclusive of the idea of another god. No reproach of men can be more severe and searching than this, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods." The uniqueness of God is seen in that: 1. He is for man only a thought; we cannot, we may not, fix him in any shape. "He is a Spirit." 2. He is behind all things. Not behind some things, as idols of wisdom, or of music, or of corn and wine. At the back of everything we can conceive is God, in whom the conception first took shape. 3. He controls all forces. Not like idols, this one controlling the wind, and that the sea. 4. He claims all homage. Not of a nation, but of the world; not of a time, but of the ages. 5. He has the supreme record of faithfulness; for he has been the "Refuge and Dwelling-place" of men in all generations.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The surprising Life-Guide.* "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." Only the *figure* is taken from the gracious Divine arrangements made for the return of the captives from Babylon. That is indeed prominent in the prophet's mind, but only as illustrative of God's constant dealings as the Life-Guide of his people.

Let us, in any vivid and impressive way, see God's working and providing in any one instance, and we learn what he really is, and what he really does, in all instances. Therefore is every man's life dotted over with special scenes of rescue and deliverance, when ways were made for him altogether beyond his imagination, that he might learn to say from the heart, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our Guide even unto death." Matthew Arnold paraphrases the verse thus: "I will bring my faint-hearted, incredulous, and undiscerning people safe through the desert to their own land." Prominent are two things: (1) the inability of man; (2) the perplexity of his circumstances. The Divine guidance ensures a safe, good way through all. This may be fully opened and illustrated on the following lines.

I. WE CANNOT GRASP THE PURPOSE OF LIFE. God holds it. What are we here for? God knows. How will our work fit into the work of others? God knows. We are only servants working at *parts* of a plan which has never been shown us. The Divine Architect is our Guide, and shows us just what we have to do. Men are, in a despairing spirit, asking "Is life worth living?" We answer, "Certainly it is, if only it is put into God's hands for the guiding." Perhaps we shall never reach to grasp the purpose of our life on the earth better than this—it is our becoming holy, and the agents in helping others to become holy. That is God's thought for us, and towards its realization he is ever working, ever guiding.

II. WE CANNOT MAKE A WAY OF LIFE. We plan, but life does not carry out our plan. We wish, but life will not fulfil our desires. Every one of us has to say, when life closes, "I could not have imagined the way in which I have been led." "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "The future we explore in vain, so little understood." God opens it. He knows the way of life for every man. He "leads in paths that we have not known." Two striking instances may be taken, one from Old Testament and the other from New Testament Scripture. David tending his sheep could not even imagine the way of life he was to take; yet God was guiding him step by step along a way he had marked out for him. Tell Saul, the zealous Hebrew, that his way lay round from Jerusalem to Illyricum, preaching the gospel of the crucified Nazarene, and he will exclaim, "Impossible!" But, under God's guidance, it was the way that he took.

III. WE CANNOT MEET THE CLAIMS OF LIFE. God can help us. Those claims seem often as impossible for us as a command to carry sufficient water with them for all their long desert-journey would have been for those returning exiles. At times the responsibilities resting upon us seem quite overwhelming, and heart and flesh fail. Then we need to be reminded of the amazing contrast between what a man can do by himself, and what a man can do when God is with him. Wonderful becomes his "enduring" when he can "see him who is invisible." The ever-strengthening conviction, which makes spiritual giants, is that God never gives any man any work to do without holding out, ready for him, grace for the doing.

IV. WE CANNOT PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF LIFE. God is the—to use an Eastern figure—Sheikh of the caravan, and he provides. What is wanted is the knowledge that anticipates all wants, and the abilities that can meet all. The various needs of life may be gathered under one head—the need of *renewals*. Renewals of body, by sleep; of health, by air, food, medicine; of mind, by knowledge; of heart, by love. It is nothing short of a Divine thing to arrange for all the needs of a single life—many of them needs to which the man himself is "blind," of them he knows nothing. God knows, guides, and provides.

V. WE CANNOT MASTER THE ILLS OF LIFE. God overrules. Again and again we have to face calamities in conscious helplessness. What can Job do with the ills of life? The Sabæans carry off his flocks, and he can do nothing. Mighty winds bring the house down upon his sons and daughters, and he can do nothing. Painful diseases afflict his own body, and he can do nothing. He can master none of the ills of life. Darkness is round him; things are crooked. Yet God is the Life-Guide. Circumstances are all in his control. He overrules. He makes the very ills turn to good, by securing for Job, through them, a new and more spiritual hold of himself, and by making Job the supreme example of patience for the whole world. He brings light on the darkness, and makes the crooked things go straight. In conclusion, urge that, in view of our helplessness and God's all-sufficing helpfulness, we may well

lift eyes and hearts up unto him, saying, "My Father, thou shalt be the Guide of my life."—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The honouring of God's Law.* Cheyne translates, "It was Jehovah's pleasure for his righteousness' sake to make the instruction great and glorious." The Revised Version gives this as a marginal reading. Only by a straining of this passage can it be made to bear any relation to Christ's obedience and righteousness. It is true, but it is not the truth presented or suggested here, that Christ "magnified the Law, and made it honourable." The point of the passage is well expressed by J. A. Alexander. "The people, being thus unfaithful to their trust, had no claim to be treated any longer as an object of Jehovah's favour; and yet he continues propitious, not on their account, but out of regard to his own engagements, and for the execution of his righteous purposes." God's Law, which he is here said to honour, is the "stream of self-consistent and inspired instruction which has run through all the ages." It is the total inspired revelation of God's mind and will, regarded as the supreme authority for man, and therefore called God's *Law.* It may be illustrated by the elaborate Mosaic system, which both announced great controlling principles, and covered the whole lives and relations of men with detailed instructions. Of this we may be well assured, God's *providences* will always be in harmony with, and will support and honour, his *revelations.* Treating the subject in this larger sphere, we dwell on two points.

I. GOD MAGNIFIES HIS LAW BY MAKING OBEDIENCE SECURE MAN'S GOOD. "Righteousness tendeth unto life." Men are dependent for forming right judgments upon sensible impressions. We apprehend moral good through the sensible figures of material good. Therefore God makes godliness carry "the promise of the life that now is." There may be things which, on occasion, break the connection between moral and material good, and then, like Asaph, we are in perplexity; but the generally working rule brings blessings round to the good man, and so honours God's provisions and laws and promises.

II. GOD MAGNIFIES HIS LAW BY FOLLOWING DISOBEDIENCE WITH MAN'S DISABILITY. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." It is often pointed out that sin is *folly.* The man who does wrong is false to his best interests; he wrongs himself. The link between sin and penalty is forged tightly; sooner or later penalty is sure to follow sin. These two points are made evidently true in the history of ancient Israel; that people was under a distinct system of *material* rewards and punishments. But they may still be illustrated in the large spheres of the world. Iniquity never pays, even now. They may be illustrated in the case of individuals, if moral and spiritual rewards and judgments be taken into due account.—R. T.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Ineffective judgments.* God has even burned Israel, and "yet he laid it not to heart." There is immediate reference to the sufferings of the people during the Captivity. It did seem strange that such manifest Divine judgments were not duly considered and properly effective in securing humiliation for national sin and penitential return to God. The secret of the failure of the Divine judgments then is the great secret of failure still; it is this—when men fall into trouble they persist in looking only at the second causes, which are the mere occasions, and will not recognize the true and only cause, or recognize God's hand in them. It has been so in all ages. One of the most striking instances is that of the Roman siege of Jerusalem under Titus. Distinctly foretold as a Divine judgment on the nation for its rejection of Messiah, the Jews to this day will not so regard it. To them it is still only a national calamity, and so it has been hitherto ineffective in the production of a due sense of national sin. So many sides and aspects of this subject have been treated, that we only give a brief outline of the topics which may be wisely and helpfully considered.

I. ALL SUFFERING IS DIVINE JUDGMENT. Whatever else may be said of it, its explanations are never exhausted until the Divine purpose in it is explained. The connection of a particular judgment with a particular individual it may be unwise for us to attempt to trace. But we can always see the judgment aspect of race, national, or family calamities; and we know that God can show the judgment element in each man's woe.

II. ALL JUDGMENT IS CORRECTIVE. It is a Father's rod. No father chastises save for correction, and with a view to the profit of the corrected.

III. ALL JUDGMENTS ARE WITHIN STRICT LIMITATIONS. They are precise to individual cases. Sometimes light, sometimes heavy. Sometimes brief, sometimes long-continued. Always in exact adaptation. There is never any exaggeration, any overdoing, in God's judgments. They are just adequate to the ends sought. They take due count of reasonable response from those to whom they are sent.

IV. ALL DESPISED JUDGMENTS MUST BE RENEWED IN SEVERER FORMS. Because they create new and more serious conditions, and these must be adequately met. God can never permit effective and successful resistance and rebellion. If a man will not bend, he must break. Heavier judgments must grind him to powder.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Vers. 1—7.—A RENEWED PROMISE TO ISRAEL OF PROTECTION AND DELIVERANCE. Severe rebuke (ch. xlii. 18—25) is followed, as so often in Isaiah (ch. i. 25—27; iv. 2—6; ix. 1—16, etc.), by comfort and consolation. Israel is assured that God has not cast him off, and promised the comfort of the Divine presence during the existing tribulation (ver. 2), and a speedy restoration to Palestine (vers. 3—7). The scattered Israelites will be brought together from all quarters by the Divine omnipotency.

Ver. 1.—**But now.** The words mark the strong contrast between the closing passage of the preceding chapter and the opening paragraph of the present one. Israel had undergone a severe punishment for his sins; he is still suffering, *but now* there is going to be an entire change. He is to be protected and delivered. **Created thee . . . formed thee . . . redeemed thee . . . called thee by thy name.** An ascending series of benefits. First, creation, like that of formless matter out of nought; then, formation, or putting of the formless matter into shape; thirdly, redemption, or making them all his own; lastly, calling them by their name, and so conferring on them a proud and enviable distinction. On this fourfold ground God claims Israel as his own.

Ver. 2.—**Through the waters . . . through the rivers;** *i.e.* through troubles of any kind (comp. Ps. lxvi. 12, "We went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us *out* into a wealthy place"). There were, perhaps, special troubles to be endured connected with the final Babylonian struggle. There were certainly others connected with the tedious and dangerous journey from Babylonia to Palestine (Ezra viii. 22, 31). There were others, again, after the Holy Land was reached, arising out of the jealousy and ill will of neighbouring nations (Ezra iv. and v.; Neh. iv.—vi.). **Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.** The literal fulfilment in the persons of the "three children" (Dan. iii. 27) will be obvious to every reader. But the prophecy has, no doubt, a far wider scope.

Ver. 3.—**The Holy One of Israel** (comp. ch. xli. 14, 20, with the comment). **Thy Saviour.** He who had saved them from Pharaoh (Exod. xiv. 23—31), from Jabin (Judg. iv.), from Midian (Judg. vii.), from the Philistines (2 Sam. viii. 1), from Zerah (2 Chron. xiv. 9—15), from Sennacherib (ch. xxxvii. 36). The term is first used of God by David in 2 Sam. xxii. 3 and Ps. cvi. 21 (if that psalm be Davidical). It is also applied to God once in Jeremiah (xiv. 8), and once in Hosea (xiii. 4). With Isaiah, in these later chapters it is a favourite epithet, being used of God no fewer than eight times (see ver. 11; ch. xlv. 15, 21; xlvii. 15; xlix. 26; lx. 16; lxiii. 8). With his eye fixed on the deliverance of Israel out of the double captivity of sin and of Babylon, he naturally had much before him this aspect of Jehovah. **I gave Egypt for thy ransom,** etc.; rather, *I have given;* that is to say, "In my counsels I have already assigned to the Persians, as compensation for their letting thee go free, the broad countries of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba." Even the latest date assigned by sceptical critics to "the Second Isaiah" would make this a most remarkable prophecy. Egypt was not reduced, nor was Ethiopia made tributary to Persia until several years after the death of Cyrus, whose son, Cambyses, effected the conquests about B.C. 527-6. Human foresight could not, in the lifetime of Cyrus, have predicted with any certainty what would be the result of collision between Egypt and Persia; much less could it have ventured on the improbable supposition that the remote Ethiopia would submit itself to the Achæmenian yoke. Yet this was the result of the invasion of Cambyses, who made Egypt a Persian province, and forced the Ethiopians to submit to the payment of an annual tribute (see Herod., iii. 97; vii. 69). **And Seba.** If "Seba" is "the land of Meroe, which is enclosed between the White and Blue Niles" (Delitzsch), it may be ques-

tioned whether really this ever formed a portion of the Persian empire. But Isaiah has probably no very distinct knowledge of the geographical position of Seba, or of the relations between the Sabæans and the rest of the Ethiopians. He couples the two together, both here and in ch. xlv. 14, as forming two portions of one nation. The subjection of the Ethiopians involves, in his eyes, the subjection of the Sabæans. And we cannot say that he is wrong, since it is not at all clear that the Sabæans were not generally spread through Ethiopia, or at any rate scattered in various parts of the country.

Ver. 4.—**Since thou wast precious.** "Since" probably means "from the time that" (LXX., ἀφ' οὗ), not "because," as Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne render. Israel became "precious" from the time that the promise was given to Jacob that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. xxviii. 14). Thenceforward God placed the interests of Israel above those of "men" generally, and markedly above those of any other "people." **People**; rather, *peoples*—as Mizraim, Cush, Seba (ver. 3).

Ver. 5.—**Fear not: for I am with thee** (comp. ch. xli. 10). **I will bring thy seed from the east . . . from the west.** The actual extent of the Jewish *diaspora* in Isaiah's day has been greatly exaggerated by some modern critics, who say that there were at that date "bands of Jewish exiles in the *far lands* of the Mediterranean, and even in China" (Cheyne). Israel had been carried captive into Mesopotamia and into Media (2 Kings xvii. 6; 1 Chron. v. 26), perhaps, also, into other regions belonging at the time to Assyria, as Babylonia, Assyria Proper, Syria. Two hundred thousand Jews had been taken to Nineveh by Sennacherib ('Eponym Canon,' p. 134), and planted probably by him in outlying portions of his dominions. But such transplantation would not carry the dispersion further than Cilicia and Cyprus towards the west, Armenia towards the north, Media towards the east, and the shores of the Persian Gulf towards the south. Any scattering of the nation into regions more remote than these, as into Egypt, Ethiopia, Elam (ch. xi. 11), and China —if Sinim is China (ch. xlix. 12)—must have been seen by Isaiah in vision, or made known to him by revelation. It had not taken place in his day. The expression, "ends of the earth" (ver. 6), must not be pressed in Isaiah any more than in Herodotus, where the ἐσχατίαι τῆς οἰκουμένης are India, Arabia, Ethiopia, and Scythia (iii. 106—116).

Ver. 6.—**Bring my sons.** The nations are called upon, not merely to "let Israel go," but to conduct and escort them from the places of their abode to their own country. (On the need of such escort, see Ezra viii. 22, 31. On the actual furnishing of an escort in one case by a Persian king, see Neh. ii. 7, 8.)

Ver. 7.—**Every one that is called by my name.** The very name of "Israel" meant "prince of God," or "soldier of God," and thus every Israelite was "called by God's name." Israelites were also known among the nations as Jehovah-worshippers (see the Moabite Stone, line 18). **I have created . . . formed . . . made him** (comp. ver. 1). "The three verbs describe the process of formation from the first rough cutting to the perfecting of the work" (Cheyne). The third verb would, perhaps, be best translated, "I have perfected," or "I have completed (him)." All three acts—creation, formation, and completion—are done by God for his own glory (comp. Prov. xvi. 4).

Vers. 8—13.—A RENEWED CHALLENGE TO THE NATIONS. The nations are once more challenged (comp. ch. xli. 1, 21—26) to set forth the claims of their gods against those of Jehovah. Israel is summoned on the one hand (ver. 8); the nations on the other (ver. 9). What prophecy can the nations produce, either old or new? The Israelites can abundantly witness on behalf of Jehovah (ver. 10). Jehovah adds a further witness of himself (vers. 11—13).

Ver. 8.—**Bring forth the blind people that have eyes.** A tribunal is supposed to have been prepared, before which the contending parties are summoned to appear and plead. Israel is first summoned, as "a blind people that have eyes;" *i.e.* a people long blind (ch. xxix. 18; xxxv. 5; xlii. 7, 18, 19), who have now, to some extent, recovered their sight (ch. xxxii. 3; xxxv. 5), and are ready to witness for God. Next, the nations are summoned (see the following verse).

Ver. 9.—**All the nations**; rather, *all ye nations.* Israel is a witness on the one hand, a multitude of nations on the other, recalling the contention of Elijah with the four hundred priests of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 22). **The people**; rather, *the peoples.* **Who among them can declare this?** *i.e.* which of them can show any prediction made by their gods comparable to the one contained in vers. 1—7? **And show us former things.** "Exhibit the past history of the world in well-attested documents" (Kay); "Make mention of past events which they have correctly foretold" (Cheyne, Delitzsch). According to the former rendering, the contrast is between the solemn, serious *history* of early times in Genesis, and the grotesque and extravagant myths in which the nations generally embodied their views of the primi-

tive ages. (For a specimen of the contrast, see 'Aids to Faith,' Essay vi. pp. 275, 276.) **Let them bring forth their witnesses.** Witnesses that the prophecies were really delivered before the events happened, or that the accounts of past times are such as have really come down to them from their ancestors. **Or let them hear and say, It is truth.** It is uncertain whether we ought to translate the initial *vau* here by "and" or by "or." If the former, the sense is, "And then let them (*i.e.* the witnesses) give ear to the assertions made, and declare them true;" if the latter, we may render, with Dr. Kay, "Or, if they have no witnesses, let them listen to the sacred records, and confess them to be *the truth*."

Ver. 10.—**Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord**; *i.e.* "Ye, Israel, are the witnesses that I cite"—ye can prove the antiquity of the historical books of Scripture by the ordinary modes by which antiquity is proved, and also the exact dates of the prophetical ones. Ye can show what clear and unambiguous prophecies have been delivered centuries before the event, as the destruction of Jerusalem by a nation in whom none can fail to recognize the Romans (Deut. xxviii. 49—57), prophesied by Moses; the demolition of the altar at Bethel by a king of the house of David, Josiah by name, prophesied by a man of God in the reign of Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 2); the long continuance of David's progeny upon the throne of Judah, prophesied by Nathan in David's time (2 Sam. vii. 11—16); the fairly long continuance of the house of Jehu on the throne of Israel, prophesied to Jehu himself (2 Kings x. 30); and the like. Israel has been at all times, and still is, one of the most important witnesses for God that exists in the world. Like the Church, Israel is the "witness and keeper" of a large portion of "Holy Writ." Her past history witnesses for God. Her continued existence and present condition constitute additional testimony. **And my Servant whom I have chosen.** To explain this as meaning "and ye are also my servant, whom I have chosen" (Nägelsbach, Cheyne, Delitzsch), is to empty it of all its force. Manifestly, a further witness is adduced, "Ye are my witnesses; and *so is* my Servant," etc. The "Servant" intended can only be the one true Servant of ch. xlii. 1—7, since faithful Israel is already among the witnesses. The prophet rises above the consideration of the immediately present, or of the single trial-scene which he is setting before us, and has in mind the great controversy ever going on between those who are for God and those who are against him. He sees, on the side of God (1) faithful Israel; and (2) Christ, the "Faithful Witness" (Rev. i. 5; iii. 14), who "came into the world that he should bear witness of the truth" (John xviii. 37). These are the two witnesses by whom God's truth is maintained in a world of falsehood and delusion. **That ye may know.** The subject is changed. "Ye" here points to "the nations," or mankind at large. **I am he** (comp. ch. xli. 4). **Before me there was no God formed.** All other gods beside me are "formed" gods—invented, fashioned, made by men. None of them was ever made before me.

Ver. 11.—**Beside me there is no saviour.** None but God can save men. Man cannot make atonement for his fellows; "for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever" (Ps. xlix. 8, Prayer-book Version). The human "saviours" whom God raises up to deliver his people out of the hand of their enemies (Judg. iii. 9; 2 Kings xiii. 5; Neh. ix. 27, etc.), are "saviours" in quite a secondary and inferior sense.

Ver. 12.—**I have declared**, etc. Translate, *I announced, and delivered, and proclaimed (the deliverance), when there was no strange god among you;* i.e. I did what the idol-gods cannot do—announced deliverance, and effected it, and further proclaimed (or published) it, at the time when you Israelites had no idolatry among you. The allusion is to the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, which God announced by the mouth of Isaiah (ch. xxxvii. 33—35), effected by the hand of his angel (ch. xxxvii. 36), and then caused to be published by Isaiah, who wrote the two accounts of the deliverance—both that in his own prophecy, and that in the Second Book of Kings (xix. 20—35). At that time there was no (open) idolatry in Judah, since Hezekiah had destroyed the idols (2 Kings xviii. 4). **Therefore ye are my witnesses . . . that I am God;** literally, *and ye are my witnesses, and I am God.* Ye can bear witness of the truth of what I have asserted in the previous portion of the verse, and your witness to this effect proves me to be God.

Ver. 13.—**Yea, before the day was I am he.** So the LXX., Jerome, and Stier; but most moderns translate, "Yea, *from this time forth* I am he" (comp. Ezek. xlviii. 35). Kay, however, thinks that the translation of the Authorized Version may stand. **Who shall let it?** literally, as in ch. xiv. 27, *who shall turn it back?* i.e. "reverse it, undo it." Surely no one.

Vers. 14—21.—A DECLARATION AGAINST BABYLON, AND A PROMISE OF ISRAEL'S RESTORATION. Having wound up the preceding "controversy" with a reference to his own power to work great results (ver. 13), **Jehovah** now brings forward two ex-

amples—the discomfiture of Babylon (vers. 14, 15), and the recovery and restoration of Israel (vers. 16—21), both of which he is about to accomplish.

Ver. 14.—**For your sake I have sent to Babylon.** For Israel's sake God has already, in his counsels, sent to Babylon the instruments of his vengeance—Cyrus and his soldiers—and by their instrumentality has **brought down all their nobles**; or rather, *has brought them all down (to be) fugitives* (comp. ch. xv. 5); **and the Chaldeans**; or, *even the Chaldeans.* The Chaldeans are not in Isaiah, as in Daniel (ii. 2; iv. 7; v. 7), a special class of Babylonians, but, as elsewhere commonly in Scripture, the Babylonians generally (see ch. xii. 19; xlvii. 1). In the native inscriptions the term is especially applied to the inhabitants of the tract upon the sea-coast. **Whose cry is in the ships**; rather, *into their ships of wailing.* The Chaldeans, flying from the Persian attack, betake themselves to their ships with cries of grief, the ships thereby becoming "ships of wailing." The nautical character of the Babylonians is strongly marked in the inscriptions, where "the ships of Ur" are celebrated at a very remote period, and the native kings, when hard pressed by the Assyrians, are constantly represented as going on ship-board, and crossing the Persian Gulf to Susiana, or to some of the islands (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. pp. 40, 43, 73; vol. vii. p. 63; vol. ix. p. 60). The abundant traffic and the numerous merchants of Babylon are mentioned by Ezekiel (xvii. 4). Æschylus, moreover, notes that the Babylonians of his day were "navigators of ships" ('Persæ,' ll. 52—55).

Ver. 15.—**The Creator of Israel.** An unusual epithet; but comp. vers. 1, 7. **Your King** (see Judg. viii. 23; 1 Sam. viii. 7; xii. 12; and comp. ch. xxxiii. 22; xlv. 6).

Ver. 16.—**The Lord, which maketh a way in the sea.** The deliverance out of Egypt is glanced at, to prepare the way for the announcement of deliverance from the hand of Babylon. Then "a way was made in the sea" (Exod. xiv. 21—29), "and a path in the mighty waters;" now it will be necessary to make "a way in the wilderness" (ver. 19).

Ver. 17.—**Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse.** Still the reference is to the events of the Exodus, whereof Israel is reminded, since "the redemption out of Egypt was a type and pledge of the deliverance to be looked for out of Babylon" (Delitzsch). God then "brought out" after Israel, to attack him, "chariot and horse, army and power;" but the result was their destruction. **They shall lie down . . . they shall not rise**; rather, *they lie down . . . they do not rise* (so Cheyne and Delitzsch). The future has here, as so often, the force of a present, the present being the *præsens historicum.* What the prophet describes in a few touches is the complete overthrow of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, and the entire extinction of that life which had just before shown itself as "lusty and strong." **Quenched as tow** (comp. ch. xlii. 3). The metaphor is not drawn from burning tow, which is not very readily extinguished, but from the wick of a lamp, which a single breath puts out.

Ver. 18.—**Remember ye not the former things.** The old deliverance will be as nothing compared with the new. Israel must cast its eye forwards, not backwards. Mr. Cheyne well compares Jer. xxiii. 7, 8, and also well notes that "the chief glories of the second manifestation are spiritual." Israel in the wilderness was a stiff-necked and rebellious people, given to murmuring, licentiousness, and idolatry. Israel, returned from Babylon, will no more hanker after idols, but will have God's Law "put in their inward parts" (Jer. xxxii. 33), and will "show forth God's praise" (ver. 21).

Ver. 19.—**Behold, I will do a new thing** (comp. ch. xlii. 9, with the comment). It is, of course, quite possible that the novelty is not *merely* in the circumstances of the deliverance, but extends to all its results, among which is the Messianic kingdom—verily, a "new thing" (see Jer. xxxi. 22). **Now it shall spring forth**; rather, *already it is springing up* (comp. ch. xlii. 9). Things, however, are more advanced (to the prophet's eye) than when that passage was written. Events are shaping themselves—the deliverance approaches. **Shall ye not know it?** rather, *will ye not give heed to it?* Will not the exiled people, whom Isaiah addresses, turn their thoughts this way, and let the idea of deliverance take possession of their minds, instead of brooding on past and present sufferings (see ch. xl. 30; xli. 17; xlii. 22)? God is about to make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. As he led his people out of their Egyptian bondage, first through the Red Sea, and then through a "howling wilderness" (Deut. xxxii. 10), so now he will "make a way" for them through a still more desolate tract. We are nowhere historically told by what route the Israelites ultimately returned. If they went by Tadmor and Damascus, they must have traversed a most arid and difficult desert. Even if they did not quit the Euphrates till they reached the latitude of Aleppo, still they must have had some wide tracts of wilderness to cross.

Ver. 20.—**The beast of the field shall honour me.** The animal creation shall

participate in the benefits of the "new thing" introduced by the restoration of Israel, and in their dumb way shall show their gratitude. **The dragons and the owls.** The recent mention of the desert causes animals of the desert (ch. xiii. 21, 22) to be taken as examples. (On the animals intended, see the comment on ch. xxxiv. 13.) If even the beasts of the desert honoured God, much more would the rest of the animal creation (comp. ch. xi. 6—8).

Ver. 21.—**This people have I formed for myself** (see above, ver. 7, and comp. Prov. xvi. 4). **They shall show forth my praise**; *i.e.* their restoration to their own land shall cause them to glorify me both with songs of praise (for the fulfilment, see Ezra iii. 9—11; Neh. xii. 27; and the post-Captivity psalms), and also by a life in accordance with my laws.

Vers. 22—28.—A REPROACH ADDRESSED TO CAPTIVE ISRAEL FOR ITS PAST OMISSIONS AND SINS. The thought of Israel in the future, redeemed, restored, and "telling out God's praise" (ver. 21), raises naturally the contrasted thought of Israel in the present and the past, disobedient, full of shortcomings (vers. 22—24), too often guilty of overt acts of sin (vers. 24—28). While reproaching his people, and reminding them that the exile is the well-merited punishment of their past offences (vers. 27, 28), God still promises them pardon if they will appeal to his covenant of mercy (vers. 25, 26).

Ver. 22.—**But thou hast not called upon me.** The Jews had never been greatly given to prayer. They were a "practical" people, active, energetic, hard-working, busily employed in handicrafts, commerce, or agriculture. David and Daniel, who prayed three times a day (Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10), were probably exceptions to the general rule. At any rate, it appears here that in the exile the nation had neglected prayer. No doubt there was a nucleus of "faithful men," who did as Daniel did. But with the mass it was otherwise. Hard toil occupied their time. Despair made dull their hearts. They looked for no alleviation of their lot, and lived on in a sort of apathy. **But thou hast been weary of me**; rather, *for thou hast wearied of me.* Thou hast left off praying, because thou wast weary of my service.

Ver. 23.—**Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings.** If this reproach is regarded as addressed to *captive* Israel, who *could not* offer sacrifices, we must explain it by the analogy of the expression, "the calves of your lips" (Hos. xiv. 2). **All prayer may be regarded as a sort of offering, and withholding it as withholding sacrifice.** But it is possible that the prophet is not addressing captive Israel only, but carrying his thoughts back to the period preceding the Captivity, when there was a general neglect of God's service, and for a time the temple was given up to idol-worship (2 Kings xxi. 3—7; xxiii. 4—14). The glance back at earlier times is apparent in vers. 27, 28. **I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, etc.**; rather, *I put no heavy service on thee in respect of meat offering, neither made I thee to toil in respect of incense*; i.e. "my positive requirements have been light—surely thou shouldst have complied with them." Meat offerings were to accompany every sacrifice, but were a small burthen. Incense was not required from any private person.

Ver. 24.—**Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money.** "Sweet cane" is mentioned in the Law only in connection with the "holy anointing oil" (Exod. xxx. 23). But the present passage raises a suspicion that it was practically used in the burnt offerings of private persons (see the next clause). That it was anciently used in Babylonia in sacrifice, appears from the Deluge Tablets ('Transactions of Society of Bibl. Archæol.,' vol. iii. p. 559, l. 48). **But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.** "The sins of Israel," as Delitzsch observes, "pressed upon Jehovah, as a burthen does upon a servant." This is a part of the fundamental idea running through the third part of Isaiah, closely connected with the mediatorial office of the "Servant of the Lord," who "bare the sin of many" (ch. liii. 12), and on whom "the Lord laid the iniquity of us all" (ch. liii. 6). Israel, both during the Captivity and before, had accumulated a heavy load of sin, not merely by negligence, but by overt acts of guilt (see ch. i. 4, 15, 21—23, etc.).

Ver. 25.—**I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions** (comp. Ps. li. 1, 9). The idea is based on that of sins being "noted in a book" (Ps. lvi. 8; Rev. xx. 12). **For mine own sake**; *i.e.* purely from the love that I bare thee.

Ver. 26.—**Put me in remembrance.** Either, ironically, "Remind me of thy good deeds; plead thy cause with me on that ground; show the merits that justify thee;" or else seriously, "Remind me of my promises; plead them before me; declare them, that by my free grace I may justify thee." The latter is the more probable interpretation.

Ver. 27.—**Thy first father hath sinned**; rather, *thy first father sinned*; that is, "Thou hast no merits of thy own. Even thy first father, Abraham, sinned (Gen. xii. 13, 18; xvii. 17; xx. 2); and **thy teachers have transgressed.** Thy very priests and pro-

phets have been full of imperfections—have often sinned against me. Much more hast thou, my people generally, committed grievous offences. Thou must therefore throw thyself on my mercy."

Ver. 28.—**Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary.** The "princes of the sanctuary" (literally, "princes of holiness") are the principal members of the priesthood, who were carried into captivity with the rest of the people (2 Kings xxv. 18), and deprived of their functions, as a part of the punishment due to Israel for its sins. Israel itself was at the same time **given to the curse** of a severe bondage and to the **reproaches** of the neighbouring nation.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7.—*Man made for the glory of God.* The great end of all creation is God's glory. Not that this is to be understood in such sort as that God was moved to create by the desire of getting glory thereby, for nothing could enlarge or enhance that glory which he had from all eternity, before even the angels were brought into being. The *motive* of God's external working, if we may use the expression, was his goodness, or benevolence (Pearson on the Creed, art. i. p. 99), which caused him to seek to communicate his own blessedness and happiness to others. But the law of his working was the exhibition of his glory. He *so* created all things that they should set this forth. From the lowest atom of dead inert matter, possessed of no qualities but substance and extension, to the highest created intelligence, endued with *almost* Divine attributes, every thing, as it issued from his hand, was so made as to show forth and proclaim his glorious and unapproachable majesty, power, and greatness. Hence the outburst of the psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another" (Ps. xix. 1, 2). Hence the call upon all things to "praise the Lord, since his Name only is excellent, and his glory above heaven and earth" (Ps. cxlviii. 13). Hence the cry of the four and twenty elders in the heavenly place, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11). God's glory may be set forth (1) unconsciously, or (2) consciously—unconsciously, as it is by the things that are devoid of intelligence, "sun, and moon, and stars of light, heavens, and waters above the heavens, earth, sea, fire, hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind, mountains, hills, fruitful trees, cedars, beasts, and all cattle, creeping things, and flying fowl" (Ps. cxlviii. 3—10); consciously, as by the host of heaven, the angels of all grades (Ps. cxlviii. 2), and also by the children of men —"young men and maidens, old men and children, kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth" (Ps. cxlviii. 10, 12). For the better setting forth of his glory, God "created man in his own image" (Gen. i. 27)—"created him, formed him, perfected him" (ver. 7). Then, when he had marred the image in which he was made, God redeemed him. Thus he is still able to set forth God's glory, and to do so is the end of his being. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do," says the apostle, "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31); and again, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20).

Vers. 8—11.—*Witnesses for God and against him.* On the side of God, witnesses for him, assertors of his existence, his unity, his omnipotence, his providential direction of human affairs, are—

I. HIS CHURCH IN ALL AGES, WHETHER JEWISH OR CHRISTIAN. 1. It was the object of God, in calling the Israelites and making them his "peculiar people," to secure the result that he should not be "left without witness" (Acts xiv. 17). Monotheists from the first, the children of Israel stood up for ages a light in a dark world, giving a clear and unmistakable testimony for God, asserting him to be One, intelligent, possessed of will, the Creator of the world and of man, omnipotent, omniscient. "This august doctrine began with them; and they have been its witnesses and confessors, even to torture and death" (Newman, 'Grammar of Assent,' p. 428). From the time of the old empire in Egypt to the present day, a uniform consistent witness has been borne by all orthodox Jews to these great and fundamental truths, the necessary bases of all

true religion, the only safeguards for the continuance among men of law, order, or morality. 2. The Christian Church is at one on all these points with the Jewish Church, and bears the same testimony for God, only with additions to it. Christianity teaches that within the Unity of the Divine Substance there is a Trinity of Persons. Christianity maintains that the most essential attribute of the Divinity is love (1 John iv. 8, 16). Christianity has much to tell of the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity, of which Judaism knows nothing. Thus, at the present day, it forms a second witness for God, and gives a wider, fuller, and deeper testimony.

II. THE LORD CHRIST HIMSELF. "Ye are my witnesses, . . . *and my Servant whom I have chosen*" (ver. 10). The Lord Jesus witnessed for God in many ways; and his utterances, placed on record by the evangelists, are testimonies of inestimable value, infallibly declaring to us the true nature of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John iii. 16); "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17); "God is true" (John iii. 33); "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24); "The Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them" (John v. 21); "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23); "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you" (John xvi. 23). Or, to take another class of utterances, "God clotheth the grass of the field" (Matt. vi. 30); God "sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45); "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17). The witness of the Son to the Father is far beyond the witness of men, and is inexpressibly touching, being pervaded by a spirit of such tender love and reverence as we shall vainly seek for elsewhere.

III. THE FATHER IN HIS OWN PERSON. In the present chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah, while citing as witnesses the Jewish Church, and his Servant, *i.e.* Christ (ver. 10), goes on to bear his own testimony to his own greatness and unapproachableness. "I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and beside me there is no Saviour . . . Yea, before the day was, I am he; there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall reverse it?" (vers. 10—13). And does not the Father bear the same testimony to himself in the soul of each of us? Is the general recognition of something high and holy external to us, "making for righteousness," anything but the Father speaking in us and bearing witness of himself in our heart of hearts? Has he not thus spoken always to all the teachable ones of his myriads upon myriads of human creatures, besides providing external testimony, making himself also an internal witness to his own Being?

Witnesses against God are, unfortunately, also many, as appears by the present passage. Among them may be mentioned—

I. THE IDOLATROUS, OR IN ANY WAY IRRELIGIOUS, NATIONS AND PEOPLES. Idolatry is either a negation of God or an utter misrepresentation and degradation of him. Polytheism is in a certain sense atheism, since a "god," limited and conditioned by a host of other gods, is in very truth no "God" at all. And the gods of idolaters had rarely such a character as enlightened Christians would willingly assign even to a low grade of angels. The "nations" of Isaiah's time, and of later ages, "because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," had been given over by him to "a reprobate mind," and had lost the power of forming in their minds the conception of a pure, holy, all-perfect, spiritual existence. When such a conception was presented to them, they rejected it, preferring their own familiar ideas of gods more nearly on a level with themselves to so transcendental a Being.

II. THE SCEPTICAL THINKERS AND PHILOSOPHERS EVERYWHERE. At all times there have been "fools" who have "said in their hearts," or even proclaimed to the world at large, "There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1). Democritus, as early as B.C. 440, and Leucippus still earlier, taught that the universe had come into being without the help of a God, by evolution from lifeless and shapeless matter. Practical atheism was as ancient in China as the time of Confucius. *Soi-disant* philosophers have been in every age among the most forward to witness against the Being from whom they derive their whole power to speak, think, or act. In the present day, atheism, though still bold and blatant in some places, for the most part bates its breath, and modestly shrouds itself under the agnostic veil.

III. THE PRACTICALLY IRRELIGIOUS AMONG THE NOMINAL SERVANTS OF GOD. The witnesses against God whose testimony is most dishonouring to him, and at the same time most injurious to mankind, are the unworthy professors of belief in him. To confess God with the lips while denying him in the life, is to do him the greatest disservice that is possible. It is to cast a doubt upon the value of all the human testimony borne in his favour, since who shall say how much of it is insincere? It is to insult God by a mock acknowledgment, a lip-service, in which the heart has no part. It is to admit his claim to allegiance and to cast off our allegiance in the same breath. The Christian religion would, it is probable, have, long ere this, overspread the world, had it not been for the vicious lives of professing Christians. The testimony of their acts takes away all its force from the testimony of their words, and changes them from witnesses for God into most persuasive witnesses against him.

Vers. 16—21.—*Three deliverances.* In the past, Israel had had one great and unparalleled deliverance, that, namely—

I. FROM THE POWER OF EGYPT. With a "mighty hand and a stretched-out arm" God had saved them from the miserable fate of being bondservants, bound to task-work, and compelled to labour under the lash. He had effected their deliverance by a series of miracles, culminating in the death of the firstborn, and the passage of the Red Sea, whereby it might have been hoped that the nation would have been so impressed as to turn heartily to God, and become "a praise upon earth." But the result had not followed. Even in the wilderness they had set up idols (Exod. xxxii. 1—20; Acts vii. 43). In the Holy Land they had gone from bad to worse, "walked in the statutes of the heathen; built them high places in all their cities, set them up images and groves, wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, hardened their hearts, followed vanity and become vain" (2 Kings xvii. 8—15); "transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, polluted the house of the Lord, mocked his messengers, and misused his prophets" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—16); "shed innocent blood, which the Lord would not pardon" (2 Kings xxiv. 4); and thus rendered their first deliverance of no avail, since it was an outward deliverance only from an earthly oppressor, and not an inward deliverance from the bondage of sin. Now Israel is promised in the future a second and a third deliverance—

II. FROM THE OPPRESSION OF BABYLON. God will once more show forth his power, will chastise Babylon by the sword of Cyrus, will cause Cyrus to "perform all his pleasure" (ch. xliv. 28), will bring his people from the four winds of heaven (vers. 5, 6) and plant them again in their own land (ch. li. 11). "The ransomed of the Lord will return, and come to Zion." This deliverance is, so far, a sort of duplicate of the deliverance from Egypt, only that it is effected by new means, without miracle, by God's ordinary and secret action on the course of human affairs.

III. FROM THE TYRANNY OF SIN. The second deliverance is to lead on to the third. Israel, redeemed from Babylon, and replanted in its own land, is to "show forth God's praise" (ver. 21). The unimpressible people is to be, to a certain extent, impressed. In point of fact, after the return to Palestine idolatry disappeared. The post-Captivity Jews were faithful to Jehovah. Though not free from certain minor sins (Ezra ix. 1; Neh. xiii. 1—25; Mal. i. 7—14; ii. 8—17; iii. 8—15), they were never apostates. In the Maccabæan times large numbers showed a noble contempt for death, and were martyrs and confessors for the truth. When our Lord came, there was still a sound and healthy element in the nation. He was able to gather to himself a "little flock." The "little flock" expanded, and became the nucleus of the Christian Church. This Church, holy by its calling, holy by its profession, holy by the sanctified lives of so many of its members, is but an enlargement of that early "flock." Thus the final deliverance—begun here, but not to be completed till the consummation of all things—is a deliverance from sin. The final "Israel of God" will be "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27).

Vers. 22—28.—*The folly of self-justification before God.* Self-justification, addressed by man to God, is doubly foolish—

I. AS HAVING NO BASIS IN TRUTH, AND THEREFORE EASILY CONFUTED. There is no fact more certain, whether we accept the statements of Scripture as authoritative, or

pin our faith on our own observation and experience, than that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). Each man is conscious to himself of sin, and no one claims perfection for his neighbours. The greatest saints, both of the Old Testament and the New, have shortcomings, defects, fall into actual sins. One alone is depicted without sin, and he was more than man. Human biographies are in accord. No one, whatever his admiration for his hero, claims that he was perfect. All accept the notion that the best man is simply the one who has fewest faults.

II. AS EXCLUDING MAN FROM THE ONLY JUSTIFICATION POSSIBLE TO HIM. God will not justify the self-righteous. He forgives those only who ask his forgiveness. Pride is a barrier which shuts men out from him, and places them on a par with the fallen angels, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13). God "justifies the sinner" (Rom. iv. 5), but only the sinner who confesses his sin and begs for pardon. If we "go about to establish our own righteousness, and do not submit ourselves to the righteousness of God," we exclude ourselves from God's covenant of salvation, which is made with the humble, the contrite, the self-abased, the penitent. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John i. 9).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The love of Jehovah to Israel.* "But now." The word itself hints yearning affection. There has been a conflict between Divine love and Divine wrath, and the former has gained the victory. In fact, the *wrath of Jehovah* was but grieved affection. Its force is *now* for the time spent. He will *now* deliver and protect, reassemble and restore his people (Cheyne).

I. IT IS THE LOVE OF A PARENT. "Thy Creator, O Jacob; he that formed thee, O Israel." Of all the works of God, confessedly the noblest is man; and if man is only known as forming nations, these too are the works of God. And Israel especially is the embodied thought of God, in her laws and institutions, her place and mission in the world. Or, if we think of Israel as gradually fashioned, by schooling and by affliction, into a "new and singular product," not less is she endeared to her Maker and Builder. We cannot but love our children; and scarcely less dear to us are the children of our brain and of our heart—our schemes, our books; the house whose structure we have planned, whose arrangements have been made after ideas of our own; the flock we have overseen; the little body of disciples or friends whom we have made an organization for the diffusion of our views of life. That delight we feel in the reflected image of our mind in what is not ourself, we transfer by analogy to God.

II. IT IS THE LOVE OF A REDEEMER. And this implies sacrifice, love proved by *expense* of some sort. The tense gives a reference to history and to prophecy—past and future. No price can be too high for the ransom of Israel: other nations will be given up—Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba—for her. Cambyses, son of Cyrus, conquered Egypt and invaded Ethiopia. The Persian was destined to set free the chosen people; and those other peoples given into his hand as compensation are the ransom price for delivered Israel. If the "wicked are a ransom for the righteous" (Prov. xxi, 18), if the sufferings of the evil are in some way connected with the deliverance of the good,—this helps to shed a consoling light upon many a dark page of human history. But not only the suffering of the evil may be thus viewed—the suffering of the good also, in the light of the great saying, "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many"—for the greater or spiritual Israel in all ages.

III. IT IS AN APPROPRIATING, SPECIALIZING, HONOURING LOVE. To "call by name" is an expressive phrase for selection and election. So was Bezaleel the artist called in connection with the tabernacle-work (Exod. xxxi. 2); so was Moses called by name (Exod. xxxiii. 12, 17) and designated for his work. It is to "find grace" in the eyes of God; it is to be precious and honourable in his sight. It is to be a "peculiar treasure" (Exod. xix. 5, 6), a property of the Eternal—"mine art thou." We are led into the heart of the covenant-relation by these words. And every association of affection and good which has belonged in the thought of the world to the spiritual bond which knits soul to soul, may be used to illustrate Israel's relation to her God—that of child to parent, of client to patron, of confidential servant to lord, of soul to guardian spirit or

angel, may be thought of in this connection. What is true of the nation must be true of its individuals; what holds good of the Church must be valid for the life of each Christian.

IV. IT IS AN ALL-PROTECTING LOVE. Israel shall go through water and through fire unhurt. No stronger figure could be used for safety amidst calamity (cf. Ps. lxvi. 12; Dan. iii. 17. 27). We may think of the salvation of Israel from the waves of the Red Sea, of the three children in the furnace at Babylon, of the ever-consuming yet never-consumed bush seen by Moses. These things are parables of the *indestructibility of the spiritual life in mankind,* and of the perfect integrity of the empire of souls, ruled by the redeeming God. From the east and the west and the north and the south, these scattered souls are to be gathered to their home. Impossible to limit such words to any temporal reference merely. The bounds of time fade away as we listen; and there rises before us the inspiring picture of the world as one vast scene of trial, of education, of an elect people to eternity—in which many sons are being brought to glory, that glory the reflection of God upon their renewed spirits.—J.

Vers. 8—13.—*The great controversy.* The challenge of ch. xli. is renewed, and Jehovah's claims are contrasted with those of the false gods.

I. ASSEMBLING OF THE NATIONS. Israel is first brought forth by the ministers of justice. The people were once blind and deaf, but now are in possession of their faculties. And then, over against this small company of the faithful, the vast host of the heathen appears. And the challenge is issued—What god of the nations can produce predictions such as those in vers. 1—7? If this can be done, let them name former things—appeal to past events correctly foretold, and establish this by testimony. But the appeal is met by silence, by impotence. There are no witnesses forthcoming. And so once more idol-power is convicted and exposed as being "nothing in the world."

II. THE WITNESS TO JEHOVAH. Israel is now called upon. She has known again and again the power of Jehovah to foresee and foretell the future. Let their faith, then, be wholly given to him—a faith *founded on evidence,* a faith *rooted in intelligence.* This faith cleaves to Jehovah as the Eternal. He is both *before* and *after* all created things. These idols have been the objects of an illusory worship—formed and fashioned things. Their power breaks with the decay of the nations of whom they have been the imagined patrons. In the hour of adversity they have seemed, like Baal, asleep or gone on a journey—have lifted no arm to save. Jehovah remains the sole *able* God, the exclusive Deliverer. No "stranger," no foreign God had power for good or evil in Israel. To this test of *ability to meet the wants of the times,* true and false religions must ultimately be brought. The doctrine or the institution which visibly is *saving* men from evil, emancipating them from bondage to vice, must have a Divine element in it. And Christianity seems to need no other apology than the witness of what it has done and is doing to purify, save, and bless mankind.

III. HIS IRREVERSIBLE WORK. "I work, and who can turn it back?" Messengers of his vengeance have been sent to Babylonia, and all the mixed multitude will be brought down into their proud ships, hopelessly overwhelmed. The great deliverance from Egypt—eternally monumental of Jehovah's power to deliver—shall itself be surpassed by the coming deliverance of Israel from the recesses of the earth. It is seen already "shooting forth," and a blissful picture of the future, peaceful, abundant, victorious over savagery, closes the representation. 1. God is Eternal. 2. He is unchangeably the same. And this is the sure foundation of the security of his people. None can trust a fickle and a vacillating being. 3. He can deliver his people from all enemies, amidst every variety of circumstances. 4. None—whether man, demon, or god—can resist him. Opposition to him is both wicked and vain. The condition of happiness is to comply with his plans, and become servants in the furtherance of his designs.—J.

Vers. 22—28.—*Memories of exile.* I. THE FAITHLESSNESS OF THE PEOPLE. They have forgotten the covenant of their God. They have neglected one of its first duties—prayer, which marks dependence; or they had prayed to other gods; or their prayers had been merely ritual and formal. And this was the less excusable as the burden of sacrifices had not laid upon them during the exile.

II. THE MINDFUL MERCY OF JEHOVAH. He promises to blot out their sins; and this simply for *his own sake*. God can swear by none mightier; he can appeal to no principle that is higher than himself. He must be true first and above all to his nature; and next to that covenant which is the expression of his nature and of his relations to the people. Let them remember that; let them remind God of his promises, and he will not fail to respond. Although their ancestors had sinned; their leaders, the prophets and the priests and the princes, had rebelled against him, and had by him been rejected; —the people are still dear to him, and must remain so while Jehovah remains Jehovah. For he is the Eternal; he changes not. Though he punishes, he will not destroy; in the midst of wrath he remembers mercy; and holds fast to the set counsels of his love, from generation to generation, despite all the fickleness of man's fancies, opinions, and inclinations. Their endeavours to overcome his good by their evil shall be met by his mightier will to overcome their evil by his long-suffering.—J.

Ver. 2.—*God, in trouble.* "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." *When.* Then it is certain that such experiences will come. It is only a question of time. Tribulation is common to all the children. "The same sufferings," says the apostle, "are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world." When? We do not always know when the desolating floods of life are coming, but presently they will rise to our breast and to our throat—deep waters.

I. TRIBULATION DOES NOT DESTROY PROGRESS. We *pass through* these waters; they are part of the way in which the Lord our God is leading us. "Ever onward" is our motto. We are "a day's march nearer home," even in the days of desolation and distress. We need not hope to escape the waters. No *détour* will take us out of the way of the floods.

II. TRIBULATION BRINGS CHRIST NEAR. "I will be with thee." A brief sentence. But it is enough. We have but to study the little word "*I*." It speaks of One who has all power in heaven and in earth; One who is human and Divine. A presence—that is what we want. Theologians talk of a "real presence." How can a presence be unreal? We do not talk of real sunlight, or real bread, or real air! This is the presence of One who understands all, and whose infinite pity accompanies the infinite peace.

III. TRIBULATION DOES NOT DESTROY. "The rivers, they shall not overflow thee." It is life the Saviour seeks for us, not death. Neither faith nor hope shall be destroyed. And if these waterfloods be death—which they are so often taken to mean—then they do not destroy. No; we pass through them to the land beyond.—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The supreme claim and the sure stay.* So far from having nothing to do with us as individual spirits, we may say that God has everything to do with us. On the one hand, he makes a very great claim upon us; and on the other hand, he holds out very great hopes to us.

I. THE SUPREME CLAIM. To every human soul, as to Israel of old, God says, "Thou art mine." He requires of us that we shall consider ourselves as belonging to him; so that he may employ us in his service, may direct our will, may command our affection, may control our life. God does not claim to own us in the sense of being at liberty to act arbitrarily and capriciously towards us, but in the sense of being free to rule our souls and fashion our lives according to the dictates of righteousness and wisdom. His claim rests on his fourfold relation to us. 1. *His creation of our spirits.* "The Lord that created thee" (ver. 1; and see vers. 7, 15). If we could make an estimate of our comparative obligations, how much should we consider that we owed to him that brought us out of nothing into being, that made us living souls, that endowed us with all the immeasurable capacities that are enfolded in an immortal spirit? How large a claim has God upon our thoughts, our gratitude, our service, in virtue of the fact that to his creative power we owe it *that we are!* 2. *His shaping of our life.* God has "formed us." He who formed Israel by all his providential dealings with that nation from the beginning is the God who has built up our life (see Heb. iii. 4). Our human relationships, our bodily health and strength, our circumstances of comfort and joy, our mental strength and acquirements,—all this is the product of that shaping hand which "forms" the destinies of men as it gives figure to the foliage, arrests the tide, or determines the

courses of the stars. 3. *His redemption of our soul.* "I have redeemed thee." God might well claim to be Israel's Redeemer, for he had mercifully and mightily interposed on its behalf. But with how much greater reason may he claim to be *our* Redeemer! How much greater is that "great salvation" by which he "saves his people from their sin," than that deliverance by which he rescued a people from political bondage or military disaster! The surpassing strength of this claim upon us is seen (1) in that it is a redemption from the very worst *spiritual* evils to spiritual power and freedom; and (2) in that it was wrought at such a priceless cost (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). 4. *His personal interest in every one of us.* "I have called thee by thy name." The distinct and especial interest which Jehovah took in Israel has its counterpart in the individual interest he takes in each one of his children. Christ has led us to feel that he follows the course of every human spirit with a parental yearning, with a Saviour's restorative purpose and hope. He calls us by our name. To each *wandering*, backsliding soul he is saying, "Return unto me." To each *striving*, inquiring spirit he is saying, "Be of good cheer; I will help thee." To each *faithful* workman he is saying, "Toil on; I will come with a recompense" (ch. XXXV. 4).

II. THE SURE STAY. "Fear not." There are many comforters who approach us and whisper these two words in our ear. Some of these are delusive, and others are imperfect and ineffectual. It may be an ill-grounded complacency, or it may be favourable surroundings, or it may be human friendship; but the house of our hope, thus built upon the sand, may fall at any hour. If we would build our confidence upon the rock, we must rest on the promised stay of a reconciled heavenly Father, on the assured aid of an Almighty Friend, on the certain succour of a Divine Comforter. Having returned unto the living God, resting and abiding in Jesus Christ, we may go forth to any future, however threatening it may be; for One is present with us in whose company we may gladly enter the darkest shadows. And if we listen we may hear a voice, whose tones we may trust in the wildest storm, saying, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee."—C.

Ver. 2.—*Succour in sorrow.* It is bad indeed for us when our best friends become our worst enemies. Fire and water are two of our best friends so long as we have them under control: they warm, cleanse, nourish, fertilize, convey. But when they gain the mastery over us they overturn and consume, they injure and destroy both property and life; they thus become striking illustrations as well as fruitful sources of trial and distress.

I. THE GREATER AFFLICTIONS OF HUMAN LIFE. The terms of the text point to the larger rather than the lesser troubles through which we pass; though even the vexations and annoyances to which we are daily subject are experiences in which we need to summon our higher principles if we would act rightly and live acceptably to God our Saviour. But it is the sterner sorrows, the more serious calamities, which most imperatively demand all the resources at our command. We pass through the waters, we walk through the fire: 1. When heavy *losses* reduce our possessions and make us face narrowness of means, hard toil, or dependence on the charity of men. 2. When grievous *disappointment* overtakes us, extinguishing the bright hopes by which our path had been lighted and our hearts had been animated and sustained. 3. When *sickness* assails us, and our strength fails, and we lie long on the couch of helplessness or pain. 4. When *bereavement* throws its dark shadow on our homeward way. 5. When the *failure* of those from whom we looked for good or even great things sends a pang through our soul.

II. THE TRUE REFUGE OF THE SORROWFUL. "God is our Refuge . . . a very present Help in trouble." He is "the Lord our God . . . our Saviour." We may count on: 1. *His sympathizing presence.* "I will be with thee." Our Divine Friend will be with us, so that we shall be able to feel that he is looking upon us with tender and pitiful regard. 2. *His limiting power.* The rivers may rise high, but they shall "not overflow" the man whom God is befriending. His hand is on the adverse forces which oppress us, and there is a mark beyond which he will see that they do not come. 3. *His sustaining grace.* The fire may rage around his children, but such will be the resisting strength within that they "will not be burned." Their faith and love will not fail; they will triumph, in spirit, over the worst distresses.

III. THE CONDITIONS WHICH GOD REQUIRES. It is not every man, however he may stand with the Supreme, who may confidently count on this Divine succour. There must be: 1. *Acceptance with God.* God must be *our* God; Jesus Christ *our* Saviour; his service our portion. God makes no such promise as this to those who stand stubbornly aloof in waywardness or rebelliousness of spirit. It is *his children* who have a place of refuge (Prov. xiv. 26). There must be also: 2. *Submission of heart* to his will. 3. *Appeal for his help.* "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee," etc. (Ps. l. 15).—C.

Vers. 3—7.—*The goodness of God to man.* The abounding grace of God to the children of men is brought out very strikingly here. It is seen in—

I. THE HIGH PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE CREATES US. "I have created him for my glory." There is no end so lofty in itself and so elevating in its influence for which God could have made mankind as this. It is for this, primarily, that the very highest intelligences in the heavenly spheres have their being.

II. THE PROFOUND INTEREST HE TAKES IN US. "Thou wast precious in my sight . . . I have loved thee." God *regards* the children of men (Ps. xxxiii. 13, 14). He *attends* to their requests, and meets their wants (Ps. cxlv. 15, 19). He pities them in their griefs (Ps. ciii. 8). He *yearns* over them with parental love (see ch. xxxi. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 9). He disciplines them with parental solicitude (Heb. xii. 5—11).

III. THE HONOUR WHICH HE CONFERS UPON US. "Thou hast been honourable." In Christ Jesus we are honoured in many ways. We are "made priests and kings unto God." What manner of honour as well as of love the Father hath shown us, that we should be called the *sons* of God; and that we should also be made his *heirs*, and also "labourers together with him" (1 Cor. iii. 9)!

IV. THE SACRIFICIAL MEANS HE EMPLOYS ON OUR BEHALF. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom . . . I will give men for thee." That which is of immeasurably greater value than gold or silver, than property of any kind—*men*, human lives, God would give for Israel. For us he has given that which is of far greater account than any nation or any multitude of men—his own well-beloved Son: "God *so* loved the world," etc.; "He spared not his own Son;" "He gave himself" for us.

V. HIS PURPOSE TO GATHER HIS CHILDREN TOGETHER to one place of rest and joy (vers. 5, 6).—C.

Ver. 10.—*The witness of God's servants.* "Ye are my witnesses." God summoned his people Israel to bear witness to him; he challenged them to come forward and testify that (1) in the absence of any possible power that could have performed it (ver. 12), (2) he had foretold things which were far in the future; and (3) he had wrought signal and splendid deliverances on their behalf,—he had "saved" as well as declared (ver. 12). Thus they were in a position to maintain that (4) he was the One living God on whom the wise would depend for guidance and redemption (vers. 10, 11). His charge to his Church is similar. God demands that we shall bear witness to him and to his gospel of grace. To this end are *we* born, and for this cause came *we* into the world, that we should "bear witness unto the truth." Concerning this testimony, we are left in no doubt as to—

I. THOSE WHO ARE TO BEAR IT. We know who they are to whom God says, "*Ye* are," etc. They are those who have themselves returned unto him in true penitence and faith. All others are unsuited by their character and their spirit (see Ps. l. 16; li. 12, 13; Rom. ii. 21; ch. lii. 11). Only they who are in sympathy with God and are living in accordance with his holy will are qualified to bear witness to his truth.

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR MESSAGE. The first and greatest thing which men need to know is the nature and character of God. For it is the relation which they maintain towards him that determines their own character and destiny. Apart from him they are separated from the source of all true blessedness, of all real life. In him and with him they are safe, wise, rich, for evermore. We have, therefore, to testify of him: (1) of his unity (ver. 10); (2) his holiness; (3) his redeeming love (ver. 11). We have to bear witness (4) to the unique efficacy of his salvation; that there is no Saviour beside him; that there is "no other Name . . . by which we can be saved." And also (5) to the conditions under which alone this salvation can be secured. Like St. Paul, to Greek

and Jew, to cultivated and uncultivated, to those who esteem themselves to be righteous and to those who know themselves to be sinners, we have to testify "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

III. THE EXPERIENCE WHICH JUSTIFIES THEIR EVIDENCE. They have experienced that which amply warrants them in commending the gospel of the grace of God. 1. A profound sense of true deliverance. Their own consciousness makes it clear and positive that they have been rescued from the tyranny, the depravity, and the burden of sin, and led into the liberty, the purity, and the joy of sonship. 2. Peace and hope in regard to the future. God has revealed to them a home of rest and love—a future state where the highest and noblest aspirations of redeemed humanity will find fulfilment. In sure prospect of this they are in a position to speak freely in the presence of those who live without God and die without hope.—C.

Vers. 22—25.—*Righteousness, guilt, mercy.* We notice here—

I. THE REASONABLENESS OF GOD'S SERVICE. "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense." God's service is not a servitude, a slavery; nor is it a burdensome task, hard and heavy to be borne. Under the Mosaic Law, special provision was made for the poor, so that the sacrifices asked of them should be within their reach (Lev. v. 7; xii. 8; xiv. 21). Women and children were excepted from certain requirements, because of their sex or their years. Various exemptions were allowed in the spirit of considerateness. There was nothing hard, rigorous, ungracious, in the Law. Nor is there in the Divine demands now made upon us. God desires—indeed, he requires of us—that we should yield to him our thought, our remembrance, our worship,—regular, willing, spiritual; our love, our filial affection; our obedience to his precepts; our submission to his will. But there is nothing arbitrary or capricious about this demand; it is only that which grows, naturally and even necessarily, out of the intimate relation in which God stands to us and we to him. What is there *less* than this that we could rightly render to our Creator, our Sustainer, our bountiful Benefactor, our Father, our Redeemer? And in everything God makes full allowance for all our weakness and incapacity. He expects of us according to that which he has entrusted to us. From those to whom much is given, much will be required, etc. (see 2 Cor. viii. 12). From the very rich God will look for the talents of gold; from the very poor, small pieces of copper; from the strong man, his strength; from the weak man, his weakness.

II. THE SERIOUSNESS AND THE HEINOUSNESS OF HUMAN SIN. The Divine complaint is against us all, that we have: 1. *Withheld from him what is due to him.* We have "not called upon" him; for we have been "weary of him." We have not brought him even our smaller offerings; we have not honoured him, as we might and should have done, in his courts. And this shortcoming is only a small part of all our sin of omission. We have all failed to render him the glory due to his Name, the reverence and the affection due to himself, the obedience and the service due to his will and to his cause. It is also against many that they have: 2. *Added aggravating offences* to their shortcoming; "served him with sins," "wearied him with iniquities." Many have not only refused their worship, but they have flagrantly and heinously broken his commandments; have multiplied their iniquities, and made him to write down the most grievous and shameful transgressions in his book against them.

III. THE FULNESS AND FREENESS OF THE DIVINE MERCY. (Ver. 25.) For his own sake, not compelled thereto by anything which they had done or should do, but impelled by his abounding and overflowing grace, he would "blot out their transgressions" from his book of remembrance. God's pardoning love to us, revealed in the gospel: 1. *Is large and free.* (1) He forgives the most flagrant offences. (2) He receives those who have been longest in rebellion against his rule, and have most pertinaciously resisted his overtures. (3) He takes back those whom he forgives into his full favour and treats them with unstinted kindness (Luke xv.). 2. *Is granted* of his own grace, and for the sake of his own Son our Saviour. 3. *Is conditional* on our repentance and faith.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Personal relations with God.* "Thou art mine." In the East, to call a person by name is a mark of an individualizing tenderness. But so it is in all lands.

Those who are in close personal relations with us we call by their Christian names; we even give them a new pet name; and they love that name, because it is a sign to them of the close connection in which they stand to us. God tried to keep this sense of personal relation ever before the people of Israel, and so to keep them assured of the living interest he had in all their concerns. Wherever they might be, and whatever might be their surroundings, this might give them perfect peace—they were *his*. And when Jesus Christ would make a great impression on his disciples of his personal regard for them, he said, "Henceforth I call you not servants . . . but I have called you *friends*." 1. Such relations are indeed involved in the fact that we are the creatures of God. "He made us, and not we ourselves." He has the interest in us which we feel—in measure—in the work of our hands. He has great thoughts and purposes concerning us, and he is graciously concerned in their realization. 2. Such relations are further seen in his entering into covenant with a particular people. He drew them into a special intimacy; committed to them an unusual trust; made them depositaries, and by-and-by witnesses, of certain foundation-truths; and for generations guarded them while they guarded these truths. The closeness of relations between God and Israel is the basis of Hosea's exquisitely tender pleadings, the dearest and nearest human relations, of husband and wife, of parent and child, being used to bring home God's appeals (see Hos. ii., etc.). We direct attention to the practical side of this subject. If we are the Lord's, we—

I. ENJOY HIS FRIENDSHIP. Illustrate from Abraham, the friend of God, El-Khalil; or from Enoch, who "walked with God." To friendship is necessary: 1. Community of sentiment. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" 2. Mutual trust. The grace unspeakable is that God should *trust us*. Our failure and sin is that we so half-heartedly trust him. 3. Frequent intercourse. Nothing blights friendship like separation. Keeping friendly means keeping together. 4. Jealousy of each other's honour. Here we come short, sadly short, in our friendship with God.

II. RENDER HIM SERVICE. Friends love to serve one another. In this friendship with God we should not forget that we have to take a dependent place. His is a condescending friendship, and our response to it finds best expression in loving obedience. All hardness is taken out of service when it is the expression of such near and loving relations as those unto which God has brought us.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Safety for the soul in times of trouble.* The first figure in this verse is a very familiar one; the second needs such explanations as are given by writers on Eastern customs. It seems that the setting of the grass and undergrowth on fire, in the East, was commonly practised to annoy enemies, and it sometimes occasioned great terror and distress. Hawkesworth relates that the wild inhabitants of New South Wales endeavoured to destroy some tents and stores belonging to Captain Cook's ship, when he was repairing it, by setting fire to the long grass of that country. This passage has been treasured up by suffering people in all ages, as a hymn is treasured which has suggestive figures (*e.g.* "Rock of ages, cleft for me"). The strength, the almost extravagance, of the poetical figures, are found specially helpful in meditative moods. From this assurance we note three things.

I. GOD DOES NOT REMOVE OUR TROUBLES. If the providences bring round to us a "passing through the waters," or a "walking through the fires," special grace will not prevent us or change our allotment or our circumstances. Through the waters and the fires we have to go. There were such reasons for the captivity of Israel, that special grace would not interfere with the chastisement. St. Paul may pray to have his affliction removed, but the prayer could not be answered.

II. GOD ASSURES HIS PRESENCE IN THE TROUBLE. And it is easier to bear when two are under the load, and One has "everlasting strength." God's presence in the fires may be illustrated by the fourth form which stood beside the Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace. God's presence in the waters, by the following incident. When the steamship *Massachusetts* was wrecked in Long Island Sound, there were two mothers, each with a child, who were noticeable for their respectful calmness during the hours of greatest peril and anxiety, when it seemed as if the vessel must shortly go to pieces. A passenger from Philadelphia says that his attention was first called to them by their voices in singing. Going towards them, he found a little boy standing there with his

life-preserver on, and the little fellow was just joining with his mother in singing a hymn of trust and confidence. And when rescue came, and the passengers were safely on another vessel, those same sweet voices were again heard, this time in a ringing strain of praise for their deliverance.

III. GOD KEEPS THE TROUBLE WITHIN CAREFUL LIMITATIONS. His concern is about those who have to suffer, not about the trouble, or the circumstances that make the trouble. It may reach our circumstances; it may even reach our bodies; but God says, "No further." Job was ruined; Job was diseased; but God's hedge was round *Job himself*, and nobody and nothing could touch *him*. Waters nor fires can ever reach *us*, to injure or destroy the life in us which God has quickened.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*God the Saviour.* "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." As we know God, he is a Triune Being—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and Scripture traces the whole work of salvation to God thus apprehended. Salvation is not the work of one Person of the Trinity, but the work of the whole personality of God. This is the truth which may be unfolded from the expression in this text.

I. SALVATION IS THE WORK OF THE DIVINE TRINITY. This is variously taught in Holy Scripture, but the most complete and precise expression of the truth may be found in Titus iii. 4—6, which Conybeare and Howson render thus: "But when God our Saviour made manifest his kindness and love of men, he saved us, not through the works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy, by the laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he richly poured forth upon us, by Jesus Christ our Saviour." The love of God appeared. The regenerations and renewings are by the Holy Spirit. And that Divine Spirit is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. God is our Saviour. Jesus Christ is our Saviour. The Holy Ghost is our Saviour. And yet we have not three Saviours, but one Saviour. Young Christians, in the earlier stages of religious apprehension, are wont to grasp firmly the one truth—Jesus is the Saviour. Many Christian people grow old in experience without coming to realize that this is a central truth, which has another truth on each side of it. On one side this truth—God is the Saviour. On the other side—the Holy Ghost is the Saviour. Jesus Christ is declared to be God "*manifest* in the flesh;" God the Father *manifest*, so that we may apprehend him; and God the Holy Ghost *manifest*, so that we may realize his gracious inworkings. We know God the Father and God the Holy Ghost through Christ, the manifested Son. Such enlarging of our thought to embrace the full Divine agency in our redemption involves no kind of dishonour to the Lord Jesus. In his part and sphere he is the only One, the only "Name." As the *Manifester* and *Mediator*, he stands alone. His sphere is man's earthly life; he is God *with us*. He shares our humanity; bears a human name; lives through a human lot; perfects an obedience in the flesh; endures the final testing of a painful and ignominious human death; and in his redemptive work in the human spheres he has none to share with him. When we speak of separate Persons in the Divine Trinity, we must apprehend the most absolute unity of purpose in them; and the differences of operation which we can trace are simply gracious modes of reaching men so as to be a perfect redemptive power on them. The Father-God, in his Divine fatherly love, initiates the redemptive purpose, and forms, in his infinite wisdom, the redemptive plan. God the Son executes that part of the Divine plan which required manifestation in man's earthly sphere—in the sphere of the senses. God the Spirit is entrusted with that part of the Divine plan which concerned man's inward state—the renewal of his mind and feeling and will.

II. THE ONE FOUNTAIN AND SOURCE OF OUR SALVATION, WHATEVER ITS FORM OR ITS AGENCY MAY BE, IS THE DIVINE LOVE. "We are saved by grace." We too often speak of the "mercy" of God, as if it were only an attribute belonging to him. Nay, it is far better than an attribute—it *is* God: "God *is* love." But when that love gains expression in man's sphere, so that we may apprehend it, we find it is working out a marvellous purpose, even the full redemption of a sinful race; and we see it in the blessed life of the redeeming Son and in the inward grace of the renewing Spirit. But all is of God. All is of free, sovereign, unbought, unconstrained, unmerited love. He saved us. He sent the Son. He sheds the Spirit. It is our Father in heaven whose fatherly love pitied us, yearned for us, and found the gracious ways in which to bring

the prodigals home, and to make the prodigals sons again. It is the "grace of God that bringeth salvation." We may have laid hold of the truth that Christ *for us* is the Gift of grace. It may be that we need to gain firm hold of that other and answering truth, that the Holy Ghost *in us* is the Provision of grace. We want more than the doctrine concerning these high things. We want a living impression, which gives to them practical and persuasive power on our hearts. When we can really feel that our salvation is throughout, from beginning to ending, from predestination to calling, from calling to justification, from justification to sanctification, and right through to glorification, wholly of grace, then the last lingering confidence in our own doings will pass right away, and we shall rejoice altogether in "God our Saviour."—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*God the Redeemer.* Proof of the existence of God is not the proper subject of a revelation made to man in a *book*. The being of God is assumed by making a revelation in a book. The proper subject of a book-revelation is not God *creating*. That we might learn from the things created. Not God *providing*. That we could sufficiently understand by due observation of life. Not God *ruling*. That would be impressed upon us with ever-increasing force by the history of the ages as they accumulated. The great subject of a book revelation must be *God redeeming*. That we could not learn from the perfect order of creation. That we could not reach by the keenest observations of his providence. That is not traced upon human history save as the deeper, hidden lines which we need some key to decipher. With that our Scriptures are full. That must be told in human language, and shown in human signs. No researches of science will declare it; no natural relations of men involve it; no creature is commissioned to show it forth. No inquiry of the human mind can reach it. *God the Redeemer.* This is the unknown mystery—unknown till God himself declares it. Too glorious to be received by men until it is seen proved over and over again, and at last gets its most melting display in that cross whereon God's beloved Son dies in agony, for the glorifying for ever of the redeeming love of God. The Scriptures may have side information on matters of creation, providence, science, government, and duty; but these are not its great message. Creation is God's first work; redemption is his second and greater, called for by the world's confusion and man's moral ruin. That second thought God could tell to man in no other way than by words; only words could reveal the deep fact of the pitying love of God, which the *heart*, not the *head*, of man alone can grasp. The heart wants to be spoken to with human words.

I. REDEMPTION IS GOD'S CONSTANT WORK. Our Bible is full of it. It is the prominent thing on every page. Clouds of curse and woe hang heavy over the very first page of human history. The darkness of Divine indignations drops down on man and woman and tempting serpent. But right across the great thunder-clouds God threw a brilliant rainbow of promise. In symbol it said, "Redemption is coming." In words it read thus: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Abraham stands forth the head of a new race. Behold a man redeemed from Chaldean idolatries, redeemed unto God. A mystery hangs round the second patriarch, Isaac. Behold a sacrifice redeemed by God, through the substitution of the ram caught in the thicket! Jacob reads his life, and sees everywhere the "angel who redeemed him from all evil." The national life of the Jewish people started in a glorious redemption, which was to be remembered for ever as giving the first and foundation-truth concerning God. A mighty host fled hurriedly forth from Egypt, and found themselves hemmed in by lofty hill-ranges, a flowing sea, and foes pressing hard upon their rear. But there is a pathway through the mighty waters, and the delivered sing of God their *Salvation*. Redemption is a constant theme in the Mosaic system. The story of the wanderings is a series of illustrations of redeeming grace. God was ever delivering in the time of the Judges. David was redeemed from Saul, Asa from the Ethiopians, Hezekiah from the Assyrians. The saints from all the ages unite to say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

II. ALL GOD'S REDEMPTIONS DISPLAY HIS POWER, HIS HOLINESS, AND HIS LOVE. If they did not, they could be no redemption for us. If there is not Divine power in them, then he cannot reach our case. If but one of those redemptions start a question of the Divine righteousness, then we can have no confidence in the worthiness of his

scheme to rescue us in Christ. We cannot be satisfied with Christ's salvation unless it is perfectly plain that in his work "justice and mercy have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." And if the redemption do not take such a shape as shall display a "love Divine, all love excelling," then our hard cold hearts will never be melted and won. But all these are fully seen in that great redemption wrought by Christ. His is a mighty salvation. The perfect obedience unto death of the beloved Son seals for ever the righteous Father's claims. And as to love, what shall we say about love in sacrifice? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" but "God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Love! It drops from the overcharged heart in the agony of the garden. It drops from the thorn-crowned brow in the mock judgment-hall. It drops from nail-pierced hands on the cruel cross. It drops from the wounded side of him who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." O melting drops! Let them fall afresh on your heart and mine, and melt us into penitence and responsive love!—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The true end of life.* This is illustrated, for us all, in the true end for which the Hebrew tribes were formed into a nation. They were organized in Egypt, delivered, trained in the wilderness, and settled in the land of Canaan for distinct purposes of God. They were formed into a nation "for himself," to "show forth his praise." St. Peter applies this view of the old Israel of God to the new Israel of God, the first Christian Church. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 9). And the same view may be applied to every regenerate individual; he too is formed anew for God; in his new, regenerate life he is to show forth God's praise. Taking illustration from the older and the newer Israel, we may impress the truth of the text in its relations to the individual. The following line of thought may be worked out.

I. Our life on earth is but a limited and dependent thing. It is but a passing time, an interlude.

II. Its beginnings were wholly out of our own control. Whence we came, why we came, we do not know.

III. Its endings are equally beyond our reach. Where we are going, and what we are to be, we know not.

IV. Even in the passing time, we are in the midst of mysteries which we cannot fathom; and we fashion aims of our own which never satisfy us, even if we attain them.

V. It is evident that there is One who gave us being for his own purposes; who supports us through our interlude to show forth his praise; and who holds the final issues of our lives as the completion of his own all-wise plan.

Then this follows, and may be duly impressed—it is folly indeed for any dependent man to live his brief life *unto himself.* It is wisdom indeed to know him who gave us being for his own purposes. And he has not left himself without witness concerning himself and concerning his will. His revelation convinces us that the true end of life—which is to honour our Maker—is glorified by the apprehension of how good, how wise, how gracious our Maker is. That which is actually the chief end of life we come lovingly, thankfully, rejoicingly, to set before ourselves as *our chief end.*—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Wearying of God's worship.* This is quite a customary prophetical complaint. The idea seems to be that God noticed his people making a toil rather than a joy of his service. They kept it up, but it was evidently an irksome burden. We can understand that, during the Captivity, when removed from all the solemn associations of the temple-worship, it would be very burdensome to keep up family or public religion. Micah pleads thus, in God's name: "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me" (Micah vi. 3). And Malachi writes thus: "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord" (Mal. i. 13). Matthew Henry suggests the signs of the people being thus weary

of God's worship. 1. They had cast off prayer. 2. They had grown weary of their religion. 3. They grudged the expense of their devotion. 4. What sacrifices they did offer, they did not honour God with them. 5. Yet God made no unreasonable or burdensome commands upon them. The two points which may be illustrated and enforced, in direct relation to the religious life of our times, are these—

I. MEN SOON WEARY OF GOD'S WORSHIP WHEN THE HEART GOES OUT OF IT. The worship of human beings, enslaved by the senses, must be formal, ritual, ceremonial—in greater or less degrees. And these are most valuable and helpful when they are, what they should be, expressions of the soul's love and admiration and thankfulness. Worship is blessed if there is *life* in it, heart in it; if it says anything, if it means anything. As a round of formalities, it is but a "weariness." It may be kept up, but only as an irksome task that must be done. So our interest in Divine worship may become a test of ourselves. If there is life in the soul there is sure to be joy in the worship.

II. THE HEART GOES OUT OF THE WORSHIP WHEN WE NEGLECT THE PRIVATE CULTIVATION OF THE REGENERATE LIFE. So often men think to make up by diligence in public religion for neglect and indifference in private religion. But it can never be done. The preparation for worship is private soul-cultivation. We must bring the worship with us, or we shall never find it in the Church. Revive personal piety, and the result will at once be revived interest in Divine worship. If men neglect the house of God, it will always be found that they have "left their first love."—R. T.

Ver. 25.—*Forgiveness for God's own sake.* "For mine own sake." Human action is seldom taken on the persuasion of only one motive. We can hardly ask—What was your motive? We should ask—What were your *motives*? One, indeed, may seem to be bigger than the rest, and to have decided the course of conduct; but we are very imperfect readers of human nature if we rest satisfied with the easy statement that every act has a single reason, a supreme motive. We may venture to apply this to God. We cannot think of him as acting without motive. We may assume that he is influenced by various motives. But we may be sure that there is always the controlling motive—he will do that which is consistent with himself, that which upholds the honour of his own Name. He takes into account our prayers, and lets them be persuasions upon him; but behind all other impulses we must see this one ever constraining him—"for his own Name's sake." In the text this is applied to the blotting out of transgressions. Forgiveness comes to us because the Divine righteousness wants exhibition, and the Divine love wants expression. It is uninfluenced by any cause in us, save as our persuasions are permitted to be secondary causes. The sovereignty of Divine forgiveness is constantly pressed upon us in Scripture; and the atonement is the mode in which it gains expression, rather than the agency by which it is secured. God is a forgiving God *because he is.* No more can be said about it. But we may fully enter into the joy of his forgiveness. Three things may be opened and illustrated.

I. FORGIVENESS AS A HOLY FEELING AND PURPOSE IN THE HEART OF GOD. The father holds forgiveness of the prodigal in his heart long before the son comes back.

II. THE EXPRESSION OF THE FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE SINNED. This is made in Scripture promises, and in the words and works of Christ.

III. THE APPREHENSION OF THE FORGIVENESS BY THOSE WHO NEED IT. This only can be known by the penitent. On the figure used in the text, which recalls the blotting out of a cloud from the sky, Maclaren says, "Sin is but the cloud, as it were, behind which the everlasting sun lies in all its power and warmth, unaffected by the cloud; and the light will yet strike, the light of his love will yet pierce through, with its merciful shafts, bringing healing in their beams, and dispersing all the pitchy darkness of man's transgressions. And as the mists gather themselves up and roll away, dissipated by the heat of that sun in the upper sky, and reveal the fair earth below, so the love of Christ shines in, melting the mist and dissipating the fog, thinning it off in its thickest places, and at last piercing its way right through it, down to the heart of the man that has been lying beneath the oppression of this thick darkness."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Vers. 1—5.—A Prophecy of Israel's Spiritual Recovery and Regeneration. This section is closely connected with ch. xliii., of which it ought to form the conclusion. The prophet cannot bear to leave Israel under a ban—its spiritual guides "profaned," and itself given over to "reproaches." He must end with a brighter prospect. Accordingly, he holds out, in the present passage, the double hope (1) of the blessing of an abundant outpouring of the Spirit, to take the place of the preceding "curse" (ch. xliii. 28); and (2) of a pressing of proselytes into the renovated Church, who will hold it in honour, instead of making it the object of their "reproaches."

Ver. 1.—**Yet now hear**; *i.e.* "be not dismayed at what has been said. Listen a little longer." **O Jacob my servant**, etc. A recurrence to the terms of endearment used in ch. xli. 8, showing that words of favour and promise are about to follow.

Ver. 2.—**The Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb** (see ch. xliii. 1, 7). "From the womb" is added here for increased emphasis. **Jesurun.** The Lord's people have their proper names—Jacob, Israel, Jesurun, or rather, Jeshurun. "Jacob" marks them simply as descendants of the patriarch—the people to whom the promises were made. "Israel" marks their militant character—that as "God's soldiers" they fought his battles and maintained his cause in the midst of a hostile world. The third name, "Jeshurun," which is very rarely used (only here and in Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 26), designates them as "righteous," being a derivative from the root *yashar* (or *jashar*), equivalent to "upright," and points to that standard of moral excellence which it was their duty to set forth, and which to some extent they did set forth, in a world that "lay in wickedness." Had they been more worthy of the name, it would probably have been oftener applied to them.

Ver. 3.—**I will pour water upon him that is thirsty.** "Water" is, in Isaiah, the common metaphor for Divine grace. Sometimes, as in this place (and ch. xxxv. 6; xliii. 20; lv. 1), the simple *maim*, "water" or "waters," is the word used. At other times we have instead, or in addition, "rain" (ch. v. 6; xxx. 23; lv. 10), or "dew" (ch. xxvi. 19), or "rivers" (ch. xxx. 25; xxxii. 2; xxxiii. 21; xli. 18; xliii. 19, etc.), or "streams" (ch. xxx. 25; xxxv. 6), or "floods" (as in this place). At his coming on earth, our blessed Lord took up the comparison, and has made it familiar to all men throughout the whole Christian world (see John iii. 5; iv. 10, 11, 13—15; vii. 37—39). We may note here that the "water" is only poured on him who is athirst for it. **Thy seed . . . thine offspring.** Not "Israel after the flesh" only, but also Israel after the Spirit—the true "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

Ver. 4.—**They shall spring up as among the grass.** The LXX. have, "As grass among the waters;" and this reading is followed by Bishop Lowth, Ewald, and Mr. Cheyne. But there does not seem to be any necessity for departing from the existing Hebrew text. **As willows.** There is some doubt whether the Hebrew word used (*'ereb*) is rightly translated "willows." The modern *yarab* seems certainly not to be a "willow," but rather a species of *Viburnum* (see the long note in Delitzsch's 'Commentary on Isaiah,' vol. ii. pp. 203, 204, Eng. trans.). It is, however, most strictly a water-plant, growing only "near flowing water."

Ver. 5.—**One shall say, I am the Lord's,** etc. There shall be an influx of proselytes. Instead of the heathen nations looking scornfully on, and uttering gibes and jeers (Ps. cxxxvii. 7) at Israel's fall, on seeing Israel's rise they shall be anxious to have a part in it, and shall hasten to enrol themselves among the worshippers of Jehovah. "One shall say, I am Jehovah's,"—while "another shall proclaim the name of Jacob," as that in which he glories; and a third "shall write on his hand, (I am) Jehovah's, and take as a surname the name of Israel." It was usual among the heathen nations to mark the name of a god upon the bodies of persons specially devoted to him (Herod., ii. 113; vii. 235); and, though the practice was forbidden to Israelites (Lev. xix. 28), it might naturally continue in use among semi-heathen proselytes.

Vers. 6—20.—A Further Contrast of God with Idols. The captive Jews, dwelling scattered in a land the inhabitants of which were, one and all, idolaters, and having by hereditary taint an inclination to idolatry, would be easily tempted, during the long and weary period of the Captivity, to put away the worship and even the thought of Jehovah, who had allowed their subjugation, and conform to the religion of their conquerors. Hence the repeated contrasts in these later chapters—specially addressed to *captive* Israel—between Jehovah and idols, and the sharp ridicule of the

latter (comp. ch. xl. 18—25; xli. 4—7, 21—29).

Ver. 6.—**The Lord the King of Israel.** Therefore entitled to Israel's allegiance (comp. ch. xliii. 15). **And his Redeemer;** *i.e.* Israel's Redeemer—he who had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage—who will redeem them from the power of Babylon—who, best of all, will redeem them from their sins. **The First . . . the Last** (comp. ch. xli. 4, with the comment). **Beside me** there is **no God.** This had been distinctly asserted in the Law (Deut. iv. 35, 39; xxxii. 39); but Israel could not be induced practically to believe it. The "gods of the nations" were supposed generally to be realities, actual powers, not perhaps so potent as Jehovah, but still real beings, capable of doing good and harm (see ch. xli. 23). It is one of Isaiah's special objects in these later chapters to disabuse Israel of this notion (see ch. xli. 21—24; xliii. 9—11; xlv. 5, 6, 14—22, etc.).

Ver. 7.—**Who, as I, shall call,** etc.? *i.e.* "Who will do (or who *can* do) as I do—call events into being, **declare** them, and **set** them **in order** beforehand—who can do this **for me** (or, in my stead)? No one. **I have done it, ever since I appointed** (or, placed upon earth) **the ancient people**"—that is, the race of men before the Flood (see Job xxii. 15). The claim is that, from the first creation of mankind, God has not only prearranged the events that should happen, but has declared them by the mouth of prophets (see Gen. iii. 15; vi. 13, 17; viii. 22, 23; ix. 12—16, etc.). No other has done the same. **The things that are coming, and shall come.** Not earlier and later events, but "future events," and "such as will actually come to pass" (Kay, Cheyne). Let the idol-gods declare these, if they are to be entitled to consideration.

Ver. 8.—**Fear ye not** (comp. ch. xli. 10, 13; xliii. 5; ver. 2). Israel need not fear that they will be forgotten or forsaken. God has **told** them **from that time,** or, *from the beginning* (ch. xlviii. 3, 7), and **declared** to them, what he is about to do—viz. destroy Babylon, and give them deliverance. He will assuredly do as he has said. **Ye are even my witnesses** (comp. ch. xliii. 10, 12). There is **no God;** literally, *there is no Rock;* i.e. no sure ground of trust or confidence (comp. ch. xvii. 10; xxvi. 4; xxx. 29; and see the comment on ch. xvii. 10).

Vers. 9—20.—The uniqueness of God having been set forth, the prophet now turns to the images and the image-makers, overwhelming them with his scorn and ridicule. The passage may be compared with Jer. x. 3—10 and Baruch vi. 8—72.

Ver. 9.—**They that make a graven image** are . . . **vanity;** rather, *are confusion.* The word **used** is *tohu,* which, together with *bohu,* describes the primitive chaos in Gen. i. 2 (comp. ch. xxiv. 10; xxxiv. 11; xl. 17, 23; xli. 29; lix. 4). **Their delectable things shall not profit.** "Their delectable things" are their idols, which are "pets, favourites, treasures." These cannot possibly be of any advantage to them. **They** are **their own witnesses.** Their powerlessness stands confessed in their very appearance, since they are manifestly sightless and senseless. **That they may be ashamed.** The subject of this clause cannot be sought in the earlier part of the verse. It is the idol-*makers* that will be put to shame.

Ver. 10.—**Who hath . . . molten a graven image?** Metal idols were mostly cast in the first instance, and then finished off with a graving-tool. "Who hath molten" means "who has been so foolish as to do so—to take so much trouble about a thing which cannot possibly profit any one?"

Ver. 11.—**All his fellows;** or, *all its associates;* i.e. all who are associated together in the worship of the idol. The worshippers of a particular idol, or sometimes of a particular god, formed a sort of guild or company, bound together by common participation in certain rites, and under an obligation to defend each other. The prophet says that, though the worshippers and the makers should, all of them, be **gathered together,** and **stand up** to help one the other, yet should they be unable to effect anything. Gathered together against God, they would "tremble and be ashamed."

Ver. 12.—**The smith with the tongs.** The Hebrew text is defective, some word having fallen out. We should probably supply "maketh," and translate, *The smith maketh an axe, and worketh it in the coals, and with hammers fashioneth it.* The description of image-making thus commences with the fashioning of the carpenter's tools. **He is hungry,** etc. The artificer who takes the first step in "forming a god" (ver. 10) is himself hungry and thirsty, depending on so mean a thing as food to supply him with the needful strength. Unless he can eat and drink, the whole work is brought to a standstill.

Ver. 13.—**The carpenter,** etc. When the smith has done his part in the formation of tools, the carpenter is called into action. His proceedings are traced "extragressively" (Delitzsch). First, he is regarded as in possession of his block of wood. On this he proceeds to **stretch out his rule,** to obtain the idol's length and breadth. Then he marks out on the block a rough outline with red chalk (*sered*). After this he pares away the superfluous wood **with planes,** or chisels, and marks out the limbs more accurately **with the compass,** planing and measuring **until he has brought the rough block into**

the figure of a man, and impressed on it something of **the beauty of a man**, so that it may seem worthy of remaining in the place where it is set up, whether temple or private **house**. But there is something necessarily anterior to all this. To obtain his block, the carpenter must first cut down a tree, or have one cut down for him (ver. 14); to obtain a tree, he (or some one for him) must have planted it; for the tree to have grown to a fitting size, the rain must have watered it. So the very existence of these wooden idols depends ultimately on whether it has rained or not—*i.e.* whether God has given his rain or withheld it.

Ver. 14.—**Cedars . . . cypress . . . oak.** The second of the trees mentioned is more probably the ilex than the cypress, which does not grow either in Palestine or in Babylonia. Idols would be made of cedar on account of its fragrance, of ilex and oak on account of their hardness and durability. Cedar was used as a material for carved figures in Egypt (Birch, 'Contents of British Museum,' p. 21). **Which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest.** The meaning is obscure. Dr. Kay translates, "and he *encourages himself in* the trees of the forest," which conveys no very distinct idea; Delitzsch, "and he *chooses* for himself among the trees," etc., which is sufficiently clear, but scarcely obtainable from the Hebrew text; Knobel, "he makes himself secure among the trees" (by putting a mark on those which he intends to have), which imparts an idea certainly not contained in the original. **He planteth an ash.** It is uncertain, and it does not greatly matter, what tree is intended. The point is that, before trees can grow up, they have to be planted, and that, for them to grow when planted, God's gift of rain is necessary (see the comment on ver. 13).

Ver. 15.—**Then shall it be for a man to burn.** The tree that has been planted, and nourished, and has grown up is naturally "for a man to burn." *That* is its ordinary destination; and even the idolater applies it partly to this purpose; but out of a portion he **maketh a god.** The very same tree serves him both for fuel and for a divinity.

Ver. 16.—**He burneth part thereof**; rather, *half thereof*; "With *half* thereof"—not the other half, but the same—"he eateth flesh." One fire serves for the two purposes of warming him and cooking his victuals.

Ver. 17.—**The residue thereof**; *i.e.* the other half.

Ver. 18.—**They have not known nor understood.** The cause of all this folly is a blinding of the understanding, divinely caused in the way of punishment, on account of their having wilfully closed their eyes to the truth. Because they "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate (or, undistinguishing) mind" (Rom. i. 28; comp. ch. xxix. 10). **He hath shut**; or, *One hath shut.* But the reference is in either case to God. The word translated "shut" means literally "plastered" or "smeared."

Ver. 19.—**None considereth in his heart**; literally, *recalls it to his heart*; i.e. returns to a sound way of thinking upon the subject. It is implied that the idolaters had once had it in their power to think and reason justly upon the absurdity of such conduct as that which was now habitual to them. But they had lost the power. They had suffered themselves little by little to be deluded. **The stock of a tree.** The marginal rendering, "that which comes of a tree," is preferable.

Ver. 20.—**He feedeth on ashes**; *i.e.* on vanity—on what can give no support or sustenance (comp. Prov. xv. 14; Hos. xii. 1). **A deceived heart.** Either self-deceived, or imposed upon by illusions from without; *e.g.* the seeming power of the idols, as seen in the victories and conquests of their worshippers. **He cannot deliver his soul.** The deceived soul is bound in trammels, which it feels to be irksome, and from which it would fain be free. But it cannot deliver itself. Deliverance must come from some external source; in other words, man needs a Deliverer. **Is there not a lie in my right hand?** An idol is "a lie." It professes to have power, strength, ability to help and save, whereas it has no power at all. It cannot even save itself. Savages often beat their fetishes. Diagoras of Melos threw an image of Heroules into the fire on which he was cooking his dinner, and bade Hercules make himself of some use by boiling his turnips. The powerlessness of idols even to help themselves is represented with much force in the Book of Baruch (vi. 12—15, 17—22, 27, 49, etc.).

Vers. 21—28.—ISRAEL ONCE MORE PROMISED DELIVERANCE, AND THE DELIVERER MENTIONED BY NAME. Israel, having been exhorted never to forget the impotency of idols (ver. 21), is promised forgiveness and deliverance (vers. 21, 22). Then, heaven and earth are called upon to join in rejoicing over the announcement (ver. 23). Finally, in a noble burst of poetry, God is represented as solemnly declaring his intention of frustrating all the false sayings of the soothsayers concerning his people, and accomplishing their restoration to their own land, and the rebuilding of their temple through the instrumentality of Cyrus (vers. 24—28).

Ver. 21.—**Remember these**; rather, *remember these things*; i.e. the futility of idols

and the folly of the idol-worshippers. **For thou** art **my servant.** Therefore bound to worship me, and not the idols (comp. ch. xli. 8; vers. 1, 2). **I have formed thee** (so also in ch. xliii. 1, 21; vers. 2, 24). The duty of absolute unquestioning obedience seems contained in the relation of that which is formed to that which has formed it. On the other hand, it may be assumed that he who has formed a thing will have a constant care of it and regard for it—that at any rate he will not "forget" it.

Ver. 22.—**I have blotted out . . . thy sins** (comp. ch. xliii. 25). The promise there made is here represented as having its fulfilment. Before God reverses his sentence and restores his people, he must first forgive them. **As a thick cloud . . . as a cloud.** It would be better to translate, *as a cloud . . . as a thick cloud.* The latter of the two Hebrew words used is the more emphatic. **Return unto me.** This is an underlying condition, both of restoration and of forgiveness. Only the penitent can be received back into favour. The knowledge, however, that God has, in his counsels, "redeemed" his people generally, may act as a stimulus on individuals to repent and turn to him.

Ver. 23.—**Sing, O ye heavens.** The sympathy of external nature with the fortunes of Israel is assumed throughout Isaiah, as it is throughout the Psalms (see ch. xi. 6—8; xxiv. 4—7; xxix. 17; xxx. 25, 26; xxxiii. 9; xxxv. 1, 2, 7, etc.). If Israel is depressed, the earth must "mourn and languish," the heavens grow dark, the mountains shrink and "be ashamed." If, on the contrary, Israel prospers, heaven and earth, mountain and forest, must alike rejoice and sing. Dr. Kay expounds the rejoicing of the heavens here (and also in ch. xlix. 13), of the joy felt by the angels over the returning and pardoned sinner; but the context of both passages is in favour of the material heavens being meant. It is quite possible that there is a real and not merely a fancied sympathy between the material and the spiritual worlds. **The Lord hath done** it; literally, *the Lord hath wrought* — what he has wrought is not said. Mr. Cheyne translates, "Jehovah hath done *nobly.*" **Shout, ye lower parts of the earth.** Metonymy of the part for the whole—"the lower parts of the earth" for "the earth even to its lowest depths." There is no thought of *Sheôl* or of its inhabitants. **Break forth into singing** (comp. ch. xiv. 7; xxxv. 2). As children and birds sing from the very gladness of their hearts, thereby venting the joy that almost oppresses them, so all nature is called upon, not merely to rejoice, but to give vent to its joy, now that Israel is redeemed and God glorified.

Ver. 24.—**Thus saith the Lord. This is** not a new prophecy entirely unconnected with the preceding, as Delitzsch supposes, but a declaration to which the prophet has been working up, and which he intends as the crown and climax of all that he has been announcing with respect to Israel's deliverance. Not only is the deliverance absolutely determined on in God's counsels, but the Deliverer himself is already chosen and designated. **He that formed thee from the womb** (comp. ver. 2). **I am the Lord that maketh all** things—rather, *I the Lord am he that doeth all things;* i.e. I am he that executeth whatever he designs—**that stretcheth forth the heavens alone** (comp. Job ix. 8), **that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.** God did not delegate the creation of the heaven and the earth to an inferior spirit, a δημιουργός, as the Greeks generally taught. He did not even call in the co-operation of a helper. Singly and solely by his own power he created all things.

Ver. 25.—**That frustrateth the tokens of the liars;** *i.e.* "who brings to nought the prognostications of the astrologers and soothsayers, that pretend falsely to a knowledge of future events" (see ch. xlix. 13; and comp. Jer. xxix. 8, 9); and **maketh diviners mad;** *i.e.* "shows them to be fools or madmen" (see Job. xii. 17). **That turneth wise men backward;** *i.e.* "repulses them—puts them to flight." Pretenders to wisdom, rather than truly wise men, are meant.

Ver. 26.—**That confirmeth the word of his servant;** that is, of Isaiah himself, whom God calls "my Servant" in ch. xx. 3. The "messengers" are the prophets generally. Before the return from the Captivity took place, it had been prophesied, not only by Isaiah, but by Jeremiah (xxix. 10—14), by Ezekiel (xxxix. 25—28), by Joel (iii. 1), by Amos (ix. 11—15), by Obadiah (ver. 20), by Micah (iv. 10), and by Zephaniah (iii. 14—20).

Ver. 27.—**That saith to the deep, Be dry** (comp. ch. xlii. 15). "The flood" here is probably the main stream of the Euphrates, while "the rivers" are the various side streams which branched off from it and again united themselves with it. Some commentators regard the drying of Euphrates as a mere metaphor for the exhaustion and ruin of Babylon (Kay); but (with Delitzsch) I should be inclined to understand a reference to the action of Cyrus in drawing off the water of the river (see the comment on ch. xlii. 15).

Ver. 28.—**That saith of Cyrus.** The mention of Cyrus by name, here and again in ch. xlv. 1, has no doubt been one of the main grounds on which has been set up the theory of two Isaiahs. It has been thought incredible, or at any rate contrary to the analogy

of prophetical revelation, that so minute a matter as the name of a man should have been announced in prophecy more than a century before his birth. There is, however, the parallel case of Josiah, who, according to the author of the Books of Kings, was announced by name more than three centuries before his birth (1 Kings xiii. 2). And there are the extremely minute facts noted in Dan. xi., which were prophetically declared from two centuries to three centuries and a half before they happened. It is, perhaps, assuming that we know more than we really do know about the object and laws of prophetic utterance, to lay it down that there can be no minute prophecy except when the prophet is living in the midst of the events. It is certainly a very marvellous thing that Isaiah, living at the close of the eighth and the beginning of the seventh century B.C., should mention a king by name who did not ascend the throne till the middle of the sixth; but no one can suppose that God could not have made such a revelation to him if he pleased. An attempt to minimize the marvel, without postulating two Isaiahs, has been made by the supposition that "Cyrus" was not really a proper name, but an old title of the Persian (Achæmenian) kings, signifying "the sun," and that Isaiah, therefore, only meant to point out Persia as the power which would destroy Babylon, which he had already done in effect in ch. xxi. 2. But, in reality, there is no sufficient ground for either of the two statements (1) that Cyrus meant "the sun," and (2) that it was an old titular name of all the Persian kings. That "Cyrus" meant "the sun," rests upon the weak authorities of Plutarch and Ctesias, and has been disproved by Sir H. Rawlinson ('Cuneiform Inscriptions,' vol. ii. p. 112). That it was an old titular name of all the Persian kings is directly contrary to the evidence. Out of fourteen Achæmenian kings, two only bore the name; and they bore it as their one and only personal appellation. It was also borne by an Achæmenian prince who had no other name. It is as purely a proper name as Cambyses, or Xerxes, or Darius. The theory of Dean Plumptre ('Biblical Studies,' p. 195) must therefore be set aside as untenable, and we must face the fact that the great Cyrus, who reigned from B.C. 559 to B.C. 529, is mentioned in prophecies attributed to a writer whose death cannot be placed much later than B.C. 700. The name which the Greeks expressed by Κύρος and the Romans by "Cyrus," is in the original Persian *Kurush*, in the old Babylonian *Kuras*, and in the Hebrew *Koresh*. **He is my shepherd**; *i.e.* not a mere ordinary king, who was often called "the shepherd of his people (ποιμὴν λαῶν)," but "*my* shepherd"—the shepherd of my people, who will tend them and care for them. **And shall perform** (literally, *accomplish*) **all my pleasure.** Cyrus is said by Josephus to have had this prophecy pointed out to him on his conquest of Babylon, and to have thereupon determined to fulfil what was written ('Ant. Jud.,' xii. 1, § 2). His edict, reported by Ezra (i. 2—4), contained a statement that "Jehovah had charged him to build him a house at Jerusalem." It is difficult to see any sufficient *political* object for his restoration of the Jews to their country. **Thou shalt be built**; rather, *it shall be built.* **Thy foundation shall be laid**; literally, *it shall be founded.* The decree of Cyrus found by Darius at Ecbatana required that "the foundations of the house should be strongly laid" (Ezra vi. 3), and prescribed its dimensions and materials. (On the actual laying of the foundations, see Ezra iii. 8—13.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Water a symbol of Divine grace.* It has been shown (in the comment on ver. 3) (1) how this symbolism pervades the prophecies of Isaiah; and (2) what an echo it found in the teaching of our Lord. An analogy thus recommended seems entitled to be viewed as something more than poetic imagery, and may properly be made the subject of our serious thought. In what respects, then, we may ask, does the symbolism hold?

I. WATER IS COMMON, ABUNDANT, FREELY GIVEN TO MANKIND AT LARGE. So is it with Divine grace. Christ, the Light of the world, lighteth *every man* that cometh into it (John i. 9). What men call "the light of nature" is an illumination poured by God into the soul, and this light is common to all. It shows men the way that they should walk in; it enables them to discern between right and wrong; if they would follow it, it would guide them to heaven. Nor does Divine grace stop at this point. To those who struggle to do right God's assisting grace is never wanting. His Spirit strives with all men (Gen. vi. 3); his mercy is over all his works (Ps. cxlv. 9); he is "no respecter of persons" (Acts x. 34).

II. WATER IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO LIFE. Nothing living, whether animal

or vegetable, can exist without water. No spiritual life can exist without grace. Without moisture, neither can the embryo be formed, nor will the seed germinate. Without grace there is no commencement of spiritual life. Water is needed for the sustentation of both plants and animals. Grace is needed for the sustentation of the quickened spirit.

III. WATER CLEANSES MEN'S BODIES FROM ALL FILTH AND POLLUTION. The grace of God cleanses their souls from the filthiness and impurity of sin. His grace is the "one fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii. 1); the precious influences of his Spirit can alone take away impurity, and make the soiled soul once more clean in his sight. Wonderful is the cleansing power of water; still more wonderful is the guilt-removing power of grace. Sins that were "as scarlet" are by grace made "white as snow;" iniquities that were "red as crimson" become "as wool" (ch. i. 18). It is not merely that the sins themselves are forgiven, but the "evil heart," from which they proceeded, is washed, sanctified, and cleansed, so as to retain no taint of evil.

IV. WATER REFRESHES AND RENOVATES THOSE WHO ARE WEARY AND FAINT. There is no refreshment to the faint and weary soul comparable to the pouring out upon it of God's Spirit. When "the parched ground becomes a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (ch. xxxv. 7), the result is a complete transformation of the whole appearance of things. "The wilderness and the solitary place" at once "are glad . . . the desert rejoices and blossoms like the rose. . . . It blossoms abundantly . . . the glory of Lebanon is given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon" (ch. xxxv. 1, 2). Similarly, when the dry and thirsty soul obtains a "time of refreshing from the Lord" (Acts iii. 19), its whole condition is on a sudden changed. Gladness succeeds to gloom, happiness to despair, an almost ecstatic bliss to a dull, gnawing sense of misery. The soul puts forth blossoms—rejoices with joy and singing (see the Psalms, *passim*).

Vers. 9—20.—*The utter folly of all kinds of idolatry.* Idolatry proper—the actual worship of images—is felt by modern Englishmen to be so extreme a folly that they have a difficulty in believing it to have at any time been, or still anywhere to be, the actual religion of a people. Their inclination is to regard it as a symbolism—coarse and ill-judged, perhaps—but yet a well-meaning symbolism, expressive of the truths of natural religion. But research into the past history of mankind, and investigation of the present condition of the nations by whom idolatry is practised, alike show a real belief in the supernatural power of the images, and a real trust in them for help and protection. Thus the idolatry directly denounced by Isaiah, extraordinary as it seems, is in fact a real form of human folly—one of the many strange aberrations of the human intellect that have an actual existence; and not only so, but one that is widely prevalent. Its "utter folly" is sufficiently exposed by the prophet, and, as being generally allowed among ourselves, need not be dwelt upon. The folly of other forms of idolatry, though not much less, is not so commonly admitted, and may with advantage be pointed out in connection with portions of Scripture like the present. We may instance—

I. THE IDOLATRY OF PERSONS. Human beings are allowed to stand between us and God—to absorb the thought, the attention, the affections, that ought to have God for their Object. Most often, perhaps, it is a child; but sometimes it is a husband, or a wife, or a lover, that holds the position, occupying the first place in our heart, and filling it to the entire exclusion of that Being who has the principal claim on us. Now, what exceeding folly is this! Is it much short of the folly of the old idolaters? To put in the place of God a mere human being, a form of flesh that may quit us at any time, that may change towards us, that has no power to help or save us,—that is not much superior to the idolater's "graven image." How often does our idol shatter itself, disappoint our hopes, disregard our wishes, become estranged from us, tear our heartstrings, trample upon our best feelings! How often is it suddenly snatched from us! God is very jealous of rivals near his throne, and very frequently takes from us, by a premature death, the idol that is imperilling our souls. Even in the best case—which is alas! the worst—if our idol stay with us, and do not change, what madness to be wholly wrapt up in the love of the finite, and to let go from us for its sake the love of the Infinite Being!

II. THE IDOLATRY OF WEALTH. "Covetousness," St. Paul tells us (Col. iii. 5), "is

idolatry." There are those who make riches the object of their worship—who allow the idol of gold to come between their souls and God, having more regard for the possession of wealth than for God's approval, and a greater desire to be rich on earth than to be saints in heaven. What abject and grovelling folly is this! Wealth! So many pieces of yellow metal to be our object in life, the end-all and be-all of our existence—pieces of metal that we cannot take away with us when we die (Ps. xlix. 17) or even make sure of keeping with us during our lifetime; pieces of metal that do not save us one twinge of pain in sickness, or one pang of remorse at death! The idolatry of wealth is even greater folly than the idolatry of persons, and even more degrading to a rational being.

III. THE IDOLATRY OF RANK AND STATION. Some, who despise wealth, and have no strong affection for any individuals, have an inordinate regard, a profound veneration, for the possessors of high worldly station. To number princes and nobles among their friends and acquaintances is the highest pleasure of which they are susceptible. They idolize rank, consider it a sufficient set-off against all demerits, and will stoop to anything in order to bring themselves into contact with it. Here, again, one can only exclaim—What folly! Rank and station, like wealth, belong to this world only. They have to be left behind, with our everyday clothes, when we step into the grave. They are accidents which no way affect a man's true worth, or the estimation in which he is held by those whose esteem is of the slightest account. The prince of to-day is the exile of to-morrow; the noble may become bankrupt in purse, and too often is bankrupt in reputation. Such as idolize rank and court the favour of nobles are despised by men of sense, disliked for the most part and ridiculed by those to whom they labour to make themselves acceptable.

Ver. 28.—*The duty of kings to be God's shepherds.* "By me kings reign," says God, "and princes decree justice" (Prov. viii. 15). Though the expression, "the Divine right of kings," has been greatly abused, it is yet a truth which all must acknowledge, that monarchs are placed in their responsible position by God, and must answer to him for the use which they make of that position. The whole world is, in a certain sense, God's flock, and the various chief rulers who hold authority over different portions of the human race are rightly viewed as shepherds entrusted by God with the care of this or that division of the flock which is primarily and really his. Thus—

I. EACH KING IS REQUIRED TO ACT AS A SHEPHERD TOWARDS THE NATION OVER WHICH HE IS SET. A true shepherd seeks the good of his flock, not his own good. He is watchful, vigilant, wisely provident. He seeks to benefit his flock, not to pleasure them. Oftentimes he must check their desires, restrain their wanderings, keep them back from alluring pastures, confine them to high regions, where the herbage is short, scant, and far from succulent. He must be specially careful of the weak and sickly, and of such as have suffered any hurt. He must spare no trouble or pains to secure, so far as he can, the well-being of every sheep and lamb committed to his charge. And further—

II. EACH KING IS SPECIALLY REQUIRED TO ACT AS A SHEPHERD TOWARDS THE PORTION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WHICH IS WITHIN HIS KINGDOM. Within the universal flock, which is coextensive with mankind, our Lord has a special flock, enclosed within a special fold, which he calls in a special sense his own (John x. 1—16). This flock is not, however, confined to one place—it is "dispersed throughout the whole world." Kings are required to look to its interests in some special way. They are to be "its nursing fathers," as queens are to be "its nursing mothers" (ch. xlix. 23). Cyrus, from the time of his conquest of Babylon, while in a general way the shepherd of all the nations under his rule, was especially the shepherd of Israel. And the case is the same with all those monarchs within whose dominions any portion of the Church of Christ has its abode. England's monarchs bear, among their other titles, the proud one of *Fidei Defensor*—"Defender of the Faith." The faith which they have to defend is the faith of Christ, and in this defence is necessarily included the special protection of Christ's faithful ones, or of the Christian community within their realm.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 1—5.—*The offspring of Israel.* Judgments are coming upon the world. And the sacred seed shall be scattered abroad through all nations. There shall be deliverance of Israel from all those calamities and much more; the heathen nations shall be brought into the light of Jehovah.

I. ADDRESS OF JEHOVAH TO THE PEOPLE. There are three names for the people—Jacob, Israel, Jesurun—and each represents a separate phase of moral progress. 1. *Jacob, my servant.* This itself is a title of honour. To be the minister of the will of an earthly sovereign is a proud distinction: how much more to wear the badge of the King of kings! Moreover, in ancient times servitude often meant confidence and friendship of the happiest kind between two souls. The name of Jacob, too, calls up memorable associations: a life of vicissitude and adventure, cheered by the constant presence of God; of notorious faults and weaknesses united with victorious faith; of a struggle to realize the Divine reality of love richly rewarded. The history of Jacob is beloved because it typifies the union of the human with the Divine—in the people, in all believing men. 2. *Israel the chosen.* One foreknown, selected, predestinated from the first to fulfil the ends of God. From the beginning of their history, the Divine hand had formed and moulded all Israel's institutions. As the organism lies implicit in the cell of protoplasm, as the oak may be seen in miniature in the acorn, so Israel sprang from a thought of God. 3. *Jesurun the upright one.* An imputed righteousness, we are told, is meant. Others say it is a word of flattery and endearment—a diminutive form of "Israel." If the two ideas may be combined, then the chosen and beloved of God will be upright in the thought of God. To say that God "imputes" righteousness to those who have it not in themselves, what is it but to ascribe to him the most beautiful effect and operation of love? It is to say that Israel is by him *idealized.* And to feel this about ourselves means deliverance from despair in those moments when in the mirror of conscience we behold a hideous self-reflection, or when we perceive how cheaply we are held by the world—

> "All I can never be,
> All men ignore in me,—
> This I am worth to God,
> Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

There are secrets of the heart unknown to any system of theology. He who can hear God's voice saying to him, "Fear not," may be deaf to all detraction and indifferent to all applause.

II. PROMISE OF JEHOVAH. 1. *The outpouring of the Spirit.* Let us transport ourselves in fancy from these moist atmospheres and dripping skies of Britain to yonder burning Orient clime. Then and there let us bathe ourselves in the generous bounty of those refreshing words, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground." But we need not go to the Orient to experience drought of soul. We may find reading "dry," and preaching drier, our own minds driest of all; nothing growing within us, nor promising to grow. And for the future the prospect seems equally cheerless. Nothing is left us but this Word of God; but all is left us in that Word. Thinking of snow will not cool us; the imagination of water will not refresh us in our thirst; but faith in God, the realization of what he is in this relation to us, remains the one resource which Scripture offers to us. 2. *The spiritual posterity.* Biblical promises respect the "solidarity" of life. That which we moderns call "individualism" appears to be unknown. As the curse, so also the blessing, goes on working to the "third and fourth generation," nay, to "a thousand generations," under the dispensation of a covenant-keeping God. Nay, it is conceived as abiding through time into eternity—"a seed established for ever, a throne built up to all generations" (Ps. lxxxix. 4). Here the abundance of Israel's spiritual posterity is imaged as grass by the waters, or as the tall and graceful poplars by the artificial water-courses. "A tree planted by the rivers of water;" "Thy years shall be as the years of a tree:" what more beautiful and touching image? The tree is typical of life in its *strength*, its *gracefulness*, its *fruitfulness*. These shall be its characteristics in the Messianic age. The Church will finally embrace the world. Proselytes will come thronging to her

threshold. They will join in one confession. It will be recorded that this and that man was born anew in Zion (Ps. lxxxvii.). Each Jew will be as it were the centre of a little synagogue; ten men will seize his skirts and say, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23). The frequent confession will be heard, "I belong to Jehovah;" or be found taking upon his person the stigmata, or sacred marks, which denote him as vowed to Jehovah's service (cf. Herod., ii. 113). We may learn: (1) The blessedness of pious parents, and their corresponding responsibilities. (2) The gift of God's Spirit is the source of true happiness and prosperity. Piety alone can be the root of the Church's and the nation's weal. (3) God will never permit true religion to be extinct. It may appear to wither; but so long as he lives it will certainly know its recurring times of revival.—J.

Vers. 6—28.—*Jehovah and the images.* I. SELF-MANIFESTATION OF JEHOVAH. He is the First and the Last, Alpha and Omega. Existing before the creation, he will endure when it shall have passed away (ch. xlviii. 12). It is a thought which strikes us at once by its sublimity, and, what is better, with its truth. Men sometimes speak of the material world as real, of the world of faith and imagination as dreamy. Not so the greatest prophets and poets. Shakespeare describes the globe and all its human splendours as passing away like an "insubstantial pageant faded." But Isaiah outdoes Shakespeare, making the very heavens themselves pass; and perhaps St. Paul goes a step further when he sees "knowledge itself" vanishing away. Moreover, Jehovah is the incomparable God. He can admit no "rival near the throne;" cannot accommodate other deities to places in a tolerant pantheon. He is the sole Object of worship, the only Being to whom is due the title "God." So, too, *he alone can tell the future.* Let the long past bear witness. He placed the "ancient people," or the "everlasting people." The reference seems to be to the ever-enduring covenant spoken of in Exod. xxxi. 16, to the priesthood and the kingdom which are everlasting (Exod. xl. 15; 2 Sam. xiii. 16). It suggests "the everlastingness of God's people," in opposition to the proximate fall of the idolatrous nations. Or, the reference may be to the days before the Flood—to the most ancient inhabitants of the world. In any case, he has appointed beforehand the times and the bounds of the habitations of men. And history is intended to teach men of him, that they may with mind and heart glorify him. Israel herself is the great witness on the earth to God. He is her "Rock"—a great and memorable figure (Deut. xxxii. 4, 30, 31; Ps. xix. 14; xxxi. 2, 3; xlii. 9). Rock of Ages, Dwelling-place of all generations: who can wear such titles but himself? "If there were another Rock of Ages, Jehovah would not complain; but as his Being is unique, it pains him that men will not have him for a God."

II. IDOLATRY CRITICIZED. The image-makers are all of them "chaos"—an expression of extreme contempt. There is no use, no profit, in their trade. To that question of *use* all institutions, yea, all men, must ultimately come. Now, what can be said on behalf of idolatry? Produce the witnesses. Blind and ignorant, what have they to say? To produce them is to abash and confound them. And so it is with many an idol and institution of our time. It tries to keep off criticism under the plea of sacredness; when the age insists on criticism, and will have an answer, its silence or its confused apologies are its condemnation. What can be answered to the following questions? How can you turn an *image* into a *living spiritual being*? *Quis nisi demens*—who but one out of his senses can confound the one with the other? The worship of these idols was sacramental, and was kept up by societies and guilds. The members were in association with the idol and with one another; like Ephraim (Hos. iv. 17), they were in fellowship with demons (cf. 1 Cor. x. 20). If the idol be nothing in the world, what becomes of those "joined to him"? Let *that* question be answered. And then, again, how can these human craftsmen make their Maker? Let them all combine in their toil: the ludicrousness of their endeavours is the more manifest. There is the smith with his sharp axe and his hammers, sweating at the fire till he is faint; the carpenter with his line and sharp chisel, plane and compasses. The semblance of a human figure appears. The god is made; and sacrifice and prayer follow. "Save me!" the benighted worshipper cries to his manufacture. The scene is enough to carry conviction to the spectator's mind, and to convince him that these votaries can have no perception, so "daubed" are their eyes and their hearts by the habits of sense. The power of *reflection*

seems gone—the power to hold up the act before the mind and judge it. A thoughtless religion, an uninquiring compliance with tradition and custom, is often enjoined upon us; but only thoughtful religion will endure. God is Mind; and if we fail to offer him the best of our mind, we sink down into some such miserable delusion, such ashy refuse of religion, as is here held up to scorn and ridicule.

III. ADMONITION TO ISRAEL. Let the child, the servant of Jehovah, remember these things, and lay to heart the folly of idolatry, and the glorious constancy of the God who has claimed them for his own. Do they think they are forgotten of God? Impossible! "O Israel, thou *canst not* be forgotten of me!" He is beforehand with her. Before she confesses, he proclaims her sins forgiven; before she returns to her allegiance, he cries, "I have blotted out as a mist thy rebellions;" before she prays for deliverance, he proclaims, "I have released thee; then return!" Here is the heart of the gospel, the heart of the infinite love. We, with too narrow heart, too often make human good the antecedent of Divine grace. "Repent," we say, "and God will forgive; be obedient and God will reward." But on the prophet's representation, Jehovah makes the first advances. He calls for conversion on the ground that he has released Israel. And so ever. The parable of the prodigal reflects the same ideas. The "goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." It is this thought which makes hardness of heart—housing up wrath against the day of wrath—appear so odious in the sinner's own eyes. We need to represent the gospel so that the sinner shall throw all the blame of his condition on self, not on God. Let us ever speak of him as One who "keeps mercy for thousands," and whose stores of compassion cannot be exhausted.

"Oh for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break!"

Let heaven and earth join in a chorus of sympathy, with shoutings from the depth of the earth, and ringings from the mountain-heights and from the forests. Let his praise be even "sounded down to hell" (cf. Ps. vi. 5; lxxxviii. 12); for he is Redeemer, has "beautified himself" in Israel (cf. ch. xlix. 3; lx. 21; lxi. 3).

IV. JEHOVAH AND HIS PURPOSES. He is the God, the Guardian Spirit, the Guide, the Avenging Judge, for Israel. He has moulded Israel in the womb of time, who has made the universe of things. He only is wise, "bringing to nought the signs of the praters, and making the diviners mad," turning the wise backward, and proving their knowledge folly. On the other hand, he speaks by the prophet. He causes his servant's word to stand, and fulfils the counsel of his messengers. And his word and counsel is that Jerusalem shall be peopled, and the waste places of Judah be built upon; the flood of Euphrates be dried up. And already the word is passing into deed. The instrument of Jehovah's purposes has been selected; no prince of the Davidic house, but Cyrus shall be his shepherd and accomplish all his pleasure. And we read in Josephus that Cyrus read the prophecy of Isaiah, and was seized by an impulse to fulfil it ('Ant.,' xi. 1. 2). God has jurisdiction over heathen monarchs; their plans are directed by him and made subservient to his will. What the Greeks thought of as *Ananké*, Necessity, the Hebrew thinks of as the will of the Eternal.—J.

Ver. 20.—*True and false bread.* "He feedeth on ashes." Man does not understand himself. Feed he must: the question is, on what? There are cravings of heart which cannot be repressed. Men are *hungry* for fame, applause, wealth, honour. Full many a time they taste this fruit; but each apple has ashes at the heart of it. What a picture of *contrast* is given us by Christ! He tells us of the true bread—the living bread, the bread which cometh down from heaven.

I. THE TABLE OF THE MEN OF THIS WORLD. Ashes! Is that all? In other words, dust! Yes; everything that does not feed the immortal nature within us is dust. Wealth is dust, and is scattered like dust. Beauty, however fascinating, turns to dust. And so far as the pursuits of man are concerned, how unsatisfying these are! The post of honour is no sooner secured than others are eager to fling the victor down. The famous "garter" is laid on the coffin and the pall. We are told the reason of this sad mistake. "A deceived *heart* hath turned him aside."

II. THE TABLE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. They feed on the Bread of God; and this Bread is the Son of God, who said, "I am the Bread of life." 1. *Christ must be*

taken and eaten. Not in the hands. *That* is impossible. We are to feed on the living Christ. His mind is to be our mind. The soul can only feed on kindred elements. The spiritual nature cannot be satisfied through the senses. Christ must be "in us," the Hope of glory. 2. *Christ was the broken bread for us.* It is the Christ of Gethsemane and Calvary on which we are to feed. "My body was broken for you." So we take into our spiritual being, not only Christ the Example, Christ the Teacher, but Christ the Saviour. And as we eat this bread we live by him, and become like him. He died for us, that we who live should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again; for Christ came, not merely to save by teaching, but to teach by saving!—W. M. S.

Vers. 3—5.—*The indispensable blessing.* We may well speak of water in the natural realm and of its antitype in the spiritual as—

I. THE INDISPENSABLE BLESSING. There may be abundance of earth, and it may be of the most valuable quality; there may be the utmost diligence in the field, and the latest agricultural science; but if the rain be withheld, if no water can be obtained to nourish the sown seed, there can be no harvest,—the indispensable blessing is not bestowed. So is it in the sphere which is more sacred and more serious. You may have the soil of spiritual human nature, you may have the seed of Divine truth, you may have the diligent and watchful culture of the Christian pastor; but if the influences of the Holy Spirit do not descend, there will be no ingathering for the Husbandman. God must pour down his rich blessing, or all our labours in the Master's vineyard will be barren of result; there will be nothing for Heaven to see but thirsty land, dry ground, fruitless farming.

II. THE FIELD WHERE WE MOST DESIRE THAT THESE RAINS SHOULD FALL. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." We desire that God should be blessing the ministry we render to the aged; we are more solicitous that words of Divine wisdom should penetrate the minds and affect the lives of men of middle life, on whom such duties devolve, with whom so many issues rest; but we are most concerned that the truth of Christ should enter the understanding, cleanse the conscience, possess the soul, of *the young.* 1. They are, in a peculiar degree, the objects of our love; they may be "our seed, our offspring." But if not, we are strongly attached to them, and therefore interested in their spiritual welfare. 2. They stand at a point where religious decision will make the very greatest difference. If now they seek God and surrender themselves to his service, they will have a large and noble contribution to make to the cause of righteousness, to the service of mankind. 3. Unaffected and unwon in youth, the obstacles in the way of decision and devotion are continually increasing.

III. THE BLESSED RESULT OF THE DIVINE BESTOWAL. There will be a glorious spiritual upspringing. "They shall spring up," etc. There shall be the signs of abounding life. The life that will be seen when the floods of heavenly influence are poured forth will be manifest in: 1. *The stem of sacred conviction.* God's truth revealed by Jesus Christ will be the staple of human thought. 2. *The flower of fitting utterance.* (Ver. 5.) (1) The Name of Christ will be honoured by a Christian profession; and (2) the people of God will be honoured by close association with them. 3. *The fruit of holy usefulness.*—C.

Vers. 9—18.—*The irrational and the religious.* This passage is interesting, as containing the most pungent and effective sarcasm in holy writ. There are indeed the finest conceivable materials for the sarcastic in the practice of idolatry; *i.e.* in all those cases in which idolatry has sunk into its lowest stage. Where a statue is understood to be nothing more than the memorial or visible representation of the Divine, the language of the Hebrew prophet would not apply; but where it is regarded, as it has been and still is regarded by millions of mankind, as not only *suggestive of* but *identical with* the Deity, then these strong and scorching words are most appropriate, most crushing. They may suggest to us thoughts respecting—

I. RELIGION TRAVESTIED BY IRRATIONALISM. Some caricatures are clever and amusing enough, but a caricature of the sacred and the religious is both sinful and hurtful. Idolatry has gone far to dishonour and to discredit religion. The fact that

men have committed such gross absurdities in connection with religion as these which Isaiah exposes and ridicules, and the fact that they have thus associated the utmost credulity with religious faith for hundreds of years under many skies,—this has done much to prejudice the minds of men against the highest and purest forms of piety. So far is ignorance from being the "mother of devotion," that it is the prolific parent of infidelity. The irrational is the best friend of the sceptical and the atheistic. It is well that we understand and appreciate this now. For though the grosser forms of incredulity have disappeared, the superstitious is with us still; and superstition, though it be baptized with a Christian name and wear Christian garments, will be recognized as the irrational thing it is; it will be transfixed by the modern reformer, and be shown in its true colours, and it will weigh down the truth which it was supposed to be sustaining.

II. RELIGION REPRESENTED BY REASONABLE SERVICE. As nothing can be more utterly irrational than the conduct here described and satirized, so, on the other hand, nothing can be more reasonable, more perfectly conformed to the fitness of things, than intelligent, spiritual devotion. What can be more right and reasonable than that the creature should worship the Creator; than that the finite mind of man should seek to be instructed in the wisdom of God; than that the recipient of innumerable and inestimable mercies should offer deepest gratitude and render heartiest thanksgiving to the Author of all his mercies; than that they who have most serious duties to discharge, difficulties to surmount, burdens to bear, obligations to meet, should seek the guidance and support of the Lord of life, the Source of strength and righteousness; than that they who are daily travelling to the grave, and have no light of experience to tell them what is beyond it, should make their appeal to One who has given us such strong reasons to accept him as the Resurrection and the Life?—C.

Ver. 20.—*The vanity of irreligion.* In a few vigorous touches the prophet sketches the utter vanity and the condemnation of idolatry. The idolatrous man: 1. Is relying on that which will miserably disappoint him; what he takes for food turns out to be nothing better than "ashes." 2. Is misled into the most grievous error; he has been "turned aside" from the highway of truth. 3. Is continually enacting a falsehood; there is "a lie in his right hand." Idolatry is the supreme mistake as well as the most heinous sin. But what is palpably and particularly true of this great iniquity is essentially true of all sin. A sinful life is—

I. A LIFE OF SADDEST INSUFFICIENCY. "He feedeth on ashes." Like the "apples of Sodom," like the "little book" of the prophet's vision (Rev. x.), a guilty action (or a sinful life) is very pleasant on the outside or at the beginning; but within, afterwards, it is bitter and disappointing in the last degree. Crime begins in successful violence or enriching fraud; it ends in the prison or the garret. Vice begins in unholy pleasure, in unprincipled companionship; it ends in distracting pain, in mortal sickness, in cruel loneliness. Ungodliness begins in the delights of eager but unhallowed ambition, of happy but unsanctified affection; it ends in weariness, in heart-ache, in the discovery that earthly distinctions and human love cannot fill the heart that God made for himself, cannot gladden and ennoble the life that he fashioned for his service. A life spent without God, devoted to selfish gratification, is a life of deep disappointment; the mistaken sinner finds out that the delectable food which he plucked with such keen anticipation is only ashes between his teeth.

II. A LIFE OF SERIOUS DEFLECTION. "A deceived heart hath turned them aside." The straight road is the path of piety, of purity, of truthfulness, of sobriety, of justice, of kindness. When men "see light in God's light," they recognize this path as the one right road in which a man should walk, any deviation from which is error—a spiritual wandering. But when the heart is deceived, when the soul is corrupted by "the deceitfulness of sin," when the inward "eye is evil" and consequently the whole body is full of darkness, then it seems to the deluded spirit that the wrong way is the right one, that the green, downward slopes of folly and sin are the highway of wisdom. And the worst of it is that the path of sin does not run near to and parallel with the way of life; it goes off from it at an angle which is continually increasing, so that the further a man goes along this evil road the greater distance he is away from that in which he should be walking. Every step takes the mistaken traveller further from his course. And when men have wholly lost sight of the beauties of holiness, of the

excellency of holy service, of the claims of Divine benefaction; when they are so far off the true track that the voices of heavenly wisdom no longer reach their ear;—they are helpless, they are lost. The deceived and deluded pilgrim "cannot deliver his soul."

III. A LIFE OF PRACTICAL FALSITY. "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Men are often *living* falsehoods when they are not putting them into words; the lie is not on their lips but in their right hand. The man who is withholding his heart from God and his life from his service is saying, by his chosen course, by his daily doings, by his deliberate action, that it is better to live a selfish than a devoted life; that the claims of Christ may be neglected; that the temporal is of more consequence than the eternal, the material than the spiritual; that happiness is more worth seeking than blessedness, the honour that cometh from man than the approval of the heavenly Father. These are fatal falsehoods, which lure men to sin and lead them down to death. Happy is that wandering soul who sees a form that comes to rescue, who hears a voice that summons to redeem—that One who says, "Man shall not live by bread alone;" "He that cometh to me shall never hunger;" that voice which says, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you;" "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death" (Prov. xii. 28).—C.

Vers. 23—28.—*Joy in God's redeeming power.* We have here—

I. THE REACH OF ALMIGHTY POWER. It extends: 1. *Over all visible nature.* (Ver. 24.) He makes "all things." The heavens and the earth are the work of his hand. 2. *Over individual men.* He can (1) direct the indifferent, so that Cyrus performs his pleasure (ver. 28), although that king was living in spiritual ignorance (ch. xlv. 5); (2) confound the rebellious, so that the impostor is discredited and ashamed (ver. 25); (3) establish the faithful, so that his servant, however he may have been disregarded, is honoured in the eyes of men (ver. 26). 3. *Over men in their collective capacity.* Jehovah had fashioned Israel, making her all she had become, giving her strength to do all she had accomplished; it was he that "formed" her from the beginning, that shaped her life (ver. 24). And he would yet restore the cities of Judah; they should be populous and powerful again (ver. 26). 4. *Over the most formidable difficulties.* Things that seem impossible of achievement are found, under his power, to be effected. At the touch of his hand the waters of the great deep disappear; at the sound of his voice the river-beds are dry (ver. 27). "With God all things are possible." Mountains of difficulty are removed, and seas of impediment are swept away. Nothing is "too hard for the Lord."

II. ITS BENEFICENT RESULTS. It is a question of the greatest importance—What are the results of the power which is exercised by the strong? The world has had some terrible illustrations of the miseries of malevolent force. Power seeking selfish gratification at the expense of righteousness and of human happiness is the most deplorable as it is the most damnable thing under the heavens. On the other hand, power put forth to elevate and bless is the most admirable and beneficent thing. God works toward two ends (1) the exaltation of his own holy Name; and (2) the redemption and restoration of mankind (ver. 23). The two become one; for it is by bringing men back to himself and to his service that he redeems them from all that is ruinous, and that he raises them to all that is elevating and ennobling. Man finds his worst calamity in distance from his heavenly Father; he finds his highest good, his fullest blessedness, in the *honour* he pays, in the *love* he cherishes, in the *obedience* he renders, in the *resemblance* he reaches, to his Divine Saviour, his living Lord and Friend.

III. UNSPEAKABLE JOY THEREIN. "Sing, O ye heavens," etc. (ver. 23). Joy at its very fullest is uncontainable, inexpressible. He wrote well who said, "I were little happy *could I say how much.*" There are times when we feel that we want every one and everything to be vocal with the gladness of our own soul. If the children did not shout, the very stones would have to speak the joy of that glad hour (Luke xix. 40). When the great and gracious purposes of God are accomplished in the redemption of one human soul from sin and its restoration to the love and the likeness of God, there is occasion for more joy than human songs can celebrate; how much more so when a nation is redeemed! and how much more yet will there be when the whole race is transformed, and when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ!—C.

Vers. 2—5.—*Revival promised in the power of the Spirit.* The history of the Church reminds us of the tides that rise and fall upon our shores—ebb and flow, ebb and flow. Sometimes the waters rise with an unusual strength, and flood all the land around, but soon they fall back into the old limits and quiet movements. No doubt the kingdom of Christ is steadily advancing, widening its reach, enlarging its influence. But as we can only see a little, one little bay of the great shore-line, as it were, we can only form our estimate of the tide in this our "arm of the sea;" we cannot measure the encroachments of the great tide of God. We may live at a time when the high tide of revival has spent its strength, and is receding lower and lower. So far as we can observe, it is not the living waters encroaching upon dreary sand, but dreary sand encroaching upon living waters. But let us wait awhile; the tide of God may turn again, and flow up higher than ever. There is a promise of blessing in our text which has been fulfilled, and will be fulfilled over and over again.

I. OUR DEPENDENCE, FOR REVIVINGS, ON THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT. The evils that gather about the Church of Christ are too subtle, and too mighty, to be mastered by anything less than the strength of God. The tendencies to decline and spiritual slumbering are too constantly working for anything less than Divine energy to counteract. The ends for which Christians associate in fellowship are too pure, too high, to be reached in any other way than by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Church is the Church of Christ; but what a desolate and helpless thing it would be if it were only the Church of a dead Christ, or the Church even of an absent Christ! We must have the assurance that he is still with us, not indeed in the body, but in the grace and power of his Spirit—a form of his presence so much better suited for permanent relations that he could say, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." No helpless, trembling infant trying to walk needed mother's steadying as we need the all-supporting Spirit. No young lad ever took tools into his inexperienced hands, and needed the directions of the master, as we need the teachings of the Spirit. No man in the fulness of manhood ever entered on an untried office, and looked for some one to guide, as it becomes us to look for the help of the Spirit. And yet this dependence it is most easy for us to lose out of heart and out of life. The Church without the Spirit is figured in our text as an unwatered Eastern land. No dews have formed on the grass or the leaves; no rain-clouds have shaded the blazing sun, and poured down revivings; the rivers have sunk lower and lower, till now their beds are exposed to view, and the pebbles are bleached in the sunshine. The leaves are dropping off the trees, dried up and scorched; the grass is killed; the ground is cracking and gaping; there is no scent in the flowers, no song in the birds; the cattle lie panting by the walls and hedgerows, or stand thirsting by the river-bank. It is a "dry and thirsty land, where no water is." That is the emblem of the individual and the Church unwatered of the Spirit.

II. THE GOOD THINGS THAT FOLLOW ON DIVINE REVIVINGS. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. *The glory of a sustained godly life.* Which depends on the constant renewal of heart motives, impulses, and resolves. 2. *The glory of a holier and more earnest ministry.* In this direction the firstfruits of a spiritual revival are usually gathered. The fruits of Divine outpourings were seen in Luther, and Whitefield, and Wesley, and Venn, and Simeon, and Arnold; and such a reviving would give us such men of "power with God and men to prevail," once again. 3. *The glory of the widening and extending of the Redeemer's kingdom.* (Ver. 5.) Who does not long for the promised time when every scoffer shall be stricken dumb; the doubts and questionings of every faint-hearted believer shall be silenced, because, in crowds, "as doves to their windows," as locusts over the plain, men shall come to Christ's people and say, "We will go with you, for verily the Lord is with you"?

III. THE GRACIOUS PROMISES WE MAY PLEAD IN PRAYING FOR A REVIVAL. There is something about God's promises that they almost overwhelm our power of faith by their largeness. He promises "floods," as though he would not have us think of limits. 1. The Spirit is the Lord's light. Then we must be willing to let him in, with his Divine illuminations, dispelling all the darkness, and making us light in the Lord. 2. The Spirit is the Lord's life. We must let him in with his Divine quickening, making every good seed in our souls thrive unto blossoming fruitage. 3. The Spirit is the Lord's power. He can make "a little one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand

to flight." 4. The Spirit is the Lord's love. And we must be willing to open our hearts, and let that love come in with its Divine cleansings and burnings, burning up sin and self, kindling a new glow of fervour, and making us revived souls and revived Churches.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*God's kingdom entered one by one.* Reference is probably intended to the coming of Gentiles, as proselytes, into the Israelite communion; and the point suggested is that they will come in "one by one," because the acceptance of the Jewish faith must be a matter of individual and personal decision. God asks for an intelligent worship. The true worship is the voluntary surrender of the will and life to God, and that each man must do for himself. We worship together; but there is no virtue in the numbers beyond the aggregate of the virtue in each individual. If we hold fast the truth of a saving conversion, a Divine regeneration, we must clearly see that men cannot flow by masses into the kingdom of God; they must come in one by one. The Greeks may be inquiring for Jesus; but each Greek will have to come, for himself, into vital and saving relations with him.

I. THERE IS A RELIGION OF ASSOCIATION—IT IS NOT SAVING RELIGION. We are Christians as citizens of a Christian country; as worshipping with Christian people; and as members of Christian families. But we are not saved men and women by virtue of that connection. The association of a diseased man with any number of men in health does not make him a healthy man. The association of a criminal with any number of honest men does not make him an honest man. The association of an unpardoned sinner with any number of forgiven and regenerate people does not make him an accepted man. And yet, in various ways, we are yielding to this self-deception, and satisfying ourselves with relations that are merely external, that are not vital. No greater work is demanded in this our age than that of driving men out of this over-crowded "refuge of lies." Not to masses, but "to you," and "to you," is "the word of this salvation sent."

II. THE RELIGION OF ASSOCIATION MUST BE MADE PERSONAL. It must become a direct dealing between each soul and God. Each one must be humble and penitent; each one must seek for the way of life; each one must believe and be forgiven; each one must make full consecration, presenting himself to God a living sacrifice; each one must take up the precise work God may entrust to his care. To stamp our absolute individuality in our soul-relations with God, he has ordered it that each of us shall come into the world "one by one," and each of us shall go out of the world "one by one." The gift of eternal life is made to us "one by one," and it must be accepted by us "one by one."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*God's witness to his own rights.* "There is no God; I know not any." A most striking exclamation. God becomes a witness to his own claims, and the last, the supreme, witness. The thought here so grandly and sublimely expressed is one which occurs also in the sacred book of the Buddhists. In the address of Gotama "Bhâgavat," are the following sentences: "Even I was even at first, not any other thing, that which exists, unperceived, supreme; afterwards I am that which is, and he who must remain am I." The exclamation sets us upon thinking what witnesses we have to the Divine rights. When all are carefully reviewed, it must be felt that, as all beings and all creation are really dependent on one great Being, the supreme witness must be that Being's witness to himself. Our sphere is strictly limited to the human and the earthly, and, so far as our experience goes, there may be some other God away in other spheres which we cannot reach. No *man* can prove that there is no other God beside Jehovah. But Jehovah fills all spheres: he, and he alone, can tell us whether, in any sphere, there is any rival deity. In a truly sublime way, the prophet presents him as looking —with an all-searching eye—into every corner of unbounded space, and then turning to us and saying, "There is no God beside me; I know not any." The passage stands in close relation with the supposed claims of idol-gods; and we should carefully note that the idol-figures are first of all representatious of qualities, or powers, which are supposed to exist, though unseen, and are usually personified or thought of as living beings. Only in the degraded stage are idol-figures treated as if they themselves were gods. In this connection two points may be illustrated, and practical lessons from each may be enforced.

I. GOD ABSORBS IN HIMSELF ALL THE IDEAS WHICH IDOLATRY SEEKS TO EMBODY. Poetically conceived, the figures of Baal or Jupiter are only representations of certain powers—of life, warmth, rule, wisdom, etc., which are living, unseen beings. Our God says there are no such beings. Every one of these powers is in himself. He is Zeus, and Baal, and Venus, and Diana, and Moloch, so far as any of these represent necessary powers belonging to Deity. We must not divide him into many beings; he is only One. So far as idols are mere creations of men, there is nothing existing that corresponds to them. So far as they represent real powers, these powers all meet in the *One God*—our God!

II. GOD DEMANDS ALL THE WORSHIP WHICH IDOLATRY DISTRIBUTES OVER MANY GODS. True worship is both *word* and *work*, profession and service. Men who divide God into gods have their favourite deity. God cannot be divided. And the law for every creature made in his image is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy soul, and all thy strength."—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The ill-fed soul.* The expression, "he feedeth on ashes," is proverbial in the East for that which is done to no purpose—that which is vain, unsatisfying, disappointing. Hugh Macmillan gives some accounts of depraved and perverted appetite in the use of earth for food. He says, "This propensity is not an occasional freak, but a common custom, and is found among so large a number and variety of tribes, that it may be regarded as coextensive with the human race. From time immemorial the Chinese have been in the habit of using various kinds of edible earths as substitutes for bread in time of scarcity; and their imperial annals have always religiously noticed the discovery of such bread-stones, or stone-meal, as they are called. On the western coast of Africa a yellowish kind of earth, called caovac, is so highly relished, and so constantly consumed by the negroes, that it has become to them a necessary of life. In the island of Java, and in various parts of the hill country of India, a reddish earth is baked into cakes, and sold in the village markets for food." But such food cannot give due nourishment to the body. It is unnatural, unsatisfying. Our souls need healthy and satisfying food as truly as our bodies do; and men's folly in respect of their bodies only illustrates their much greater folly in respect of their souls. So many of us are ill fed, injudiciously fed. After showing what is the proper nutriment for a renewed soul, leading up to the mystical expression of our Lord, as recorded by John, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," it may be shown that food for the soul is insufficient and injurious when it is—

I. ILL SELECTED. It must be good, but it must also be appropriate and adapted. The word of the preacher must be such as "ministers grace to the hearers." The supreme question for each one is—Do the means of grace minister grace to me? I may be at the feast, yet be ill fed.

II. ILL PREPARED. Food that is in itself good is often made unsuitable for us in the cooking. Teachings may be spoiled by the vanity or the over-adornment of the teachers. Especially teachings may be ill prepared as they lack the true spiritual flavour. Then they come to us as the word of man rather than as the word of God.

III. ILL PROPORTIONED. Sometimes in excess; at other times deficient. We may at times be starved, and at others surfeited. We may have the false appetite, which feeds voraciously at times. We may, in religious things, run too hard along particular lines, interest ourselves only in sides and aspects of truth, and so become ill-fed souls.

IV. ILL SUSTAINED. In respect of soul-feeding the law for the body applies. Little and often. Plain and regular. Therefore are we taught to pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread." And to teach us that we want food, not luxuries, Christ said of himself, "I am the *Bread* of life."—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*God's way of pleading with men.* Put in other words, the statement of this text is, "As a cloud is blotted out of the heavens, so have I blotted out thy transgressions." But it is difficult for us to realize what is meant by "blotting out a cloud." So far as we have to do with clouds, we cannot speak of them as "blotted out." Some swiftly hurry by; others move majestically along,—they go out of sight into some other quarter of the heavens; but we do not see them vanish from their place in mid-sky, and become "blotted out." Sometimes the cloud sends down showers upon the earth, and

so it exhausts itself; but that cannot be the image of our text, because it intimates a putting away of our sins, so that they shall not shower down upon us the tribulation and anguish that is gathered up in all transgression. But the image which our damp climate cannot furnish is given in the sunny lands of the East. There, in the morning, will often be seen dull heavy masses of clouds, and there is every indication of a showery day. But as the sun rises and gathers strength, these clouds all vanish and disappear; they do not drift away, or pass into another part of the heavens; they just vanish on the spot, they die away, they are "blotted out." Understood thus, it is a striking and impressive figure. Even thus the thick clouds of our sins darken the sky, and those sin-clouds bear manifest tokens of punishment and wrath. But thus also God's love, the sun of his forgiving love, arises, shines out full, and the sin-cloud is dispelled, it vanishes away. It is not driven into the future, to await us there; it is just "blotted out," forgiven and forgotten. With other most impressive figures God endeavours to convince us of the fulness of his forgiving. He makes his servant say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Where is the east? Where is the west? Is it yonder ridge of hill, behind which we saw the sun set yesterday? Nay, did you stand on that very spot, the west would be still away, away, in the dim distance. The more you hurry toward the east, the further you get away from the west. Go east, and try to find your forgiven sins; behold God has put them in the utmost west. Elsewhere we read of God's "casting our sins behind his back." He not merely *puts* them behind his back, he *casts* them there; his love refuses to look on them, his forgiving restoring love will not treasure them up against us; they are flung away; they are done with; they are bonds cancelled, debts settled for ever. And there is another figure—that of "casting our sins into the depths of the sea." Take a jewel, and when upon mid-ocean, drop it over the ship's side into the waters. It is gone. None can descend into those depths and bring it back again. So God, as it were, binds up the book, the "handwriting of ordinances that was against us." He drops it in mid-ocean. And as we see it go, our hearts should be filled with thankful, trustful love to the great Forgiver. To a full return to him who has so dealt with our sins the text invites. This is God's way of pleading.

I. OUR REDEMPTION IS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT. The terms of the text are very explicit: "I have blotted out. . . . I have redeemed." Redemption is not a matter which has to be settled; it is settled. We too often speak of needing to be redeemed; we should speak much more of realizing our redemption—entering into the life and privilege bought for us, and offered to us in the sovereign mercy of our God. That redemption should be regarded as an accomplished fact is taught by our Lord. 1. See the parable of the prodigal son. The charm of the parable is the look it gives us into the father's heart. He had forgiven the son in his heart long before the forgiving word could be spoken. 2. The parable of the feast. The message sent forth is, "Come, for all things are now ready." 3. Notice how Christ directed the thoughts of men to himself. If our redemption were not an accomplished fact, of which our Lord was the Divine expression and persuasion, how could he say, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"? 4. This is, indeed, involved in the doctrine of the cross of Christ. God provided that cross as the highest expression of his love to us; it is the persuasion that he has forgiven. It is not in order that he may love us, it is because he did love us, that he gave his only begotten Son. 5. Observe the new terms of condemnation set forth in the gospel: "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life;" "He that believeth not is condemned already." God looks on men as forgiven, but tested by their thoughts of Christ, by their acceptance of his offered love and friendship in the person of Jesus Christ. God says, "I have redeemed you." If you will turn to God, *return* to God, you shall *realize* that you are redeemed. If you will not return, then that very redemption will gather into a burden, weightier far than all others that can come upon you.

II. OUR REDEMPTION, AS AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT, IS GOD'S GREAT POWER ON HUMAN SOULS. This is the very essence of the gospel—the "good news" of God. God is a forgiving God. He has forgiven in his heart; he speaks his forgiveness in Christ. He can pass by iniquity, transgression, and sin. He can keep his righteousness before all his creatures, and yet reach down a hand of acceptance to us. 1. The cry of God, in olden days, was the cry of this forgiving love, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc.

(ch. lv. 1). The wine and milk are bought; they are set ready; take, and eat. 2. Apostles preached a perfect salvation. They told men it was wrought—it was done. They preached remission of sins in the Name of Jesus. Our faith is not asked for a scheme partially realized, a salvation partially accomplished, that needs the addition of our delayings, our tears, our prayers, our goodnesses. It was perfect before we had one thought about it. It sprang out of God's own love; it was manifested in God's own perfect way. He has redeemed us, and wants the fact of his redemption to be a gracious persuasion of us to come to him. We have seen the little bird taken from its nest in the woods, and put into the cage, and it seemed to be happy even with the bars all round it. Not always happy. Sometimes it would flap its wings against the bars, and try to get free, when a glint of warmer sunshine broke in upon it. And when the door was opened, wide opened, the bird scarcely knew what to do; it seemed bewildered, as if it could not believe such good news. But at last it seemed to flash upon it, "I am free—free to the wild woods, and the open sky, and the glad sunshine." And at once it spread its wings and fled away. We are like that bird, caged in with sin: the bars are all round us. Some of us are willing to be caged, some of us fret to be caged. And the fact is that God has set before us an open door. Yet we stand irresolute. What! is the cage really open? May we come forth into the sky of God's free favour and acceptance? Has God kept his holiness and his truth, and yet can he open the door? That is the truth, that is the assurance of the text. That is God's way of pleading, "Return unto me; for I *have* redeemed thee."—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*God's rights in the individual.* God made us, gave us breath and being. We are his, and for his use. He can call any man into any sphere he pleases. It ought to be true of him that he saith to one "Come," and he cometh; to another "Go," and he goeth. Every man's true attitude is figured in the attitude of the six-winged seraphim before the throne. "With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly," or did stand ready to fly. Of every man, great and small, our God may say, "He is my under-shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure." Josephus has a very curious statement concerning Cyrus, which may have some basis of truth. "Now this became known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Esaias left behind him of his prophecy; for this man said that God had spoken thus to him in secret: 'My will is that Cyrus,' etc. This was prophesied by Esaias one hundred and forty years before the demolition of the temple. When, therefore, Cyrus had read this, and marvelled at the divinity, a kind of impulse and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written." Modern discoveries are changing our received notions respecting Cyrus; they do not alter the fact of his having been the agent in securing the return of the exiles, but they indicate that, so far as he was concerned, his action was strictly one of state policy. The idea that he was a pure monotheist is greatly shaken. The line of thought which may be followed can only be indicated.

I. God has absolute rights over every individual.

II. He makes particular claims on individuals for particular services.

III. The duty of each individual is response to the gracious claims.

IV. The highest well-being of the individual lies in his yielding all supposed individual rights, in order that he may, entirely and faithfully, meet the claims of God.

Cyrus (*Koresh*) was required to be a *shepherd*, and lead God's flock back to its old pastures. Whatsoever we may be required to do, that must be done as unto the Lord. We should not want any other man's place or work. The best for us is just that one which is given to us. And the daily, lifelong, attitude which we should keep should inspire the daily prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?" "It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd than to be Emperor of the East."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLV.

Vers. 1—7.—GOD'S WILL CONCERNING HIM ANNOUNCED TO CYRUS. This direct address of God to a heathen king is without a parallel in Scripture. Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Abimelech, were warned through dreams. Nebuchadnezzar was even promised Divine aid (Ezek. xxx. 24, 25). But no heathen monarch had previously been personally addressed by God, much less called "his anointed," and spoken to *by his name* (ver. 4). Three motives are mentioned for this special favour to him: (1) that he might acknowledge Jehovah to be the true God; (2) that Israel might be benefited and advantaged by him; (3) that the attention of the whole world might be attracted, and the unity of God made manifest far and wide (vers. 3—6).

Ver. 1.—**Thus saith the Lord to his anointed.** The "anointed of Jehovah" is elsewhere always either an Israelite king, or the expected Deliverer of the nation, "Messiah the Prince" (Dan. ix. 25). This Deliverer, however, was to be of the line of David (ch. xi. 1), and of the city of Bethlehem (Micah v. 2), so that we can scarcely suppose Isaiah to have seen him in Cyrus. But he may have seen in Cyrus a type of the great Deliverer, as he saw in the release of Israel from the power of Babylon a type of their deliverance from sin. **Whose right hand I have holden;** rather, *strengthened* (comp. Ezek. xxx. 24). **To subdue nations before him** (see above, ch. xli. 2, and the comment *ad loc.*). Among the nations subdued by Cyrus may be mentioned the Medes, the Babylonians, the Lydians, the Carians, the Caunians, the Lycians, the Bactrians, the Sacæ, the Parthians, the Hyrcanians, the Chorasmians, the Sogdians, the Arians of Herat, the Zarangians, the Arachosians, the Satagydians, and the Gandarians. **I will loose the loins of kings;** *i.e.* "render them weak and incapable of resistance" (comp. Dan. v. 6), not "disarm them" (Cheyne); for the chief royal weapons were the spear and the bow, neither of which was carried at the girdle. **To open before him the two-leaved gates.** The cities and forts represented on the Assyrian monuments have invariably their gateways closed by two large gates or doors which meet in the centre of the gateway. The bronze plating found at Ballarat gave the dimensions, and showed the strength of such gates ('Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæol.,' vol. vii. pp. 83—88).

Ver. 2.—**I will . . . make the crooked places straight;** rather, *I will make the rugged places level.* No doubt intended generally, "I will smooth his way before him." **The gates of brass . . . the bars of iron.** According to Herodotus, the gates of Babylon were of solid bronze, and one hundred in number (i. 179). Solid bronze gates have, however, nowhere been found, and would have been inconvenient from their enormous weight. It is probable that the "gates of brass," or "bronze," whereof we read, were always, like those found at Ballarat, of wood plated with bronze. *To the eye* these would be "gates of bronze." Gates of towns were, as a matter of course, secured by bars, which would commonly be made of iron, as the strongest material. Iron was well known to the Babylonians (Herod., i. 186).

Ver. 3.—**I will give thee the treasures of darkness;** *i.e.* "treasures stored in dark places"—"hidden treasures." Treasuries were built for greater security without windows. Of the treasures which fell into the hands of Cyrus, the greatest were probably those of Babylon (Herod., i. 183) and of Sardis (Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 2, § 11). The value of the latter has been estimated at above one hundred and twenty-six millions sterling. **That thou mayest know;** or, *acknowledge* (for the actual acknowledgment, see the decrees in Ezra i. 3 and vi. 3—5). If these documents are accepted as genuine, or even as true in substance (Ewald), Cyrus must be considered to have identified Jehovah with his own Ormuzd, and to have viewed the Jewish and Persian religions as substantially the same. He would be under no temptation, with so weak and down-trodden a people as the Jews, to resort to politic pretences, as he might be in the case of the Babylonians (see the comment on ch. xli. 25). **Which call thee by thy name** (comp. ver. 1 and ch. xliv. 28). (On the special favour implied in God's condescending to "know" or "call" a person by his name, see the 'Pulpit Commentary' on Exod. xxxiii. 12.) **Am the God of Israel;** rather, *am the Lord . . . the God of Israel.*

Ver. 4.—**For Jacob my servant's sake** This second motive is, in a certain sense, the main one. Cyrus is raised up, especially, to perform God's pleasure with respect to Judah and Jerusalem (ch. xliv. 26—28). Jacob, his Church, is more important in God's eyes than any individual. No doubt his Church is maintained, in part, that it

may be "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" but it is not maintained solely, or even mainly, for this end. Its welfare is an end in itself, and would be sought by God apart from any further consequence. **Israel mine elect** (comp. ch. xli. 8; xliv. 1). **I have surnamed thee**; *i.e.* "given thee designations of honour," *e.g.* "my anointed" (ver. 1); "my shepherd" (ch. xliv. 28); "he who shall do all my pleasure" (ch. xliv. 28). **Though thou hast not known me**; rather, *though thou didst not know me.* Cyrus's honours, his titles, his mention by name, etc., were accumulated upon him before his birth, when he knew nothing of God, when, therefore, he had in no way merited them. Thus all was done, not for his sake, but for the sake of Israel.

Ver. 5.—**I girded thee.** As God "loosed the loins" of Cyrus's adversaries (ver. 1), to weaken them, so he "girded" those of Cyrus, to give him strength (comp. Ps. xviii. 32).

Ver. 6.—**That they may know from the rising of the sun.** Here we have the third motive of the Divine action respecting Cyrus. The attention of all the world from the extreme east to the extreme west, would be drawn by the wonderful occurrences. Jehovah's hand in them would be perceived, and his sole Godhead would obtain acknowledgment. An impulse was doubtless given to monotheism by the victories of Cyrus and the favour which he showed the Jews; but it cannot be said to have been very marked. Idolatry and polytheism were to a certain extent discredited; but they maintained their ground nevertheless. It was not till the true "Anointed One" appeared—the antitype of whom Cyrus was the type—that the idols were "utterly abolished."

Ver. 7.—**I form the light, and create darkness.** It has been recently denied that there is any allusion in these words, or in those which follow, to the Zoroastrian tenets; and it has even been asserted that the religion of the early Achæmenian kings was free from the taint of dualism. But according to some authorities, "a god of lies" is mentioned in the Behistun inscription; and the evidence is exceedingly strong that dualism was an essential part of the Zoroastrian religion long before the time of Cyrus (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 332, 333, 2nd edit.). It is quite reasonable to suppose that Isaiah would be acquainted with the belief of the Persians and Medes, who had come in contact with the Assyrians as early as B.C. 830; and a warning against the chief error of their religion would be quite in place when he was holding up Cyrus to his countrymen as entitled to their respect and veneration. The *nexus* of the words, "I am the Lord, *and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness,*" is such as naturally to suggest an intended antagonism to the Zoroastrian system. Under that, Ormuzd created "light" and "peace," Ahriman "darkness" and "evil." The two were eternal adversaries, engaged in an interminable contest. Ormuzd, it is true, claimed the undivided allegiance of mankind, since he was their maker; but Ahriman was a great power, terribly formidable—perhaps a god (*diva*)—certainly the chief of the devas. It was from Zoroastrianism that Manicheism derived its doctrine of the two principles, and to the same source may, with much probability, be traced the "devil-worshippers" of the Zagros mountain chain.

Ver. 8.—THE BLESSED RESULTS OF ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE. The restoration of Israel to their own land will be followed by a great increase of righteousness and salvation. They will be, as it were, showered down abundantly from heaven, while at the same time they will spring in profusion from earth's bosom. Jehovah, who has caused the deliverance, will also cause these results to follow from it.

Ver. 8.—**Drop down, ye heavens**; literally, *distil, ye heavens* (comp. Deut. xxxii. 1; Job xxxvi. 28); or *rain down* on the thirsty earth your gracious influences. Let righteousness, or God's law of right, descend afresh from the skies as a boon to mankind—a boon for which they have been long waiting. **And . . . let the earth open.** Let earth make due response, opening her gentle bosom, as she does in spring (comp. *Aprilis* from *aperio*), and blossoming with human righteousness, the fruit and evidence of salvation. To the prophet's rapt gaze the excellence of the post-Captivity times, when all idolatry had been put away, seemed, in comparison with earlier ages, the reign of justice and truth upon earth. **I the Lord have created it**; *i.e.* "I, Jehovah, have wrought the change by the larger outpouring of my Spirit" (comp. ch. xliii. 3).

Vers. 9—13.—ISRAEL WARNED NOT TO CALL IN QUESTION GOD'S MODES OF ACTION. Apparently, Isaiah anticipates that the Israelites will be discontented and murmur at their deliverer being a heathen king, and not one of their own body. He therefore warns them against presuming to criticize the arrangements of the All-Wise, reminding them of his unapproachable greatness (ver. 12), and once more assuring them

that the appointment of Cyrus is from him (ver. 13).

Ver. 9.—**Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!** Let the potsherd strive, etc.; rather, *woe unto him that striveth with his Maker, a potsherd among potsherds of the ground!* All men are equally made of "the dust of the ground" (Gen. ii. 7). Israel has no prerogative in this respect. He, too, is "a potsherd among potsherds"—clay moulded by the potter; no more entitled to lift up his voice against his Maker than the vessel to rebel against the man who shapes it (comp. ch. xxix. 16; and see the comment furnished by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans ix. 20—24). What would a man think if the clay that he was fashioning objected to being moulded in a particular form, or if a work that he had made exclaimed, "He is a poor bungler—**he hath no hands**"? Yet this is what a man does who finds fault with the arrangements of the Almighty.

Ver. 10.—**Woe unto him that saith unto his father,** etc.! A change is made in the metaphor, the relationship of a father and his child being substituted for that of a potter and his clay. What would a man think of a child murmuring against his parent for not having made him stronger, handsomer, cleverer? Would not such a child be regarded as most unnatural, and as deserving to have woe denounced upon him?

Ver. 11.—**The Holy One of Israel;** *i.e.* he who always does right, and with whom, therefore, it is absurd to find fault. **His Maker;** *i.e.* Israel's Maker, who has, therefore, the right to do with him as he pleases. **Ask me of things to come concerning my sons.** This sentence is wrongly punctuated. The last three words should be attached to what follows, thus: "Ask me of things to come: concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands command ye me;" *i.e.* first learn of me what in my designs is to be the course of human events, and then (if necessary) give me directions concerning my sons (Israel), who are the work of my hands; but do not presume to give me directions while you are still in utter ignorance of my designs. In any case remember who I am—the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, One accustomed to give directions to the angelic host (ver. 12).

Ver. 12.—**I, even my hands;** literally, *I, my hands;* i.e. "my hands, and my hands alone." **All their host.** The "host of heaven" is sometimes put for the stars, and may be so understood here; but "commands" are laid on intelligent rather than on unintelligent beings. (The object of the verb *tsâvah* in Hebrew is almost always personal.)

Ver. 13.—**I have raised him up.** "Him" can only be referred to Cyrus, the one individual mentioned previously in the chapter (vers. 1—5). The expression, "raised up," had been already used of him (ch. xli. 25). **In righteousness** means "to carry out my righteous purposes." **I will direct;** rather, as in the margin, *make straight.* **He . . . shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward.** Captives were often "redeemed for a price" (Neh. vi. 8). In Greece a fixed sum was established by general consent as the ransom of a captive (Aristot., 'Eth. Nic.,' v. 6). Cyrus, however, in letting the Jews go free, would not be actuated by the paltry motive of pecuniary profit. He *may,* as Mr. Cheyne remarks, have been actuated in part "by a consideration of the usefulness of such a faithful advanced guard at the border of Egypt;" but *mainly* it is probable that "he obeyed the dictates of religious sympathy with the Jews." The recent contention, that he was not a Zoroastrian (Sayce, *Academy,* October 16, 1880; 'Ancient Empires,' p. 439; Cheyne, 'Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 279) rests upon insufficient evidence, his so-called inscription being a document not put forth by himself, but by the priests of Merodach at Babylon; and the first introduction of Zoroastrian monotheism into the state religion of Persia by Darius Hystaspis (Sayce, 'Ancient Empires,' p. 440) being expressly disclaimed by him in the Behistun inscription, where he declares his reformation to have consisted in the rebuilding of the temples which Gomates the Magian had destroyed, and the reinstitution for the state of the religious chants and the worship which he had put down (col. i. par. 14).

Vers. 14—25.—THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES A CONSEQUENCE OF THE RESTORATION AND SALVATION OF ISRAEL. "With the prospect of the release of the exiles is associated," says Delitzsch, "in the prophet's perspective, the prospect of an expansion of the restored Church, through the entrance of the fulness of the Gentiles." Egypt, Ethiopia, and Saba are especially mentioned here, as in ch. xliii. 3, as among the first to come in (vers. 14, 15). Later on, a more general influx is spoken of (ver. 20); and, finally, a prospect is held out of an ultimate universal conversion (ver. 23). At the same time, judgment is denounced against the idolaters who persist in their idolatry (vers. 16, 20), and they are warned that they will have no share in the coming glories of the Israel of God.

Ver. 14.—**The labour of Egypt, and mer-**

chandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabæans; *i.e.* "the laborious Egyptians, and the traffic-loving Ethiopians and Sabæans." Their buildings and their husbandry alike justify what is said of the Egyptians, while the very ancient traffic between Egypt and Ethiopia is sufficient ground for the assignment of a commercial character to the Ethiopians and the Sabæans. **Men of stature.** (On the tall stature of the Ethiopians, see Herod., iii. 20; and comp. ch. xviii. 2, with the comment.) **Shall come over unto thee.** Knobel understands that they would give their aid to the rebuilding of the temple: but this they certainly did not do, and Isaiah's words certainly do not imply it. He is again speaking of the great conversion of the nations, which he connected with the restoration of the Jews to their own land (ch. xi. 12; xviii. 7; xix. 18—25, etc.), and which may be considered to have begun then, but only to have had its full accomplishment in the Messianic period. **In chains they shall come over.** Ready to serve the Church as slaves and servants — not literally wearing chains. **They shall fall down unto thee,** etc. The Church, as informed with the Spirit of God, shall seem to them a holy thing, and therefore an object of worship (comp. Rev. iii. 9). There is such a union between Christ and his Church, that worship, in a qualified sense, may be paid the Church without unfitness.

Ver. 15.—**Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.** Some commentators regard this as an exclamation made by Isaiah himself, who marvels at the unsearchable mystery of God's ways. But others, with better reason, take it for a continuation of the speech of the converted heathen, who marvel that God has so long hid himself from them and from the world at large, not manifesting his power, as he has now done in the person of Cyrus. In this recent manifestation he has shown himself especially the **God of Israel,** and their **Saviour.**

Ver. 16.—**They shall be ashamed . . . shall go to confusion;** rather, *are ashamed . . . are gone to confusion*—the "perfect of prophetic certainty." While the heathen that join themselves to Israel partake of their glory and salvation, such as abide by their idols are covered with shame and confusion.

Ver. 17.—**Israel shall be saved . . . with an everlasting salvation;** literally, *a salvation of ages;* i.e. one which will continue age after age. As Mr. Cheyne remarks, for this to be so, the redemption required to be spiritual as well as temporal. Otherwise it would ere long have been forfeited.

Ver. 18.—**Thus saith the Lord,** etc. Translate, *Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens—he is God—that formed the earth and made it; he established it; he created it not a chaos, but formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else.* As God had not formed the earth to be a material chaos, but had introduced into it order and arrangement, so he willed his spiritual creation to be recovered out of the confusion into which it had fallen, and to be established in righteousness.

Ver. 19.—**I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth;** literally, *in a place of the land of darkness.* Jehovah's oracles have not been given, like those of the necromancers, or those of the heathen gods, in dark places of the earth—caves like that of Trophonius (Pausan., ix. 29, § 2), or the inmost recesses (*adyta*) of temples; but openly on Sinai, or by the mouth of prophets who proclaimed his words to all Israel (comp. Deut. xxx. 11—14, "This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it"). So our Lord says of his own teaching, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and *in secret have I said nothing*" (John xviii. 20). **Seek ye me in vain;** rather, *seek ye me as a chaos* (comp. Jer. ii. 31, where God says to his people, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?"). God has no more revealed himself to his people as chaotic, confused, disordered, than he has presented the world to them in this condition. **I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.** There is an allusion to the crooked and ambiguous utterances of the heathen oracles, which rarely gave direct answers or plainly expressed any definite meaning. God in his utterances never diverges from the straight line of righteousness and truth (comp. Prov. viii. 6).

Ver. 20.—**Assemble yourselves and come . . . ye . . . escaped of the nations.** The prophet reverts to the main idea of the section, which is the conversion of the Gentiles, and calls on all "the escaped of the nation"—*i.e.* all who have survived the judgments of the time—to "assemble and come," to consider the claims of Jehovah to be the only true God, to "look to him (ver. 22) and be saved." The great judgments through which the heathen will be brought to God have been frequently mentioned (ch. xxiv. 1—23; xxvi. 20, 21; xxvii. 1—7; xxx. 27—33; xxxiv. 1—10; xl. 24; xli. 11, 12, 25; xlii. 13—15, etc.). They must not be regarded as limited to the time of Cyrus, but rather as continuing

into the Messianic period, and indeed nearly to its close (see especially ch. xxxiv.). Each one of them constitutes a call to the nations, and is followed by a conversion to a greater or less extent. **They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image**; rather, *who lift up* (or, *carry*) *the wood of their graven image* (comp. ch. xlvi. 7, "They bear him upon the shoulder," where the same verb is used). It was a practice of the idolatrous heathen to carry the images of their gods in processions, generally exposed to view upon their shoulders (Layard, 'Nineveh and its Remains,' vol. ii. opp. p. 451), but sometimes partially concealed in shrines, or "arks" (Rawlinson, 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. pp. 100, 101). There would be still among the "escaped" some who would so act.

Ver. 21.—**Tell ye, and bring them near.** Dr. Kay and Mr. Cheyne understand the nations to be addressed, and told to "show" or "announce," and "bring forth" or "produce," any argument in favour of the divinity of their gods. But it is simpler and better, with our translators, to regard the address as made to the prophets of God, who are bidden to announce his message of mercy to the nations, and to bring them near to him (comp. ch. xl. 1). **Let them take counsel together**; *i.e.* let the nations consider one with another, whether God or the idols be the fitter object of worship. **Who hath declared this?** "This" must refer to the conquest of Babylon and deliverance of Israel by Cyrus. None but Jehovah had ever announced this—none but he could bring it to pass. **From ancient time**; rather, *from aforetime* (Cheyne). The announcement cannot have been made very long before this prophecy was delivered. **A just God and a Saviour.** A God in whom "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps. lxxxv. 16); who can be at once just, "acting stringently according to the demands of his holiness" (Delitzsch), and yet design and effect the salvation of sinners.

Ver. 22.—**Look unto me**; rather, *turn unto me* (as in Ps. xxv. 16; lxix. 16; lxxxvi. 16); *i.e.* "Be converted—turn unto the Lord your God." It is implied that all can turn, if they will. **And be ye saved.** On conversion, salvation will follow. **It will extend even to all the ends of the earth** (comp. Ps. xcviii. 3, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God").

Ver. 23.—**I have sworn by myself** (comp. Gen. xxii. 17; Jer. xxii. 5; xlix. 15). God swears "by himself," because he can swear by no greater" (Heb. vi. 13). He condescends, for man's sake, to confirm in this way promises that are exceedingly precious (see the Homiletics on ch. xiv. 24). **The word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness.** So Dr. Kay and Mr. Cheyne (comp. ver. 19, "I the Lord speak righteousness"). **And shall not return**; *i.e.* shall not be withdrawn or retracted. God's gifts and promises are "without repentance." **Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.** This universal turning to God belongs to the final Messianic kingdom, prophesied in ch. ii. 2—4; xi. 6—9; xxxv. 1—10; lxv. 17—25; lxvi. 18—23; and also by Daniel (vii. 9—14) and St. John the Divine (Rev. xxi. 1—4). The entire destruction of God's enemies is to take place previously (Rev. xix. 17—21).

Ver. 24.—**Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness**; rather, *only in the Lord, shall each man say to me, is their righteousness.* All shall confess that God alone is righteous, and that any goodness which they have is derived from him. The Hebrew has "righteousnesses" in the plural, to express abundance. **All that are incensed**; rather, *all that were incensed* (see ch. xli. 11). Such persons shall repent and be ashamed.

Ver. 25.—**In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.** Joined to Jehovah in mystic union (Cheyne), the whole "Israel of God" shall be justified, and glory in their condition.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7.—*In what sense God "creates evil."* It was to avoid the objections which the human conscience feels against regarding God as in any sense the author of evil, that dualism was invented. The Western Aryans thought it simpler and more natural to explain the phenomena of the physical and moral universe by a perpetual struggle of two equal, or nearly equal, powers—one a principle of pure goodness, the creator of everything that was bright, sweet, delightful, holy, pure, good; the other, his antagonist, the creator of all that was the opposite—than to postulate a single original principle, all-powerful and all-perfect, which had yet brought into being a universe in which so much of moral and physical evil obtains as experience reveals to us. And it scarcely seems surprising that unassisted human reason should so argue. There is a difficulty in understanding the coexistence of evil with the absolute government of all things by

an omnipotent and absolutely good Ruler. The difficulty is greater with regard to moral than physical evil, but it is considerable even with respect to the latter.

I. PHYSICAL EVIL. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. viii. 22). The sum of animal suffering is so enormous that to dwell on it in thought would make almost any man miserable. Even the sum of human suffering is more than we can well bear to think of. Hunger, thirst, sickness, accidents, blows, wounds, sores, excessive toil, make the lives of millions a burthen to them, and cause them to welcome death. No doubt much of this physical evil is the result of moral evil; but, making any reasonable deduction on this score, we shall still find in what remains—the resultant of the physical conditions of human and animal life—a total that it is agonizing to contemplate. Yet God must, it would seem, be regarded as the direct Author of this. He has so arranged the world that, with the first introduction into it of sentient life, pain came in. Appetites are pains; desires are pains; most of the animal functions are pains; growth is a pain; decay and decline are pains; death is mostly an intense pain. Man, as an animal, must have known pain, even had he never known sin—must, as he increased and multiplied, have found the means of subsistence grow scanty, and have had to struggle for existence. Can we at all account for this? Much of it, especially the animal suffering, must, we think, remain an inscrutable mystery until we are "within the veil." But for the physical evils to which men are liable we may see sufficient reason. Men are made "perfect through sufferings." In overcoming, or in bearing, physical pains, man finds the best training for his moral nature. He learns to be courageous by resisting fear, which is a pain; to be just by resisting covetousness, which is another pain; and so on. Great physical evils bring out the greatest moral excellences, as those developed in martyrs and confessors. Altogether, we may pretty clearly see that the moral good produced by the pain which humanity suffers may greatly outweigh the evil of the pain itself in the sight of a moral Being.

II. MORAL EVIL. Moral evil is certainly not "created" by God, in the same direct way as physical evil. He has not necessitated it by the arrangements of his universe. He has but *allowed* it to come into existence. And this he seems to have done in consequence of a necessity in the nature of things. Either he must have limited his creation to objects that moved mechanically and were incapable of moral action, or, by creating moral agents, have allowed the possibility of moral evil coming into being. A free agent must be free to do right or to do wrong; if he is not free to do wrong, he is really not free when he does right. And when millions of free agents were created, each with a power of doing wrong, that some of them would choose to do wrong was to be expected, and was of course foreseen by the Creator. From the fact that, though thus foreseeing the introduction of sin into his universe, God nevertheless determined to create moral beings, we may gather that it is better in God's sight, and therefore better absolutely, that the two classes of good and bad moral beings should coexist, than that there should be no moral beings at all. Further, moral evil is certainly, like physical evil, a great means of developing higher forms of moral goodness. The virtue that resists contact with vice, the influence of bad example, the seductions of those who make all possible efforts to corrupt it, is of a higher form than that untried virtue which has passed through no such ordeal. The religion that leads men to plunge into the haunts of vice, and give themselves to the reclaiming of the lowest outcasts among the dregs of our populace, is the highest form of religion. If there were no moral evil, moral goodness would fall far short of being what it is—there would be no Howards, no Frys, no Havelocks, no Livingstones. By the moral furnace through which it passes, "the trial of men's faith, being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," is found, and will "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7).

Vers. 9—11.—*Murmuring against God's arrangements at once foolish and wicked* Man is very apt to consider himself wiser than God, if not altogether, at any rate in this or that particular matter. There are few who do not at times imagine that, had the arrangement of the universe been committed to them, they could have improved it in many respects. Some would have had no sin; almost all would have had no suffering. Every one would have made some change or other. Bishop Butler suggests that

such speculations are not altogether innocent ('Analogy,' part i. ch. ii.); but they are, perhaps, not greatly to be blamed, unless where they lead on to positive dissatisfaction, to complaints, and to murmurings.

I. MURMURING IS FOOLISH. Since: 1. It is *vain, idle;* it can produce no change. God will not alter his arrangements because we are dissatisfied with them. "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i. 17). The laws which he gives are laws "which shall not be broken" (Ps. cxlviii. 6, Prayer-book Version). "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii. 4). If we could affect the operation of God's laws, change them, modify them, the case would be different; there would then be some result of our querulousness. But, as it is, there is no result—we effect nothing. 2. It is *founded on ignorance.* We know so little of God's entire scheme of things that we cannot possibly tell whether any part of the scheme to which we object may not be a necessary condition to, or inseparably bound up with, some other part or parts on which we set the highest value. That to which we object may conceivably be the very thing which, if we knew all, we should most prize. 3. It is *the preference of a lesser good over a greater.* Whatever we may say in moments of suffering, *ennui,* or dissatisfaction, we do not really believe in our inmost hearts that any portion of God's arrangement of the universe is actually wrong and could be set right by our wisdom. We know that "whatever is, is best." Were we actually empowered to make a change, we should hesitate. We should be afraid of doing harm. How foolisb, then, to grumble at arrangements which we should fear to disturb!

II. MURMURING IS WICKED. Since: 1. It is a form of *rebellion against God,* and so of the basest ingratitude, inasmuch as God is our great Benefactor, to whom we owe everything. 2. It is always *selfish.* We are never tempted to murmur except when the operation of some law of God's universe interferes with our own immediate comfort, or our profit, or our imagined advantage. But in such cases we know that our disadvantage must be compensated by some overplus of advantage to others, or the law would not exist; so that our murmuring implies a desire that others should suffer instead of ourselves, which is pure selfishness. 3. It *argues pride.* If we had a right sense of our own demerit and ill deserving, we should accept any and every chastening at God's hands as far less than our due. We should "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," and take thankfully whatever suffering he sent us. It is only when we are so proud as to imagine we do not need chastening that we can murmur.

Vers. 14—23.—*The conversion of the Gentiles gradual, but ultimately complete.* Three stages in the conversion of the Gentiles seem to be marked—one in ver. 3; another in ver. 20; a third in ver. 23.

I. THE FIRST STAGE. The nations within a certain moderate radius of Palestine are naturally the first to come in—Egypt and Ethiopia, in Africa; and by parity of reasoning, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor, in Asia; Greece, Italy, and Southern Gaul, in Europe. This was very much the range of Hebrew influence during the five centuries preceding Christianity, and of Christian influence during two centuries afterwards.

II. THE SECOND STAGE. The circle gradually widens, and a time comes when the gospel may be said, roughly, to have penetrated everywhere, and "the earth" to be "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (ch. xi. 9). Missionaries have visited the remotest ends of the earth; and the nations generally may be challenged to "assemble themselves, and come," and make their choice between true religion and their own false and absurd systems (ver. 20). But conversion has not kept pace with preaching. On many nations very little, on some no, impression has been made. Prayer is still offered widely to deities "that cannot save." This is the state of things at the present day. Scarcely a nation in the world has not heard of the salvation of God; but a large number—as much as three-fourths of the population of the globe, we are told—have not yet accepted it.

III. THE THIRD STAGE. God has "sworn by himself, the word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and shall not return"—that ultimately "unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear" (ver. 23). In "a new heaven and a new earth" (ch. lxv. 17) the Messiah, "the Ancient of days" (Dan. vii. 6), will rule over a

kingdom which will contain "all people, nations, and languages" (Dan. vii. 14). How this will be brought about, what exactly will be the scene of the kingdom, what the condition of its members, is not revealed, otherwise than in mystical words, and cannot be laid down with definiteness; but in that kingdom, beyond a doubt, "all people will fall down before Jehovah, all nations will do him service"—the prophecies of Isaiah will have full effect: "all flesh will worship before the Lord" (ch. lxvi. 23).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Cyrus the anointed of Jehovah.* I. THE REASON OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR TO CYRUS. Cyrus is the only king out of Israel who bears the title of Jehovah's anointed. He is solemnly set apart as an instrument to perform an important public service in the cause of Jehovah. It does not necessarily imply the piety of Cyrus. For the purposes of Jehovah he is upheld, "grasped by the right hand," that he may subdue nations before him—from the Euxine to Egypt, from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. The girdles of mighty kings will be unloosed before him. See this said of Belshazzar (Dan. v. 6); then were the "two-leaved gates" of Babylon left open, amidst the revelry, and the conqueror broke in unopposed (Herod., i. 191). The treasures of the city are laid open before him. 1. The object was that he might acknowledge Jehovah. "He hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth" (Ezra i. 2). "Son of Cambyses, Heaven favours you manifestly, or you could not thus have risen superior to fortune" (Herod., i. 124; cf. 205). None but the Omniscient could have known the person and the name of him who was to conquer Babylon and deliver his people. 2. The next object was the deliverance of the chosen people. "The fates of the empires and kingdoms of the world are divinely disposed of with a view to the Church." But all the progress and prosperity of true religion are summed up in the *knowledge of Jehovah:* that he is the *sole God;* that he is the *Creator* and the *providential Ruler* of the world. The alternation of day and night is Jehovah's ordinance. So also is that of peace and war, success and misfortune, good and evil. This is pure monotheism, opposed alike to pantheism and to dualism. That the world may be converted to true religion is the final and all-comprehensive object.

II. SONG OF PRAISE. "The appearance of the shepherd of Jehovah, and the thought of the blessings of which he is to be the medium, inspires the prophet with a joyous strain of psalmody." The form of the expression is borrowed from the Eastern religions, the fertility of the earth being due to the impregnating influence of Heaven (Ps. lxxxv. 11; Hos. ii. 21, 22). Righteousness, in the sense of salvation (ch. li. 5, 6, 8; lvi. 1; lix. 17; lxi. 10, 11; lxii. 1), descends upon the souls of men. And they will break forth into "fruits of righteousness" to the glory of God. Prepared for repentance and the reception of the truth from the Holy Spirit, they will be, even as the earth is, made mellow and adapted for the reception of seed by rain and dew. "A Church smiles under the influence of a revival of religion, and society puts on the aspect of loveliness like the earth after abundant showers."—J.

Vers. 9—13.—*The sovereignty of God.* I. THE MURMURER AGAINST PROVIDENCE. He is compared to a "potsherd among potsherds on the ground." "Woe unto him who, though made of earth, and with no intrinsic authority over others of his race, presumes to find fault with the Maker!" (cf. ch. xxix. 16; lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 1—6; xix. 1, 10, 11; Rom. ix. 20—24). In the account of the Creation, the Almighty is conceived as making man out of the dust of the earth (Gen. ii. 7). Shall the clay, then, quarrel with the plastic hand of the Potter? How can the distance between man and God be better expressed than by the tautology, "God is God, and man is man"? or that he is Maker, man the made? "Since matters stand thus between God and us, let us consider what hands we are in, and what an irresistible grip has hold of us; and let that teach us, even for our sakes, to be quiet under it. There is, indeed, but one way of encountering an infinite power; and that is by an extraordinary (if it were possible), an infinite patience" (South). Is it natural, again, for the child to complain of its parents that it has been brought deformed or weakly into the world? Nor is it becoming of men to

catechize and call to account Jehovah. "Are ye children of God? Then is it well with you; and to murmur against me is as if ye should renounce your sonship."

II. THE ABSURDITY OF MURMURING. To criticize the Creator is to assume a knowledge we have not got. We should be creators ourselves before we could say whether this or that part of the great world-work could have been otherwise executed. It is also to assume a knowledge of the clues of history, the springs of sudden events, which is not ours. And Jehovah reminds man again of his providential relation to Cyrus. His absolute unquestionable dominion and sovereignty over all things is the great argument for our submission to him. His dominion is founded on an inalienable title—Creation and Providence. It is reasonable that the first cause should be the Supreme Governor; and whatever has been made by God should also be commanded by him. He might have chosen whether he would have made the world or no; for he had no need of it to complete or add to his happiness, which was infinitely perfect within the compass of his own glorious being. Yet he was pleased, by the free motion of his will, to communicate and diffuse some little shadow of those perfections upon the creatures, and more especially upon his nearer resemblances, men and angels. A being essentially wise cannot do anything but wisely. Our ignorance of God's actions cannot make them or argue them to be unreasonable. He is more honoured by our admiration than by our inquiries. Hence the necessity, the prudence, and the becomingness of submission, without murmuring to his allotments.—J.

Vers. 14—17.—*The conversion of Egypt.* In this conversion of the nations to true religion the Divine goodness and providence will be at last recognized. They are represented as going over to Israel of their own accord, and surrendering to her their wealth. And they will be brought at last to the great confession, "Of a truth God is in thee, and there is none beside—no Godhead at all."

I. HISTORY AS THE CONCEALMENT OF GOD. So it often appears. The weak are down-trodden; the proud and tyrannical are in the ascendant. Israel in her prostrate condition and insignificance seemed to imply a God impotent to save. And so it is in the personal life and history. There are sufferings which obscure the light of faith, and seem to give the lie to the most deep-seated religious hopes. But God is where he was, though our view pierces not to him. "He's in his heaven; all's right with the world!"

II. HISTORY THE UNVEILING OF GOD. "Now we are forced to own that Israel's God is the absolutely Strong One, able and willing to deliver all who trust in him." Then in a moment they who have trusted in idols are covered with confusion, together with the artificers of them. And Israel is saved with an everlasting salvation. "Time, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity." What is all life and time, nature and human fashion, but a veiling of God? How can we see him except "through a glass darkly"? What is thinking but dreaming, and dreams what but pictured screens, concealing and revealing the truth? We are in bondage to sense, to belief, to fancy. But our deliverance draws near; and no confusion will await them that have believed to the end.—J.

Vers. 18—25.—*God, Israel, and the world.* Again, with solemn iteration, Jehovah declares that he is Creator and God alone. The earth was framed and fitted to be the habitation of man, and the theatre of providential manifestations.

I. THE REALITY OF THE ETERNAL. The truth is open, and may be published to all; it is no thing of mystery, secrecy, like heathen esoteric rites or knowledge. "Jehovah's Law is not to be obtained by any occult arts from the under-world." He has not been a wilderness unto Israel or a land of darkness (Jer. ii. 31; cf. ii. 6). The seeking of his people after him is not to end in chaos. Here, again, may be an allusion to the dark sayings of the heathen oracles—ambiguous, oblique, or fallacious. His speech is direct, upright, and true. Let those who have escaped from the judgment upon the nations bear witness. How foolish they who carry the wooden image in processions, and pray to it (cf. ch. xlvi. 1; Jer. x. 5; Am. v. 26)! What argument can be produced for the divinity of idols? Which of them can pretend to the prophetic and predictive power of Jehovah? God is the only Reality, the only Truth, the only faithful Principle in a world of idolatrous unrealities, pretences, and shams.

II. CALL TO SALVATION. In him who is real and true, alone can men find deliverance from temporal and spiritual ills. Not Israel alone, but mankind, is destined to look to him as the Universal Saviour. Jehovah swears by himself—the strongest form of assurance—"when the accompanying revelation is specially grand, or specially hard to believe." "The abolition of the last vestige of nationalism in the true religion is announced." The word is gone forth, and shall not miss its aim; the truth has sped like an arrow to the mark. Every knee shall bow in homage, every tongue shall swear allegiance. Submission shall be without reserve and absolute. "Only in Jehovah are righteousness and strength." While confusion shall be the portion of his enemies, his servants shall be accepted, and be placed by him on the footing of the justified and righteous. "He, then, that trembles at the name of an offended Creator, let him comfort himself in the title of a reconciled Father. Though we have cause to dread the tribunal of his justice, let us come confidently to the throne of his mercy. Let us come freely, and spread all our wants before him, lay open all our complaints, tell him all the distresses and secret anguishes of our burdened consciences. Believe it, we cannot be more ready to tell them than he is to hear them; nor he to hear them than to relieve them. Let us anchor our hopes, our trust, our confidence, on his goodness; for although as our Creator he will not save us, yet as our Redeemer he will."—J.

Vers. 18—25.—*Jehovah: his nature and purposes.* I. HIS SOLE DEITY. He is the Creator, and to say this is to say that his is "*the* Godhead." This truth is repeated "line upon line," and "precept upon precept." Simple truths have an *emphasis* peculiar to them. They need to be *iterated*, because the memories of men are unfaithful, their imaginations vagrant, their affections prone to wander from their true and central Object. It was so in ancient times; it is so still. Then men were tempted to think that other national gods had some power; now they are disposed to turn to some "ideal substitute" for God. We should learn, not to share out our reverence among God and various ideals of the true, wise, beautiful, and good, but to conceive of him as the sum total of them all. The enduringly good, and the permanently true and spiritually and essentially fair, all enter into the conception of "the Eternal, beside whom there is none."

II. HIS PURPOSE IN THE CREATION. It was to be, "not as a chaos," but a scene of *order*, a *kosmos*, as the Greek said. It was "formed, finished, and arranged, that it might be inhabited"—like "a lodging for a friend." God "rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights are with the children of men." His thought was above all for the social *kosmos*—the spiritual system, the beauty of the regenerate state of souls; his mind to be reflected in the human creation; the human creation to illustrate the glory of his mind. If science brings to light the wonders of the natural order, true theology brings to light the greater wonders of the spiritual order. It is a discovery of the law to which the passions and forces of human nature must render obedience in order to happiness.

III. THE OPENNESS OF HIS REVELATIONS. Not in darkness and secrecy, like the heathen mysteries; nor in obscure and symbolic phrases, like theirs. Nor is it a matter of occult art and divination. It is the "light of Jehovah" (cf. Deut. xxx. 11—14; Jer. ii. 31). Luminous in themselves, his words lead us on to tracts of light and felicity. They are *direct*, and opposed to the crooked and enigmatic deliverances of the heathen oracles. Let human experience decide between Jehovah and the heathen gods. They only dare to make such an appeal who are conscious that it cannot be resisted. That religion cannot stand which will not endure satire; for ridicule is the test of truth. How can they endure it who "without knowledge carry the word of their image, and pray unto a god that cannot save"? What argument can they produce? What covenant can there be between the soul and an idol? what ability in wood or stone to save? The result remains as before. As there is but one Creator, so is there but one Moral Governor—one righteous, faithful, covenant-keeping God.

IV. CALL TO SALVATION AND TO ADORATION. "Be saved!" That is, ye shall be saved in turning unto me. If he is the only God, obedience to him must be the only salvation. And upon this end God has set his heart—this end, he swears, as God is God, shall be accomplished. The true Israel shall expand, the barriers of naturalism shall be broken down; there shall be universal, voluntary, unrestrained submission.

Shame at error, and triumphant, boastful gladness in the new-found truth, shall go together. Such a communion of spirits in God and with one another is the object of faith, of aspiration now, and shall be a glorious realization hereafter.—J.

Ver. 5.—*God in our past life.* "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." When the soul of man is renewed, and his rebellion against God ceases, wonderment often arises in the heart that life has not been altogether a ruin. So many times we have been near the precipice; the crumbling stones fell down into the plain; our feet well-nigh slipped. Here is the open secret.

I. UNCONSCIOUS HELP. "I girded thee." We have not seen a face nor even heard a voice, but an invisible arm has been around us. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." Our folly was sufficient to ruin us. Our obstinacy was wild and wilful. We cannot take credit to ourselves for deliverances from moral danger. We *can* look back and see that often there was but *a step* betwixt us and moral death. "Great deliverances," as the prophet says, hath God wrought.

II. HUMAN IGNORANCE. "Though thou hast not known me." The life has been destitute of fellowship with God and likeness to God. We have not retained the knowledge of God. There has been all through our life: 1. *God's care without our cognizance.* 2. *God's love without our gratitude.* 3. *God's wisdom without our skill.* Verily the apostle was right: "By the grace of God I am what I am."—W. M. S.

Ver. 22.—*The eye of the soul.* Look unto me, and be ye saved." Faith can look! We have the spiritual vision and the spiritual object. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." We look, and are saved! Yes; and we look in hours of sorrow and unrest, and our burdens are lightened. This is no dream of the quietist; no meditation of the mystic. We do not look into infinity, and feel awe. We do not merely set religious imagination to work. We have a loving Lord and Saviour, to *whom* we look. "Sir, we would *see* Jesus." When our eyes are filled with worldly visions; when we are active in the warehouse, the office, the street, the home;—then we have experience of time-visions. When our *souls* are awake we gaze on the unseen Lord, who has been about our path all the day, and who is always waiting to be gracious. What is the exact word, do you say? I see! You are accustomed to a close exegesis of the Scripture. It is well! The Hebrew means, "flowed together." Is not that beautiful? "They looked unto him, and flowed together." We are lightened by oneness with our Lord.

I. LOOKING UNTO JESUS LIGHTENS US BY CONSCIOUS SYMPATHY. This always lightens. In a human sense it does. We *can* enter into each other's lives, and bear each other's burdens. We want not more strength, but more cheer. He does not give new faculty, but the Holy Spirit quickens faith; faculty we already have. Think of the one Divine life. Christ knew what it was to go to his Father in prayer, to be alone, to be misunderstood, to be solitary and forsaken. He was tempted, too, in all points as we are, yet without sin. He suffered, being tempted. We look to the Brother as well as the Saviour. Sympathy! Is it not precious? We get hardened by habits, where each has to struggle for himself or herself. Yes, herself! The womanly life is often a heroism of endeavour in the sense of seeking sometimes a livelihood; and the world to a widow does seem a very selfish place at times. Christ was poor. He was, in a human sense, needy. But, you say, even in these lives of struggle and difficulty, the spiritual anxieties are the deepest: to maintain a pure heart, a faithful love, a true conscience, a gracious progress in heavenward affection. Then remember he knows your inner history. Look to him. Seek oneness. Let your life and his "flow together."

II. LOOKING UNTO JESUS LIGHTENS US BY CONSCIOUS POWER. He is able to keep—able to save. Have you ever been in a gale at sea, and been nervous and timorous? But there, on the bridge, is the calm, keen-eyed, well-trained captain. You feel that there is confidence coming to your heart as you look at him. What waves cannot Christ calm? What coast of life does not he know the soundings of? What can surprise his vigilance, or blind his knowledge, or hinder his commands? Even when the earthly physician came to your sick child, you watched his face and were lightened; he hoped, and you renewed your strength. A Christ less than Divine is no real refuge for such

anxious souls as ours. We need not only beautiful ethics, exquisite parables; but we want Divine authority: "*I will*; be thou clean!" We are at rest when we can say with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." We feel how guilty we are. We admit no man, no priest, into the picture-gallery of the soul. We decline to reveal our leprosy of heart to our fellow-men. But we are all polluted and evil; and we have deep repose of heart when we come to the one fountain open for sin and uncleanness, and know that Christ is "*able* to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." No look lightens us which is merely imitative—which is a lesson-look of duty. We need a great Saviour as well as a great Teacher.

III. LOOKING UNTO JESUS LIGHTENS US BY CONSCIOUS OBEDIENCE. This comes next. We flow together, not merely in sympathy, but in life and service. We do his commandments; we know in following him we are in the *right* path; and how it lightens one to feel that the way is right, however hard and painful it may be! Rectitude is the music of the soul. Is not this sometimes forgotten? you say. Or, if not forgotten, is obedience relegated to a very inferior place by some Christians? Yes; they mean well, but they take a superficial view of the gospel. Removal of guilt is not all. Doing is *not* a deadly thing, it does *not* end in death—if it is *life-doing* and not *law-doing*. Christ says, "Keep my commandments." "This *do*, and thou shalt live." We are never lightened by self-indulgent piety, which leaves all to God. We are to exercise our graces; to use what Paul calls "the gymnastic of godliness"—a beautiful expression. Looking to Jesus, we shall gain strength for every earnest endeavour after the Divine life. But is there not a danger of spiritual pride? Is it not better to feel God does all? There is no one of us free from the danger of spiritual pride. We must all watch and pray against it. But you may detect spiritual pride often very manifestly in those who think that they, and they alone, know the entire secret of God's will; and their secret is, a leaving it all to him. Then pride says, "See; I am free from legalism, and I have no danger of self-righteousness." Pride *may* hide under this cloak of confessed humility. We are only safe in Christ's own way. He and no earthly teacher is to be really our spiritual Director, and he says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life." Not by a cowardly shrinking from duty, but by looking up to the Captain of the great host and gathering nerve to throw one's self into the thick of the fight is our heart lightened.

IV. LOOKING UNTO JESUS LIGHTENS BY CONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE. We have tried it in the days of old! Christ has lightened many a burden we foolishly tried to carry alone. Men are ashamed of their failures. They boast of a certain specific, and it fails. They recommend certain methods of conduct which break down in operation. But our faces are not ashamed. They glow with the consciousness of what Christ has been in past times of test and trial. He has never failed—never forsaken. This is a beautiful idea about the countenance—a Christian should have no shame there. I do not mean a face defiant or boastful; *that* is not the meaning of these words, "And their faces were not ashamed." It means no confusion, no flush of anxiety, no prophecy of failure on it. We can *all* look to him. We are all invited! None of us can measure the weight on the heart. Christ can. And he knows that it is heavy, very heavy. We are often tired and weary. Come to him! You need him! You have slighted and neglected him long time now; but you have found no Friend, no Saviour away from him.

"'Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.'"

Let us do so. Then this experience will have brought to us a peace which passeth all understanding.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*The unfelt hand on the human heart.* Of this passage the most striking and inviting words are those in the fourth and fifth verses: "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me;" "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." But while these sentences furnish the theme of consideration, the other part of the passage suggests *three particular things in which the prophetic word was fulfilled.* 1. The opening of the gates of brass (ver. 1), fulfilled during the capture of Babylon.

2. The discovery of hidden treasure (ver. 3), fulfilled in the taking and sacking of two of the wealthiest cities of antiquity, besides other great acquisitions. 3. The strengthening of Cyrus for the sake of Israel (vers. 1—4), fulfilled in the brilliant successes of the great Persian conqueror, followed by the liberation of the Jews from captivity. But the interesting fact is the *presence and action of the Divine hand* in the course of this heathen king. Little as Cyrus imagined it, he was under the guardianship and guidance of the Lord of hosts from his earliest childhood to his last successes. The power that snatched him from earliest peril, that made him the wise and capable administrator he became, that planted in him the spirit of humanity and equity, that saved him in a thousand dangers, and gave so triumphant an issue to his various enterprises,—this was none other than the power which is Divine. God was girding him, though he knew not the name and the works of Jehovah. On this unenlightened sovereign, from infancy to age, through all the events of a crowded life, a Divine hand was laid; its touch was all unfelt, its secrets undiscovered; but it was there—a gentle, constraining force, shaping his career, tracing the lines along which he moved, making him the power among the nations that he was in those ancient times. This known fact does two very useful things for us.

I. IT GIVES A PROFOUND INTEREST TO ALL HUMAN HISTORY. There is too much in the affairs of men to justify the sarcasm about the "battle of kites and crows;" there is something pitifully small in the contests which proceed in "high places" for honours, titles, and emoluments. In one view the struggles of men are small enough to excite our pity, if not our disregard. But introduce the element of the Divine! Then all is changed. And should we not introduce that element? If God's unfelt hand was on one heathen king, why not on another? why not on all the others? If, all unknown, he was upsetting and upraising kingdoms in one clime and age, why not in other climes and in other ages? In this view "profane" history becomes "sacred;" for in it we have a record of God's doings in the world. When we read the account of the overthrow of Assyria, of Persia, of Greece, of Rome, of Spain; when we read the careers of Alexander, of Cæsar, of Charlemagne, of Napoleon, of Cromwell, of Washington,—in the light of the truth which lies in the text, human history is *very* much more than the story of a "battle between kites and crows;" it is more than the account of human passions in stern conflict, of human ambition working itself up and burning itself out. It is Divine procedure; it is God's outworking and overruling; it is the hand of God laid on the arm of man,—unfelt, unrecognized, but directing and controlling, working to wise and righteous issues. In the great events which are the landmarks of history, and in the careers of illustrious men, God is "within the shadow," girding men though they know him not—the mightiest factor by far in all worlds, and even in *this*, where he is so little known, so much forgotten.

II. IT LENDS GREAT IMPORTANCE TO EVERY HUMAN LIFE. Men may imagine that there is nothing sacred about their individual life; that they have very little to do with God and he with them; that God stands in no closer relation to them than that of the Author of the laws by which they are governed, and the ultimate source of the blessings which they receive. But they are wrong. God is much more to them than this. He is the Father of their spirits; he is the Saviour of their souls; he is seeking their welfare; is following them out, in his thought and affection, to the "far country" of sin; is inviting and promoting their return; is touching them in many ways and at many points, "girding them, though they know him not." The meaning of all sacred privilege and of all parental discipline is that God is laying his hand upon us, and is saying to us, "Return unto me;" "Come unto me."—C.

Vers. 6—8.—*An old perplexity.* From very ancient times, through very many generations, there has presented itself to the human mind the perplexity which arises from the antagonism of forces. We find everywhere—

I. OPPOSITE ASPECTS OF HUMAN LIFE. Here are light and darkness, peace and evil (ver. 7). On the one hand are signs and indications of a marvellous and minute benevolence. In the sea, in the soil, in the forests, in the air, and on the earth; in fish, in insects, in beast, in bird, and, above all, in the life and in the mind of man,—are innumerable, inestimable evidences of Divine beneficence. But, on the other hand, there are drawbacks, there are shadows, there are evils, the number of which we

cannot count, and the nature of which it is difficult to exaggerate. Pleasure is matched with pain; joy is followed by sorrow; hope is shadowed by fear; peace is waited upon by strife; life is swallowed up by death.

II. THE PERPLEXITY THUS OCCASIONED. What is the secret of this strange contradiction? What is the explanation of it? Shall we find intellectual rest in *dualism*? or shall we fall back upon *fate*—upon the blind action of unintelligent forces? or may we rise to the belief in one overruling God? Who shall read the riddle of the unintelligible world?

III. THE ARGUMENT FROM THE ISSUE. Go far enough on, and we shall find that which enlightens and relieves us; we must look to "the *end* of the Lord" (Jas. v. 11). The end of the Lord is found: 1. *In righteousness.* (Ver. 8.) At last, in the history of men, families, and nations, the pure and just are exalted, while the wicked are consumed and perish. 2. *In salvation.* (Ver. 8.) To the suffering ones comes rescue from poverty or oppression; to the sinful ones comes redemption from penalty, reinstatement in the home and kingdom of God.

IV. THE SATISFYING TRUTH. After all, only one thing will decide the question—God's revealing Word. It *was* his declaration through the prophets, "I am the Lord;" "I the Lord have created it." It *is* the word, the life, the work of Jesus Christ, who reveals to us an ever-present, overruling Father of mankind.—C.

Vers. 9—12.—*The argument for acquiescence.* No doubt there are circumstances in which men find—

I. A TEMPTATION TO REBEL. 1. Men are bitterly *disappointed*, or they are greatly *distressed;* their high hopes are dashed to the ground, or their chief treasures are taken from their grasp. 2. Then they think themselves *aggrieved;* they imagine that the Almighty is dealing with them as he does not with their fellows—that he is acting ungraciously and even unjustly toward them. 3. The issue is often a settled *rebelliousness* of spirit, an "inward thought" that God is partial and unfair; a tone of querulousness, if not actual terms of reproach, or even blasphemous arraignment.

II. THE ARGUMENT FOR ACQUIESCENCE. This is manifold. 1. The impotence and the peril of human resistance to the Divine will. "Woe unto him that striveth," etc. (ver. 9). How vain is the contrast between finite, perishable man and the Infinite and Eternal; between one who is formed of clay and him who "made the earth and stretched out the heavens"! 2. The deference due from the creature to the Creator. "That striveth with his Maker" (vers. 9, 11). For us to enter into a controversy with the Being who called us into existence, who endowed us with all the faculties we possess, who gave us the very power which is being exercised in criticism and questioning, without whose creative and sustaining hand we could not think one thought or speak one word, is unseemly and unbecoming in the last degree. 3. The fact of God's fatherhood, and all the reasons that reside therein. If it be *unfitting* for a son to reproach his father (ver. 10), how much more for us to rebel against God, who stands to us in a relation far more intimate, far more sacred, far more worthy of reverent submission, than that in which the human parent stands to his child! And it is also *short-sighted;* for the Divine Father has thoughts in his mind, reasons for his action, which we, his children, are quite unable to comprehend or even to conceive. For us to complain of him is for ignorance to complain of wisdom. 4. Consideration of the future which is coming. We must not leave the "things to come" (ver. 11) out of our reckoning; they have much to do with the whole question of God's dealings with mankind. What God purposes to do for us, both as individual men and as a race, forms an essential element in the whole matter. The future will be found to adjust the past and the present. The grievous things which have been and the painful things which are now will be balanced by, will be completely lost in, the blessed and glorious things which "wait to be revealed."—C.

Ver. 15.—*Divine concealment.* In God's dealings with individual men and with mankind at large, as with his people Israel, there are three stages.

I. THE REVELATION OF HIMSELF. "O God of Israel." The God who was thus addressed was, emphatically, *a Revealing One.* He was known to Israel as the One who revealed himself to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, to Moses and Aaron, to Samuel

and David and Solomon, to all his holy prophets. We also know God as the Being who has revealed himself in nature, in the human reason and conscience, in providence, and more especially in Jesus Christ. We worship him as the God who "hath showed us light," who has made clear to us his nature, his character, his disposition toward us, his sinful children, the conditions under which he will receive and reinstate us.

II. HIS CONCEALMENT OF HIMSELF. "Thou art a God that hidest thyself." We see this truth appearing in various directions. 1. In the *processes of nature*. The power of God is in all the beneficent forces of nature, working out for us the changes of the seasons, the bounties and the beauties of the earth, the wonders of human attainment; but his hand is unseen, his touch unfelt. 2. In his *government of mankind*. Israel did not understand what Jehovah was doing with her; as a nation she entirely misunderstood her mission. God concealed the purpose he had in his training and his providential treatment. The other nations of antiquity—Assyria, Persia, Egypt, Greece, Rome—were serving a Divine purpose; but they knew it not. It was "the mystery hid from the ages and generations." 3. In his *redemption of our race*. How little did the apostles, while they accompanied our Lord and ministered to his wants and witnessed his sufferings, imagine that he was laying the foundations of a spiritual and universal empire—a kingdom of truth and love! What a blessed purpose, what a grand design was concealed beneath the humble person and the peaceful ministry of the Son of man! And in all the subsequent outworkings of the Divine plan, how much has there been of Divine concealment! So that, as one has said, while these eighteen centuries have been *anni Domini*, we have had to lament—

> "Years of the Lord are these,
> But of a Lord away."

4. In his conduct of *each human life*. We believe that God is ordering our lives, shaping and moulding them, determining their course, and deciding what shall be the witness they shall bear and the work they shall do—what shall be their contribution to the great campaign he is conducting. But, here again, his hand is all unseen. Often, generally, we cannot detect the unity, the plan, the purpose of our lives; it is because we walk by faith and not by sight that we are convinced of the presence of his intervening and overruling power. Many are the dark passages in the good man's career, when he is prompted to exclaim, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself."

III. HIS MANIFESTATION IN REDEEMING LOVE. The last word we have to use is a word which explains everything—"the Saviour." Israel is brought very low; God's face is hidden from his people; he seems to have forgotten them; but he comes in redeeming grace, and "with the saving strength of his right hand" proves himself their Refuge and their Friend. The human race goes from bad to worse, and, when it seems delivered over to corruption and ruin, there is born in the city of David *a Saviour*, Jesus Christ. The hour in our experience is dark, misfortunes have multiplied, disaster is imminent; but our extremity is his opportunity, and God appears in delivering power. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." From the very edge of the precipice we are snatched by the strong and saving hand of God. 1. Circumstances of distress are no proof of God's absence. He may only be hiding his face for a while. 2. Let all souls in their integrity appeal for and anticipate a merciful and full redemption (Ps. l. 15).—C.

Vers. 16—19.—*What shall the end be?* Things are rightly tested by their issues. We do well to ask—To what is this course tending? in what will it terminate? Taken in a deep and full sense, though not in a short and shallow one, "all *is* well that ends well." The prophet says that idolatry will be condemned in the ultimate and utter overthrow and confusion of its victims (ver. 16), while true piety will be finally and fully established (ver. 17). Of this there was the most ample security (vers. 18, 19). We infer, generally—

I. THAT EVIL ENDS IN OVERTHROW AND DISHONOUR. It is not idolatry only which, when the last stage is reached, is covered with confusion. It is the doom of all departure from the righteous will of God. *Self-indulgence* has its pleasant hours; but it conducts by a sure road to disease and early death. *Crime* has its successes; but it

spends its last days within prison-walls. *Greed* has its own wretched gratification; but it earns general and unspeakable contempt. *Worldliness* wins its honour and "has *its* reward;" but it ends in heart-ache and bitter disappointment. *Rapacity* and *injustice* do often wring treasures from the wronged and suffering; but they end in exposure, in condemnation, in ruin.

II. THAT OBEDIENCE ENDS IN BLESSEDNESS AND HONOUR. It is not confounded nor ashamed; it is saved—it "seeks not God's face in vain." It "inherits the land." Though much may be endured, yet a great deal more is gained, by a complete surrender of self to the service of Christ (see Mark x. 29, 30). It ensures that without which all earthly possessions and all human honours are worthless, with which they can be cheerfully foregone. It brings peace of mind, joy of soul, growth in goodness, victory over the world, Divine favour and guidance, eternal glory.

III. THAT OF THIS RESULT WE HAVE THE MOST AMPLE SECURITY. It rests on the foundations of: 1. *Divine power.* On the "thus saith the Lord," on the word of him who "created the heavens and formed the earth." 2. *Divine wisdom.* On the word of Him whose presence is attested by his handiwork: "He created it not in vain." 3. *Divine righteousness.* "I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right." The power, the wisdom, and the righteousness of God are to us the all-sufficient pledge that we shall not seek his face in vain, but shall find that the earnest seeker after God will find all that will fill his *heart*, ennoble his *life*, and secure a glorious and immortal *destiny*.—C.

Vers. 21—25.—*Our great hope: a missionary sermon.* The view of the prophet is "exceeding broad." He sees that which is "afar off." He looks across the countries and across the centuries, and he has a more glorious vision than statesman ever pictured, than poet ever dreamed. We look at this—

I. OUR SUPREME HOPE FOR THE HUMAN WORLD. Isaiah has before his mind a time when "all the ends of the earth will be saved;" when "every knee will bow" to God, and every tongue solemnly invoke his holy Name; when men shall "come to him" in adoration and in thanksgiving. This is our heart's most profound desire, our soul's highest hope. We do not want our nation to subdue every other to servitude and subsidy. We do not want our form of faith or polity to swallow up every other form. We do want mankind to know God, to approach him in pure worship, to bless him for his fatherly love, to glory in his goodness, to submit to his righteous sway, to rejoice in him as the One that saves from sin and restores to righteousness. When, beneath every sky, speaking every language, with all possible varieties of custom and civilization, men everywhere shall honour the one holy Lord and rejoice in the same righteous Redeemer, the supreme hope for the world will be fulfilled. But we have to consider—

II. THE DELAY IN ITS FULFILMENT. The Israelites returned from captivity, and entered again on a course of national freedom and Divine worship in the holy place; the Lord "did great things for them, whereof they were glad." But nothing happened then or in subsequent days in Jerusalem or in Judæa which could be said to be a realization of this glorious vision. Jerusalem perished and Israel was scattered, while the prophecy remained unfulfilled. Jesus Christ came and formed his Church; that Church grew and throve, overturning the idolatries with which it contended. It has been making its way in the world, and, during the last century, has made substantial progress. But the world is very far indeed from having attained to the condition which is here foretold. The prophetic word waits to be fulfilled; there is a long delay in the realization of our supreme hope. But let us gladly turn to—

III. OUR CONFIDENCE IN A VICTORIOUS RESULT. It rests on three things. 1. *The triumphs which have been already gained.* These are very great, and they are exactly proportionate to the purity of the doctrine which has been taught and the zeal of the Churches which has been shown. With Christ's truth taught as it came from him and from his inspired apostles, and with the Churches of Christ as much in earnest as they have been during this century, the advance will be sure and swift. 2. *The strong word of Divine promise.* "I have sworn by myself . . . that unto me," etc.; "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," etc.; "All power is given unto me . . . go ye therefore," etc. 3. *The fitness of the gospel of Christ for the necessities of men.* It provides: (1) A sense of forgiveness of sin. "Be justified." (2) The possession of moral excellency

"Righteousness." (3) Spiritual power to resist temptation. "Strength." (4) Joy of heart, showing itself in praise. "Shall glory."

IV. OUR PRIVILEGE AND DUTY IN RELATION TO IT. Since there is, indeed, such a hope for mankind, since that is to be the final issue of all strife and suffering and toil, let each nation, each Church, each family, each Christian man, see to it that its (his) contribution is forthcoming, so that, when the fields are ripe, it (he) may have a share in the joy of harvest.—C.

Ver. 2.—*The secret of assured success.* These figures indicate the removal of all obstacles and hindrances out of the way of him who is called of God, entrusted with some particular work for God, and helped of God in the doing of that work. Historical illustration is found in the fact, as stated by the older writers, that in some unaccountable way the river-gates of Babylon were found open on the approach of Cyrus; or, as stated on the authority of the monuments, that the city capitulated, as a consequence of the defeat of Nabonidus in the field. Professor Sayce says, "Another fact of an equally revolutionary kind, which the inscriptions teach us, is that Babylon was not besieged and taken by Cyrus. It opened its gates to his general long before he came near it, and needed neither fighting nor battle for its occupation." Grote, in his 'History of Greece,' says, "The way in which the city was treated would lead us to suppose that its acquisition cannot have cost the conqueror either much time or much loss . . . it is certain that the vast walls and gates were left untouched." The assurances of the text are even better fulfilled by moving obstacles out of the way, than by Cyrus actually mastering them. Herodotus tells us that Babylon had a hundred gates of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

I. OBSTACLES IN THE WAY SHOULD BE NO HINDRANCE TO US. There is hardly anything worth doing in life that is not difficult to do. The difference between men is seen in their attitude in face of difficulties. Illustrate by the position of Israel before the Red Sea. It was a brave thing for Moses to command Israel to "go forward;" but it was a type of the right attitude for us always to take when the way seems obstructed. "I cannot" must give place to "I will, God helping me."

II. THE ONE THING TO SEEK IS THE ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE DOING GOD'S WILL. This distinguishes the good man from the mere man of energy. The Cyrus here referred to was raised up by God, and entrusted with a particular work. But it is true that still God calls individuals to special service. He makes plain to them his will. And our first anxiety should be to be sure that we are where he has set us, and are doing just what he would have us do. Once let these things be settled, and oppositions and hindrances count for nothing. We want more faith in Divine providence, in the inward inspirations and outward directings of God. Where he sets us we must bear, conquer, and do.

III. WAYS ALWAYS OPEN BEFORE THE OBEDIENT, RESOLUTE, TRUSTFUL MAN. Firmness, moral courage, persistency, and, above all, real faith in God, compel difficulties to yield. They are always according to the size of the man himself. If he is big with faith, they grow small; if he is little with fears, they grow big. Obstacles are searching tests of character. Men of faith are like the mountain streams that make their way down amid the rocks; if they cannot get over the rocks, they go round them, but they will not be stopped.—R. T.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The Divine surnaming.* "I that call thee by thy name." "I have titled thee" (Cheyne's translation). Some think the reference is to the name Cyrus, or Koresh, regarded as a new title for one who was originally known as Agradates. Others, with more probability, think the reference is to the honourable epithets, "my shepherd," "my anointed." Our knowledge of Cyrus has been modified, in some very important particulars, by recent discoveries of Babylonian inscriptions. Professor Sayce is of opinion that, "We must give up the belief that Cyrus was a monotheist, bent on destroying the idols of Babylon. On the contrary, from the time when we first hear of him, he is a worshipper of Bel-Merodach, the patron-god of Babylon; and the first care of himself and his son, after his conquest of Babylonia, is to restore the Babylonian gods to the shrines from which they had been impiously removed by Nabonidos." "The theory," he says, "which held that Cyrus had allowed the Jews to return

to their own land because, like them, he believed in but one supreme god—the Ormazd, or good spirit, of the Zoroastrian creed—must be abandoned. God consecrated Cyrus to be his instrument in restoring his chosen people to their land, not because the King of Elam was a monotheist, but because the period of Jewish trial and punishment had come to an end." It has been thought by some that this prophecy of Isaiah concerning Cyrus was brought to that king's notice, and so helped to secure its own fulfilment. It is agreed that this Cyrus was a singularly just and noble monarch. Dr. H. Bushnell says, "So beautiful is the character and history of Cyrus, the person here addressed, that many have doubted whether the sketch given by Xenophon was not intended as an idealizing or merely romantic picture. . . . And what should he be but a model of all princely beauty, of bravery, of justice, of impartial honour to the lowly, of greatness and true magnanimity in every form, when God has girded him, unseen, to be the minister of his own great and sovereign purposes to the nations of his time?" Dean Stanley says, "Though we know but little of the individual character of Cyrus, he first of the ancient conquerors, appears in other than a merely despotic and destructive aspect. It can hardly be without foundation that both in Greek and Hebrew literature he is represented as the type of a just and gentle prince." Three subjects are suggested.

I. THE DISTINCT ENDOWMENTS OF MEN INDICATE DIVINE CALL TO DIVINE WORK. In the Divine sovereignty and wisdom there is a proportionate distribution of gifts among men. In the figure of our Lord's parable, we may say, the master of the house calls together his servants, and delivers to each one some portion of his goods in trust. Very marked are the varieties of endowment and ability in a single family. We are often made to feel that God has given special gifts to some of our children; but we should see that these cases are only prominent illustrations of the truth that he has given some gifts to all. We all have some special work to do for God in the world, and so we all have some special endowments for the doing of it. Every man is called of God, girded by God, surnamed by God, and the moment when he clearly sees what his life-work is, is the moment when he becomes conscious of his call. Bushnell says, "What do the Scriptures show us but that God has a particular care for every man, a personal interest in him, and a sympathy with him and his trials, watching for the uses of his one talent as attentively and kindly, and approving him as heartily in the right employment of it, as if he had given him ten? and what is the giving out of the talents itself but an exhibition of the fact that God has a definite purpose, charge, and work, be it this or that, for every man?" "Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God—a Divine biography marked out, which it enters into life to live." The point on which we dwell is that the sense of power, the consciousness of power, is the witness to God's call; and the responsibility of using the power to do God's work comes with the consciousness. To say "I can" is to affirm that there is something God wants me to do.

II. THE PRECISE TIME IN WHICH A MAN HAS TO LIVE INDICATES DIVINE CALL AND WORK. Each one comes into being at the "fulness of time" for him. It is sometimes said that great preachers and thought-leaders of the past would do little if they lived now. The saying is a foolish one. They belonged to their age, and were endowed for their age. The Divine lead was as marked in the time of their appearing as in the gifts with which they were endowed. In each age God wants men (1) who can represent the age, and find expression for the average thought of the age; (2) men who are before the age, and can lead the age up towards the thoughts and things that are to be; and (3) men who are behind the age, and zealously preserve the good things of the past that may seem to be imperilled. A man may say, "God has called me to live just now; then I may be quite sure that there is something which he wants me to do for him, and which he has fitted me to do, just now." Thus viewed, life grows solemn and holy for us all. We have our own work to do.

III. THE PROVIDENTIAL CULTURE OF MEN FITS THEM FOR DOING GOD'S PRECISE WORK FOR THEM. This is often imperfectly apprehended. We are precisely endowed, and set forth in the world at just the right time; but it is important that we further trace how God cultures the gifts by the influences with which he surrounds us, and the providences he arranges for us. Often when men have found out what their life-work is to be, they gain the key to the meaning of the scenes and circumstances through which they have been led.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*One source of evil and good.* "I make peace, and create evil." It is an unworthy forcing of Scripture to set this passage in relation to the insoluble difficulty of the origin of moral evil. Two things are often sadly confounded—evil as an unpleasant state of our circumstances; and evil as a wrong condition of our will. The latter is referable to God only in the sense that he gave to man a moral nature and a capacity of choice. The former view of evil is that alluded to in the passage now before us. It has been thought that the passage was written in view of the principles of Persian dualism. "The Magi taught that there are two coeternal supramundane beings—Ormazd, the pure and eternal principle of light, the source of all that is good; and Ahriman, the source of darkness, the fountain of all evil, both physical and moral. These two divide the empire of the world, and are in perpetual conflict with each other." Perhaps Isaiah deals here with evil and good as they are regarded by *man*, not as they are estimated by *God*. The "good" here is that which is pleasant; the "evil" is that which is painful; and the assertion is that both the pleasant and the painful are within the Divine controlling, and are forces used by God to secure certain high moral ends. "Darkness" represents the misery and woe of the exile; "light" represents the happy state to which Israel was to be restored through the agency of Cyrus.

I. THE TENDENCY TO THINK OF A SEPARATE SOURCE OF EVIL. So great are the disturbances of God's order through man's sin and wilfulness, that human life seems more full of calamities and anxieties than of blessings and good. This is man's impression, and he has ever been disposed to say, "The *good* God cannot send these calamities; they must have a source of their own." Men are always ready to make Ahrimans, Sivas, or Typhons, to explain the existence of physical evils.

II. THE TENDENCY TO GIVE ALMOST EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP TO THE EVIL-GOD. To ward off evil seems to be a more pressing thing than to be good or to obtain good, and so the supreme effort is made to propitiate the evil-god. Illustrate by the heathen sailors in the boat with Jonah, exposed to storms. We even need to be most careful in our conceptions of Satan, lest a notion of his independence should divide our worship between him and Jehovah. He must be thought of as dependent on God, even as we.

III. THE INEVITABLE DEGRADATION OF HUMAN WORSHIP UNDER THIS CONDITION. The maintenance of high morality is found absolutely to depend on the jealous preservation of the truth of the Divine unity.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The sin and folly of resisting God.* The truth of the Divine sovereignty must be clearly and faithfully presented. But we must carefully guard God from all charges of caprice or favouritism. We must liken him to man, in order to apprehend him at all; but we must eliminate from our figure of man all that is weak and self-seeking. The infinite holiness and infinite wisdom of God glorifies his sovereignty. He does what he wills with his own; but what he wills to do is always the absolute best, the eternally right. It must, then, be mistaken, unworthy, and wrong for us to resist God. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" The immediate reference of the text is to those who murmured at the delay of the deliverance from exile. "Woe unto him who, though made of earth, and with no intrinsic superiority over others of his race, presumes to find fault with his Maker, and to criticize providential arrangements!" Matthew Henry says, "Men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions. They are dashed in pieces one against another; and, if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as for the clay to find fault with the potter, as unnatural as for a child to find fault with his parents." Criticizers of God may be classed under two heads—(1) those who only question and raise doubts; (2) those who arrogantly condemn. Some of the people of Israel were looking for a deliverer to arise from among themselves, and criticized God's delay, and then criticized his delivering by the agency of a heathen prince. The plea urged is this: "Will Israel be more wise than God?" We have here suggested three stages of unworthy treatment of God.

I. CRITICIZING. There are two ways of judging the actions of others, and they differ by the difference in their tone and spirit rather than in the acts themselves. 1. We

may judge with the prevailing disposition to find out all that is good. 2. We may judge with the prevailing disposition to find fault. This is always unworthy, but never so unworthy as where applied to the ways and works of God.

II. CONDEMNING. Always a doubtful thing for man to do, seeing he is invested with neither authority nor ability for such work. Always wrong and unworthy, if man's condemnation of God, seeing that he cannot compass the whole of God's reasons, motives, and aims. Man never knows enough to allow him to venture on a condemnation.

III. WORKING AGAINST. Translating bad opinions into bad conduct. Allowing criticism to encourage enmity. Illustrate from Saul of Tarsus, who ventured to criticize and condemn God's Messiah, and then thought himself justified in working against him.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The joy of mystery in God.* "Surely thou art a God that hideth himself, O God of Israel, Saviour!" (Cheyne's translation). This represents the average feeling of the captives. God's ways, though excellent, are not as man's ways; they are often hidden from men. They are mysterious ways; but faith rises above the mysteries, and calls them "good ways." (1) God's plans are hidden in the counsels of eternity; (2) God's work is often hidden in the variety of the agencies he employs; and (3) God's results cause surprise and joy when they can be revealed. Dealing with this subject in a larger way, we inquire—

I. WHAT IS GOD TO MAN'S SEEING? In our pride of heart we are very unwilling to admit the limitation or imperfection of our faculties. We can know so much; why cannot we know God? We can see so much; why cannot we see God? Men are restless, and bitterly fret, because the dark mists still fringe and hide the "mountain-peak of a God." They say, "If it be so to our vision down in the plains of common life, then we will climb the hills of science, get up above, and look down on the peak, and shatter for ever the mysteries that surround him." Some expect to return to us with a scornful smile, prepared to say, "There is no God, only a high peak, which the unclouded sun gilds with a perpetual radiance; and this, shining through the clouds, made you think there was a God."

"Then all goes wrong: the old foundations rock;
One scorns at him of old who gazed unshod;
One, striking with a pickaxe, thinks the shock
Shall move the seat of God.

"A little way, a very little way
(Life is so short), they dig into the rind,
And they are very sorry—so they say—
Sorry for what they find.

"O marvellous credulity of man!
If God indeed kept secret, couldst thou know
Or follow up the mighty Artisan
Unless he willed it so?"

(Jean Ingelow.)

Human vision cannot see all round. When it can see the *under*-world and the *within*-world, it may begin to boast that it can see the *beyond*-world. But not till then. And what it does see it can only see imperfectly. Only sides and parts and aspects. With the great heap of human attainments lying before us, we may say, "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but the thunder of his power who can understand?" Do you want to see God all round and right through? Be assured of this: "No mortal vision, pure or sinning, hath seen the face." Better, far better, to adore and love the mystery of God and God's ways.

II. WHAT IS GOD BEYOND MAN'S SEEING? Man's foolish ambition is to see everything with his bodily eyes. Man's true wisdom is in knowing God through the soul-visions that are granted to faith. And, beyond our seeing of the clouds and the mystery, what is God? 1. To our seeing, there is much difficulty and mystery about God's ruling of the earth; but our souls know that he reigns in righteousness. 2. To

our seeing, there is much cloud and mystery about God's providential dealings with us; but our souls know that he makes "all things work together for good." 3. To our seeing, the redemption of the human race from sin is a profound and awful mystery; but our souls know that Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." 4. To our seeing, the future of the human race is all hung about with clouds and darkness. The very terms, "eternal life," "eternal death," are but folds of the wondrous veil that hides the unspeakable from our view; but our souls do enter into rest. Righteousness and love will preside over man's future, as truly as over the past and the present. We may rejoice in a God who hideth himself. We may be glad that the clouds hang low about him, that the mystery of him cannot be solved, and that he therefore calls for a great wondering, lowly adoration, and the perfect trust. Our God is within the grasp neither of our hand nor of our mind. Nothing in heaven above or earth beneath can be, in any full sense, a likeness of him. The grandest things do but hint his grandeur; the most lovely things do but suggest his loveliness; the truest things are but faint echoes of his truth. Away, beyond us, above us, he soars into the "light inaccessible"—our ever-blessed God, who, though he hideth himself, is *our Saviour*.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Seeking in vain.* Henderson regards this as an appeal "to the publicity and perspicuity with which the Divine predictions had been announced; with manifest reference to the responses of the heathen oracles, which were given from deep and obscure caverns, or the hidden recesses of temples; and were, at the best, artful and equivocal, and, in cases of extreme difficulty, were altogether withheld." Cheyne says, "The heathen oracles are as obscure in their origin as they are unveracious and disappointing. Those who deliver them say, as it were, 'Seek ye me as chaos.' But the revelations of Jehovah are the embodiments of righteousness and uprightness." (comp. Prov. viii. 6). It may be urged (1) that God's message to men is plain; (2) is satisfactory; (3) is just. Or it may be shown that God's will is clearly and sufficiently revealed, in all its several forms: (1) in creation; (2) in history; (3) in individual experiences; (4) in Word-revelations spoken directly within man, as the law of conscience; and (5) in Word-revelations spoken to man, as the law of conduct. It is suggestive of illustration to recall the declaration of our Lord Jesus, "In secret have I said nothing" (John xviii. 20). Another line of treatment may be offered.

I. MEN'S SELF-PURSUITS END IN VANITY. We do "seek them in vain." Illustrations should be taken from the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is precisely this—a man's record of his seeking the "chief good" as he could conceive it. He sought *this* way and that, in every conceivably hopeful direction, and with every possible advantage in the search; and his conclusion of the matter is, "Nothing satisfies. All is vanity." Byron sought self-satisfaction in pursuing self-ends; and long ere old age could come with its burdens he wrote, "The worm, the canker, and the grief, are mine alone." Before the ruins of the self-seeking life, we stand and say, "So is he who heapeth up riches for himself, and is not rich toward God."

II. MAN-MADE RELIGIONS END IN VANITY. To trust them is "spending money for that which is not bread." Illustrate this by showing how, in St. Paul's day, the Athenians had multiplied gods because, one after another, they had been sought, and failed to satisfy; and at length they even, in their unrest, inscribed altars to the "Unknown God."

III. GOD'S WAY OF LIFE IS ABUNDANTLY SATISFYING. It is a living fountain of waters. 1. It meets the soul-cry for righteousness in God. 2. It meets the soul-cry for pardon of sin. 3. It meets the soul-cry for restored and happy relations with God. 4. It meets the soul-cry for power to perform that which is good. 5. It meets the yearning of the soul for assurance concerning the future. So men never seek God in vain.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Just and saving.* The idea is that God is strictly faithful to his covenant, and therefore he must be a saving God. Saving is implied and involved in the covenant. There is the further assertion that God stands alone as a Saviour; there is no God who can save besides him. The point which may be unfolded and illustrated is that there is here declared the union of two attributes in God which, in human actions,

are often thought to be incompatible. The just *man* is thought of as likely to punish. The just *God* is sure to save.

I. MAN'S IDEA IS—JUST AND PUNISHING. Our minds are mostly occupied with the work of justice in finding and punishing evil-doers. Consequently, a very limited forensic idea of justice has come to possess men's minds; and this limited and unworthy notion of justice we too readily apply to God; and according to it settle God's relations with men. But justice is properly "doing right by men" and "setting men right," and mere punishment is only an accident of the true work of justice; or, we may say, one of its agencies in doing its higher work. Justice is as truly delivering men out of the hands of the wicked, as it is punishing the evil-doer. This position should be fully illustrated, and it will prepare the way for the consideration of the next division.

II. GOD'S IDEA IS—JUST AND SAVING. With God the "just" means the "right," and that always includes the "kind." This may be opened in several ways. 1. God is just in saving his people from disasters which others have brought on them. 2. God is just in saving them from the consequences of their own infirmities and follies. 3. God is just in saving men from their sins by punishing them for their sins. 4. God is just in saving them from punishment, when the ends of punishment have been secured. 5. God is just in finding a way by which, through the voluntary sacrifice of his Son, his honour can be maintained while his mercy is extended to guilty and helpless sinners. His saving, in Christ Jesus, is the expression of his justice. He is the "Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Salvation by looking.* The illustration at once suggested is that of the Israelites, healed from the bite of the serpents by looking at the God-provided brazen serpent, lifted up on high in the middle of the camp. This familiar subject needs only a bare outline of points to unfold and impress.

I. HIM TO WHOM WE SHOULD LOOK. "I, if I be lifted up," said Christ, "will draw all men unto me." "That whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. THE LOOK THAT SAVES. 1. The look of conscious need. 2. The look of personal helplessness. 3. The look of humility. 4. The look of faith.

III. THE SALVATION THAT COMES BY LOOKING. 1. Salvation from the penalty due to sin. 2. From the wrong relations brought about by sin. 3. From the bad inward state induced by sin. "For all within you, Guido, which sighs after a redemption, is Christ come as a Redeemer; he has redeemed your heart and your reason; he has redeemed your spirit and your body; he has redeemed yourself and nature which surrounds you" (Tholuck).—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The Lord's final triumph.* (Comp. Phil. ii. 10.) It should be noticed that "kneeling" and "swearing to" are acts of homage and fealty; and they are so used in this passage. Still we "swear" allegiance to a sovereign. "If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adoration and addresses, and in cheerful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him." The point suggested for illustration is this—How can the faith of Israel claim to be the universal religion for mankind? The answer is that, beneath its forms and ceremonials, which were but illustrations of its truths, it holds all the absolute essentials of religion, and these can gain varied expression, to suit the genius of all races, in all climes and periods. These essentials are—

I. THE TRUTH THAT THERE IS ONE GOD, AND HE IS A SPIRITUAL BEING.

II. THE FACT THAT THIS ONE GOD HAS REVEALED HIS WILL.

III. THE DEMAND THAT THIS ONE GOD SHOULD BE HONOURED BY MAN'S FAITH AND SERVED BY MAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Vers. 1, 2.—The Fall of the Gods of Babylon. Among the direct consequences of the victories of Cyrus will be the downfall, in a certain sense, of the Babylonian idolatry. The prophet expresses the downfall by material imagery, graphically describing the fate of the idols themselves. But we must regard him as exulting mainly in the thought of the blow that would be dealt to idolatry in general, and to the Babylonian form of it in particular, by the substitution of the non-idolatrous and almost monotheistic Persians for the polytheistic and grossly idolatrous Babylonians, in the sovereignty of the Asiatic world. The Babylonian religion no doubt maintained itself at Babylon until and beyond the time of Alexander; but it had lost all its prestige. From the state religion of the chief empire of Western Asia, it had sunk to the position of a provincial cult.

Ver. 1.—**Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth.** In the later Babylonian period, to which Isaiah's prophetic vision transports him, Bel and Nebo (if we understand by Bel, Bel-Merodach) were decidedly the two principal gods. Of the seven kings of the last dynasty, three had names in which Nebo, and two names in which Bel or Merodach, was an element. Bel-Merodach and Nebo are the chief gods worshipped by Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar. Bel, Nebo, and Merodach are the only three Babylonian gods that receive acknowledgment from Cyrus in the so-called 'Cyrus Cylinder.' Bel is, in the Babylonian, "Bil," or "Belu," and means simply "lord." There was an ancient god of the name, one of the First Triad (Anu, Bel, and Hea or Hoa), who came by degrees to be identified with Merodach, the tutelary deity of Babylon. Bel-Merodach was the Βῆλος (Belus) of the Greeks and Romans, who was worshipped in the great temple of Babylon, now represented by the ruin called "Babil." His name forms an element in those of Bel-lush, Bel-kudur-azur, Bel-ipni, Bel-zakir-iskun, and Belshazzar, all of them kings or viceroys of either Babylonia or Assyria. Nebo was the Babylonian god of learning, and has therefore been compared to Mercury. He was the special deity of Borsippa. The name is thought to be etymologically connected with the Hebrew *nabi*, prophet. The "bowing" and "stooping" of Bel and Nebo has primary reference to the overthrow of their images by the conqueror, but includes also the idea of the fall of the gods themselves in the opinions of men. **Their idols were upon the beasts.** The Chaldean images generally—not only those of Bel-Merodach and Nebo, but also of Anu, and Hea, and Beltis, and Ishtar, and Nergal, and Sin, and Shamas, and Gula, and others—would be torn from their shrines, and placed upon the backs of beasts of burden, to be carried off by the conquerors. No doubt this was the case with a large number of the images, which were among the most precious of the spoils seized by the soldiers. But it appears that numerous exceptions were made. Neither Cyrus nor Cambyses touched the famous golden image of Bel-Merodach at Babylon, which was first carried off from the great temple by Xerxes (Herod., i. 183). Cyrus, moreover, restored various idols, which Nabonidus had taken to Babylon from provincial towns, to the temples to which they of right belonged (*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, January, 1880, art. ii.). But though their fate was in this way often delayed, ultimately it is probable every valuable idol was carried off and committed to the melting-pot. **Your carriages were heavy loaden;** rather, *the things that ye carried (in procession) are now borne along heavily.* The allusion is to the contrast between the light-hearted carrying of the images on festal occasions by their votaries (ch. xlv. 20), and their slow transport to foreign lands on the backs of wearied beasts.

Ver. 2.—**They stoop, they bow down together;** *i.e.* all the Babylonian gods would suffer equally—not one would be able to protect himself. **They could not deliver the burden.** A distinction is here made between the god and the idol, which have hitherto been identified. The god was, in each case, unable to deliver, or save from capture, the heavy "burden" of gold, or silver, or bronze (*i.e.* his own image) which was carried off on the back of the "weary beast." On the contrary, the gods themselves—the "souls" of the images, immanent in them—were carried off with the images into captivity.

Vers. 3—8.—An Admonition to Israel. Israel should learn from the fate of the Babylonian idols to trust in Jehovah, who can and will deliver them, rather than in gods of gold and silver, which can give no aid, either to themselves or others.

Ver. 3.—**All the remnant of the house of Israel.** The address is not to those who had remained faithful of the ten tribes (as

Delitzsch supposes), but to the captives of Babylon, designated in these later chapters indifferently as "Jacob" or "Israel" (ch. xl. 27; xli. 8, 14; xlii. 24; xliii. 1, 28; xliv. 1, 21, 23; xlv. 4, etc.), never as "Judah," and constantly mentioned as a "remnant" —all that was left of the oppressed and down-trodden nation (see ch. i. 9; x. 20—22; xi. 16, etc.). **Borne** by me. Carried in the everlasting arms, as a child in the arms of its nurse or mother (comp. ch. lxiii. 9). **From the belly . . . from the womb.** From the very beginning of the national existence.

Ver. 4.—Even to your **old age I am he**; even to **hoar hairs**, etc. The nurse—even the mother—soon grows tired of carrying the child, and leaves him to shift for himself. But God's tender care for his people lasts from their infancy, through their boyhood and manhood, to their old age. The everlasting arms never weary. God's watchfulness, his providence, his protection, never fail. **I have made, and I will bear.** The maker of a thing has naturally regard to what he has made, loves it, desires its good, seeks to defend and save it.

Ver. 5.—**To whom will ye liken me?** (comp. ch. xl. 18.) Am I to be likened to the idols of Babylon? Will you make images of me? Bethink you what the very nature of an idol is—how contrary to my nature! My idol would be no more capable of helping itself or others than the images of Nebo or Bel-Merodach.

Ver. 7.—**They bear him upon the shoulder** (see the comment on ch. xlv. 20). Here, however, it is not the carrying in procession that is spoken of, but the conveyance of the image by the workman from his own workshop to the temple where it is to be set up. The carrying of heavy burdens upon the shoulder is mentioned by Herodotus (ii. 35), and frequently represented on ancient monuments (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 402, 475; 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. pl. opp. p. 177; etc.). **From his place shall he not remove**; *i.e.* he (the god) will have no power of moving an inch from the spot on which he is set up. There he will stand motionless, till some one comes and pushes him or pulls him from his place.

Ver. 8.—**Remember this, and show yourselves men**; or, *remember this, and stand firm.* Isaiah is addressing those who waver between true religion and idolatry. Hitherto they have not fallen away, but they are in danger of so doing. "Remember," he says to them, or "bear in mind constantly the impotence of the idols, and the power of Jehovah, and then stand firm—remain in your old faith—do not be drawn over to so foolish a thing as idolatry." **O ye transgressors.** It is to be a "transgressor" even to contemplate the turning from Jehovah to idolatry. Israel has been already "called a transgressor from the beginning" (ch. xlviii. 8).

Vers. 9—11.—A FURTHER ADMONITION GROUNDED ON OTHER MOTIVES. Israel is exhorted to continue firm in the faith (1) by the recollection of God's mercies in the past (ver. 9); (2) by the consideration of his prophetic power (ver. 10); and (3) by a renewed promise of coming deliverance through Cyrus (ver. 11).

Ver. 9.—**Remember the former things of old**; *i.e.* God's wonderful dealings with Israel in times past—the miracles in Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the deliverances from Midian, and Ammon, and the Philistines, and Zerah, and Sennacherib—which proved him God in a sense in which the word could be applied to no other. **I am God . . . I am God.** In the original, "I am *El* . . . I am *Elohim*." *El* is "the Mighty One," "the Omnipotent;" *Elohim*, "the Godhead" in all its fulness.

Ver. 10.—**Declaring the end from the beginning**; *i.e.* "possessed of the very highest prophetic power, able to declare from the very beginnings of history its ultimate issues" (see Gen. iii. 15; xvi. 12; xxi. 18, etc.). **My counsel**; rather, *my purpose*, or *my plan* (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 11; Job xxiii. 13; and *supra*, ch. xiv. 24).

Ver. 11.—**Calling a ravenous bird**; rather, *a bird of prey.* The imagery is quite natural, and exactly parallel to that by which Nebuchadnezzar is termed "an eagle," both by Jeremiah (xlix. 22) and Ezekiel (xvii. 3). There is no need to suppose any allusion to the fact, if fact it be, that the Persians from the time of Cyrus had for a standard a golden eagle, with wings outspread, on the top of a spear-shaft (Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 1, § 4; 'Anab.,' i. 10, § 12). **From the east** (comp. ch. xli. 2, 25). Both Persia and Susiana, which were the primary seats of the power of Cyrus, lay to the east of Babylon, the latter due east, the former somewhat to the south-east. Even Media might, according to Hebrew usage, be described as east, though lying almost due north-east.

Vers. 12, 13.—AN ADMONITION TO THE OBDURATE IN ISRAEL. God's mercy extends even to those who resist his grace. They who have been hitherto stiff-necked and "far from righteousness," have a special warning addressed to them. Salvation is drawing nigh; the deliverance of Israel is approaching; there is no time to lose; will they not cast in their lot with the true Israel, and take advantage of the deliverance when it comes?

Ver. 12.—**Ye stout-hearted** (comp. Ezek. ii. 6; iii. 7; and *infra*, ch. xlviii. 4). The LXX. translate by σκληροκάρδιοι.

Ver. 13.—**I bring near my righteousness**; *i.e.* "my righteous judgment is approaching—that judgment which involves vengeance on my enemies, mercy and deliverance to my people." This latter is **the salvation that shall not tarry. In Zion.** The head-quarters of the "salvation" shall once more be Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, where God's people shall once more take up their abode, and which shall be "the centre of the renovated nation" (Delitzsch).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The effect of God's temporal judgments upon nations on the religious history of the world.* In the ancient world, where religions had no revealed or historic basis, but had been evolved by degrees from the thought or imagination of each people, the fate of a religion depended greatly upon the course of secular history, and the success or failure that attended upon the arms of the nation professing it. As no people could have a rational, or, consequently, a firm belief in a system based upon imagination, each was ready to adopt any other which seemed to prove its superiority by triumphs and victories. The downfall of an empire involved, for the most part, the downfall of the system which its rulers had made the state religion; or, if not its absolute downfall, its depression and gradual decay. When God raised up a conquering power, he gave an impetus to its religious system, which was either imposed by force upon conquered tribes, or, in many cases, voluntarily accepted by them. The gross and sensuous idolatry of Assyria and Babylon had obtained almost exclusive possession of Western Asia through the conquests of the Assyrians and Babylonians between the twelfth century B.C. and the sixth. When Cyrus captured Babylon and shattered the Babylonian empire, this idolatry received its death-blow. The subject nations either reverted to their ancient creeds or adopted the belief of the new conquerors. Zoroastrianism became the predominant religion of civilized Asia. In Babylon itself and its neighbourhood a small knot of believers clung to the old superstition; but, generally speaking, it was discredited, and had to make way for the dualism of Persia. Dualism suffered in its turn when the Persian empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great, and continued under a cloud during the Parthian period, at the close of which (A.D. 226) it once more reasserted itself under Artaxerxes, son of Babek, who brought the Parthian empire to an end. Military success, similarly, established Mohammedanism as the religion of Syria and Egypt, Asia Minor, Persia, Upper India, Turkestan, Turkey, and North Africa, even Christianity suffering when God's judgments fell on the effete and debased Byzantine empire. The only religion that has been but slightly affected by military success and failure is the religion of Christ. Originally spreading, like leaven, silently and gradually, without any help from conquerors or from the secular arm, till, having become the religion of the mass of his subjects, it was adopted as the state religion by Constantine; it resisted the great influx of the barbarians into the Roman empire; and, instead of disappearing before Teutonic and Scandinavian heathenism, converted its conquerors. Unarmed missionaries spread it through Central and Northern Europe, through Georgia, Armenia, and Mesopotamia, and again into Abyssinia and the African desert. In America alone was it propagated by the sword. Gradually progressive in almost every quarter, once only and in one quarter has it retrograded through a Divine judgment. The followers of the Arabian prophet were allowed to sweep it from the greater part of the East, from Egypt and from Northern Africa, for a time from part of Spain; but this judgment, provoked by immorality, coldness, and heresies of various kinds, was not a final judgment—already, in all the regions temporarily lost to it, the religion of the cross has recovered a footing, and is gaining ground. Propagandism by the sword has now ceased; but everywhere the course of secular history is so ordered that Christianity comes more and more to the front. Islam is dying out; Brahminism is shaken to its basis; Buddhism has well-nigh spent itself. The religion on which God has set, and is each year more clearly setting, the seal of success is Christianity.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The religion of Jehovah contrasted with idolatry.* I. THE HUMILIATION OF BEL AND NEBO. These were the tutelar gods of Babylon and its suburb, Borsippa. Merodach, or Marduk (Jer. l. 2), is another name of a being closely related to or identical with Bel. The idols of the Chaldeans are given up to the beasts, and the images once carried in solemn procession by the priests and nobles are put upon the backs of beasts of burden. Herodotus and Diodorus tell us of the golden statue of the great god at Babylon (the Greeks called him after their own, Zeus), and the great golden table in front of it—a "table of demons"—and the golden altar. The image was said to have been carried away by Xerxes (Herod., i. 183). These gods, then, once held as mighty, tutelar, delivering saviours in one of the greatest cities in the world, have themselves gone into captivity. Themselves they could not save. Had these gods been really Divine, they would surely have rescued their own images. Conceived as persons by the heathen, they are, in the prophet's arguments, convicted of being without any of the proper ability of personality. "It is difficult not to think of the last strange journey of these desecrated images," remarks a commentator (cf. Layard's picture of the 'Procession of the Bull beneath the Mound of Nimrod'). The power of the heathen god depended on the faith, *i.e.* the imagination, of his worshippers. The overthrow of Babylonian power was a great shock to the heathen imagination. It showed that the power in which they had believed was an illusion and a lie from the Hebrew point of view. And so ever; the powers of this present world and its princes and its illusions are seen passing away before the prevalence of true religion.

II. THE PROVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH OVER HIS PEOPLE. He is what the gods counterfeited—a wise superintending Being, a faithful supporting Being, to his people, alike in war and in peace; the gods of conquered peoples had failed to be this, according to the prophet, and according to ancient thought generally. Jehovah is this. Note the *extreme tenderness* of the representations of him in this attitude to his folk. Not a timid and trembling captive but may appropriate the truth to his own consolation. He is as the Nurse, they as the little helpless infant (cf. ch. lxiii. 9; Deut. i. 31; Exod. xix. 4; Ps. xxviii. 9; Hos. xi. 3). But the thought of the human parent and nurse reminds us of mortality and of transiency belonging to human conditions. "The devoted watchfulness of the parent dies away when his child has come to maturity; and he is commonly removed by death when his offspring has attained to old age." Not so with Israel and Jehovah. Israel is always the object of the *motherly* care and affection of God (ch. xlii. 14; xlix. 15; lxvi. 9, 13). "Even to old age I am the same" (see Ps. lxxi. 18, where the people speak as one person). "Even to grey hairs *I* will bear; *I* have made, and *I* will carry, and *I* will bear and will rescue."

III. HIS APPEAL TO THE REASON OF THE PEOPLE. Ever we seem to hear him saying, "Come now, and let us *reason together*." There are "rebellious ones" (ver. 8), yet Jehovah still reasons with them. Once more the piece of manufactured helplessness called an idol is placed before their thought. What can it do for men? They "cry unto it, but it cannot answer, nor save them out of trouble." Is Jehovah to be compared with *that thing*? And then the positive argument is again brought forward. Jehovah alone has the power of prediction. "From the very beginning of a period of history he can announce the far-off issue, utterly incalculable to human eyes." If, then, now he has announced his purpose, it will stand. If the bird of prey, the eagle Cyrus, has been called from the east, it will be to the certain execution of a mission from Jehovah. To trust in him is to have all difficulties solved, all confidence restored. To believe in Providence; to be assured that the world's history at any moment, at this moment, is not a mere play of passion, caprice, and chance, but that things are working together to an end foreseen;—this is strength, because this is reason. And God would have his people understand what true reason brings to religion; that religion is reason and sense, while idolatry is weakness, folly, and unreason.

IV. THE NEARNESS OF GOD'S SALVATION. This, too, is an emphatic thought (cf. ch. lvi. 1). Righteousness and salvation are but two aspects of the same blessing. Yet men may be "far off." How? It is not space, it is not time, that separates from

God. It is in the heart that men are near or far. The power of imagination must not be forgotten. In one sense God is no more near or distant at one time than another, nor to one person than another; that our reason assures us. Yet the evidence of feeling and of imagination is otherwise. They tell us that he may be "near" or "far." It is, then, in ourselves that the cause must be sought. The warm affection, the lively fancy, the open and lowly intelligence,—these bring him near. The *obdurate* heart—which means the dull intelligence, the sluggish fancy, the state of coldness in the affections—this may place him wide as the poles asunder from man. What is needed in religion, alike in its intellectual and its practical aspects, is simplicity, yielding child-likeness, impressionableness to great and obvious truths.—J.

Ver. 4.—*God's care for the aged.* "And even to your old age I am he," etc. What a contrast between God and man! Concerning how many may it be said that they are forgotten in old age! Sometimes even children are faithless to their parents, and age has died in a workhouse, when children have been well-to-do. But change comes, too, in other relationships. The world does not want us when we are worn out. Its sweet songs can charm no more. The cunning of the worker's hand fails. The preacher faints. A new generation of strength and health has won the palm. Then, mark—

I. THE SURPRISE. *Even.* At the time when the world draws off, God comes nearer. Weakness is always welcome to him. He loves to comfort. His infinite strength is not weakened by all outgoings of help to others. Wherever, in age, sickness confines us, or solitude keeps us, there is our Father. *Even* then, when heart and flesh faint and fail. He has not merely *promised* this, but the Jacobs of the world can attest the truth: "All my life long." And apart from promise and experience, it is God's *nature* so to do.

II. THE REASONS. 1. "I have *made*." God will not, as Job says, forget us, because "thou hast a desire to the work of thy hands." 2. "I have rescued." What else says the prophet? "I will carry and deliver you." What we could not bear away, God, in the person of his Son, will do for us. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Hoar hairs may have their perfect whiteness, but hoar hearts have not, and we need a Saviour to the end. Nor is this all. Old age has its sorrows as well as its sins. The young have not always sympathy with the old. They do not understand what it is to feel so "alone," with buried generations behind, who once joined in the race of life with them, and who worshipped with them in the house of God. Those who admired and understood and loved them are *gone*, and a generation has risen up who know not Joseph. Beautifully does the next verse begin, "To whom will ye liken me?" "Even to your old age I am he." Always a Father, always a Saviour, always a Friend.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*Men bearing gods, and God bearing his people.* The pitiable and even ludicrous insufficiency of idolatry is admirably drawn in this picture. We see the beasts bowed down with the images of the helpless deities of Chaldea. In what striking and glowing contrast does the relation of Jehovah to his people appear! From the very infancy of Israel God had borne them in the arms of his faithfulness and power; and his tender kindness in the past would extend to the furthest future. Even to old age he would bear them; they might confidently lean on his strength; they might count with absolute assurance on his protecting care, on his delivering grace. "I will carry, and will deliver you." We learn—

I. THAT FALSE TRUSTS, SO FAR FROM LIGHTENING OUR BURDENS, ARE A HEAVY WEIGHT TO CARRY. Men make mistakes now which are as serious in their consequences as that made by the Babylonians. They put their trust in things which prove to be delusive and even burdensome. This is true of unwise *friendships;* of ill-gained or excessive *wealth;* of exalted *positions*, which we have not strength to fill, or high *honours* which we have not grace to carry; of *learning* in one direction, unbalanced by knowledge in other directions. You see men who thought to bless themselves with these "idols," who expected to be enriched and sustained by them, staggering under their weight, blinded and misled by them, betrayed and ruined by them. Instead of their gods carrying them, they have to carry their gods.

II. THAT TRUST IN GOD WILL BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LONGEST LIFE. (Ver. 4.) 1. God

continued his mercies to us from our birth to our regeneration; though we knew him not, he girded us (ch. xlv. 5). He fed and clothed and sheltered us. 2. He undertook to befriend us when we gave ourselves to him, and he has done so. He has made good to us his kindest words of promise. 3. A time of special trial may confront us: the pillar and mainstay may have fallen; unfriendly seasons or adverse circumstances may have stripped us; sickness may have weakened us, or infirmity may be visibly advancing on us. Our human powers, our earthly prospects, may be failing and waning. 4. But we may go on undaunted, untroubled. "The Lord will provide." We have a strong consolation—we whose hope is in the Lord our God. (1) His word of promise cannot be broken. (2) We, men, do not desert *our* servants in their age or their sickness: how much less will he (Ps. lxxi. 18; ch. lv. 9)! (3) Our very weakness and distress are a strong guarantee that the compassionate and considerate Father will befriend and sustain us. (4) The unchangeable One will not begin without concluding his work; he will "perfect that which concerns us;" he will "not forsake the work of his own hands." To old age, to hoar hairs, he will carry us along the path of life, till we reach the home of unfailing health and unbroken joy.—C.

Ver. 8.—*Manliness in relation to religion.* "Remember this, and show yourselves men." The prophet calls on the people of God to show themselves to be men, either by *exercising their powers of recollection and reason* in remembering the facts and arguments he has adduced, or by *taking appropriate, manly action* in the recollection and realization of these convincing and constraining reasons. Religion is a manly thing in both these aspects. So far from its being the childish or effeminate thing which its enemies have been pleased to call it, it is a sphere of thought and of action in which the very highest and noblest attributes of our humanity have fullest scope.

I. AS A SPHERE OF HUMAN THOUGHT. 1. It is the most *elevated.* All objects of creation are worthy of regard, and the study of them is full of recompense. But they differ in the degree of their worthiness; there is an ascending scale, and they culminate in the Divine. The noblest study of mankind is God—his nature, his character, his will, his kingdom. 2. It is the most *obligatory.* Men, *as men,* should consider that which most claims their attention, should dwell on those themes which most demand their thonght and care. And these are found in Divine blessings, Divine dealings, Divine messages, Divine beauties and excellences. We are never doing anything more worthy of our manhood than when we are recalling and realizing what God is, what he has done, what he has been to our race and to ourselves, what sovereign and supreme claims he has on our reverence and love.

II. AS A SPHERE OF HUMAN ACTION. If there be anything which can be said to be manlier than patient and earnest thought on the highest themes, it is: 1. *Deliberate choice of the wisest and best course*—the determination, at all costs and spite of all inducements, to take that course which commends itself to our judgment as the right and the wise one. This is exactly what men do when they surrender themselves to the will of God, to the service of Jesus Christ. 2. *Resolute and persistent pursuit of it.* Where does manliness find nobler illustrations than in the persistent worship of God under cruel persecution, the immovable adherence to sacred conviction under the wearying and worrying assaults of worldly and frivolous associates, the steadfast endeavour to extend the kingdom of righteousness and to raise the condition of the degraded, notwithstanding all the discouragements that await the Christian workman?—C.

Ver. 4.—*Grace for a long life.* "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Reference is made more especially to the prolonged life and varied experience of the nation; but the promise and assurance are equally applicable to the individual—they exactly match other assurances which are addressed to individuals. And Israel may always be regarded as the type of the godly man. For us all life is full of changes, surprises, and calamities. We have nothing absolutely stable and unchangeable, nothing always true and trustworthy, unless God is such. In an exquisite fragment of autobiography, by Dr. Horace Bushnell, found dimly pencilled on a stray sheet of paper, is the following indication of the rest a soul finds in the permanence, the unchangeableness, of God: "My mother's loving instinct was from God, and God was in love to me first there-

fore; which love was deeper than hers, and more protracted. Long years ago she vanished, but God stays by me still, embracing me in my grey hairs, as tenderly and carefully as she did in my infancy, and giving to me as my joy and the principal glory of my life that he lets me know him, and helps me, with real confidence, to call him my Father." This truth of God's permanent gracious relations with those who put their trust in him was stated in its Christian form by the Apostle John (John xiii. 1), when, speaking of his Master, he said, "Those whom he loveth, he loveth *unto the end*." It may be noticed that, while mother's love and interest never flags or fails, mother's work, of bearing, tending, carrying, does change and pass as the children grow older. So even with a mother God may be contrasted; for he tends even to old age, even to the end. Opening the general topic suggested by the text, we may observe that the promise—

I. ASSUMES US TO BE IN GRACIOUS RELATIONS WITH GOD. Sometimes those relations are presented under the figure of a "covenant." At other times they are seen as relations brought about by "redemption"-work in our behalf. Here the closer, more natural, more personal, relations of parents and children are referred to. God is represented as feeling towards us like the mother who bore us. Compare the psalmist's sense of the motherly relation in his plea, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

II. DECLARES THAT THE RELATION SHALL BE KEPT UP TO THE END. Such an assurance is necessary, not because we fear any changeableness in God, but because we fear that the wilfulness and changeableness *in us* may grieve him, and lead him to remove his grace from us. The comfort of the promise of the text lies in the confidence it gives us that our waywardness will not outweary our God. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful."

III. INVOLVES GRACE SUFFICIENT FOR MAINTAINING THE RELATION. It is not a promise of grace *at* the end, but *unto* the end. All along the way we may be quite sure of adaptations of Divine grace such as may go into the words "carry," "bear," "deliver."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*God's call to exercise right reason.* "Show yourselves men." This is the language of irony. Worshippers of idols should have the courage of their convictions. They should not be such children as to confound the spiritual God with dumb, senseless idols, who can neither counsel nor save. "Remember this, that has often been told you, what senseless, helpless things idols are, and show yourselves men—men, and not brutes; men, and not babes. Act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest. Do a wise thing, do a brave thing, and scorn to disparage your own judgment, as you do when you worship idols" (Matthew Henry). The point presented for consideration is—that God is served by the diligent and faithful use of our faculties, and not by crushing them.

I. GOD IS BEST SERVED BY MAN AT HIS BEST. A very curious perversion of St. Paul's glorying in his infirmities is the notion, which prevails in some quarters, that the more ignorant, weak, and foolish we are, the better we can serve God's purposes. It is the universal truth that God works out his best purposes through the consecration of man's best and most cultured powers to his service. It is only the exception of Divine grace that God is pleased sometimes to use man's feebleness. Sometimes, indeed, it is so, that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God perfects praise;" and his so doing efficiently persuades us of the absolute sovereignty of Divine grace; but the normal law is that God shall be served by the best culture and the wisest use of just those powers and faculties which he has himself given us. Let babes be babes, and honour God with infant songs. Since we are *men*, it is the best-cultured and most fully matured manhood that we must lay upon his altar. When reproached by a mere sentimentalist that "God had no need of his learning," the cultured divine very wisely as well as smartly replied, "And he has as little need of your ignorance." We must be in every way the best possible for God, and this includes our *mental* best.

II. MAN AT HIS BEST IS BUT A SERVANT OF GOD. This conviction will keep him in his place, whatsoever his attainments may be. It is the constantly observed fact that fulness of learning and a genuine humility go together hand-in-hand. It is a "little knowledge" that puffeth up, a "little culture" that nourishes self-will. The things

we have in the household and family life, for daily use, need not be chipped, ugly, or inefficient things; they may be in the best shapes, and may be artistic in appearance, pleasant to the eye, without losing their practical usefulness. So we can be the truest, wisest, most cultured, most beautiful men and women, and yet keep in perfect simplicity the humility and the joy of our *service*.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The goodness of God's "pleasure."* "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." An anthropopathic expression. Care is necessary in transferring human sentiments and feelings to God. Words may come to be applied in such a way to men that they cannot be wisely used for God. A man's "pleasure" has come to stand for his mere "self-willedness," his unreasoning and often unreasonable "wishes." A man's "pleasure" is simply the thing that he "likes." In such senses we cannot properly apply such a word to God. In the text, the word "pleasure" is associated with the word "counsel," and the suggestion made is that the counsels of the infinite wisdom and goodness are such that God can find a personal pleasure in carrying them out. Just as he looked upon all his creation-work, called it good, and found pleasure in it, so he looks upon all the operations of his providence, for nations and individuals, and finds pleasure in watching them as they bear towards the final issue of universal good. It may be shown that every being finds its pleasure "after its kind," according to its nature; and we ought to have the utmost satisfaction in God's getting his pleasure because of what we know of him. His pleasure must be like him, worthy of him; and that is enough.

I. WHAT IS PLEASANT TO GOD MUST BE RIGHT. For men that is true which is expressed in the proverb, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Man finds his pleasure in that which is doubtful, and even in that which is wrong. But we have the most perfect confidence that God finds no pleasure in anything that is not through and through *right*. If he is well pleased, then we are sure that the thing is right. Indeed, so fixed is this relation between "God" and "right," that, for us, the right has come to be simply "God's will."

II. WHAT IS PLEASANT TO GOD MUST BE KIND. That is, it must have taken all due consideration of the well-being and the wishes of others; and it must involve a going out of God, as it were, beyond himself, to live in the feelings of others. The essence of pleasure is unselfish concern for others. And God may do all his "pleasure," because he proposes only that which secures our highest welfare. What may be spoken of as the highest pleasure God can know? We are assured that he has "no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his evil way and live." God's supreme pleasure is found in *redeeming*; in all that this most suggestive and comprehensive word involves. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Stout-heartedness.* "Ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness." Ezekiel has other terms. "For they are impudent children and stiff-hearted" (ii. 4); "For all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted" (iii. 7). The term "stout-hearted" expresses stubborn and confirmed opposition, rebelliousness, obduracy, a state of mind and heart that is beyond the influence of any gracious pleadings and persuasions. And such "stout-heartedness" involves the man's own self-willed exclusion from the "righteousness of God." The stout-hearted man gets far away from God, because he has no intentions of obedience to him. The plea of the text is sent to those exiles who were slow to believe in their deliverance through the agency of Cyrus; and it must be admitted that all the later information we have concerning Cyrus helps us to understand how unlikely a person he was for the carrying out of Jehovah's purposes. Not even yet have we sufficent information to permit our understanding the national circumstances and political pressure which, humanly speaking, led to the restoration. The plea of the text is full of force for all sinners who refuse to accept the offers of mercy and salvation which God has been pleased to make to them. The "stout-hearted" can even refuse God's mercy in Christ Jesus. But the refusal is rebellion and insult; and the stone that should be a foundation must prove a stone that falls and crushes. Matthew Henry regards these "stout-hearted" as "the unhumbled Jews, that have been long under the hammer, long in the furnace, but are not broken,

are not melted; that, like the unbelieving, murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think themselves far from God's righteousness (that is, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them), and by their distrusts set themselves at a yet further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief." A study of this state and condition of mind and feeling may follow along three lines.

I. STOUT-HEARTEDNESS AS A NATURAL DISPOSITION. There is a natural obstinacy, a self-willed tendency to object and to resist, which parental training ought to correct, lest it should get established as a bad bias for life. Severe child-chastisements only can check this evil.

II. STOUT-HEARTEDNESS AS A PRODUCT OF CIRCUMSTANCES. Illustrate from the distressed condition of exiles in Babylon, the long delay in Divine deliverance, etc. We can hardly wonder that some should say, "Why should we wait for God any longer?"

III. STOUT-HEARTEDNESS AS A RESULT OF ACTS OF WILFULNESS. Nothing is more morally injurious than for us to be successful in first transgressions and little sins, and so to become hardened and proud in our hearts.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*God's people are God's glory.* "For Israel my glory." He glories in them. He is glorified in them. He ought to be glorified in them. Some read the clauses from which the text is taken so as to throw out a different meaning: "And I appoint in Zion salvation, unto Israel (I give) my glory." God's glory is thus represented as connected with his salvation and his righteousness. God's glory is his faithfulness and his redemption. As we have so often the declaration of God's interest in Israel, his joy in her, and the honour he expects her to be to him, we take the simpler thought suggested by the English Version, and suggest such a homily as may be suitable for a week-night service or prayer-meeting. God's people are God's glory; they bring honour to him, as we see—

I. WHAT HE DOES FOR THEM. Illustrate from God's moving away all obstacles, and constraining unlikely agents to serve him in the restoring of the exiles to their loved city and country.

II. WHAT HE DOES IN THEM. By the very delay of his promise, and by his gracious sanctifyings, preparing them to get the very best moral and spiritual blessings out of their deliverance.

III. WHAT HE DOES WITH THEM. Making them a spectacle and a witness for himself, to their own age and the surrounding nations; and making the marvel of their story a testimony to his faithfulness and mercy to all ages, until the end of the world shall come.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Vers. 1—15.—A SONG OF TRIUMPH OVER THE FALL OF BABYLON. The song divides itself into four strophes, or stanzas—the first one of four verses (vers. 1—4); the second of three (vers. 5—7); the third of four (vers. 8—11); and the fourth also of four (vers. 12—15). The speaker is either Jehovah (see ver. 3, *ad fin.*) or "a chorus of celestial beings" (Cheyne), bent on expressing their sympathy with Israel.

Ver. 1.—**Come down, and sit in the dust;** *i.e.* "descend to the lowest depth of humiliation" (comp. ch. iii. 26 and Job ii. 8). **O virgin daughter of Babylon.** The "virgin daughter of Babylon" is the Babylonian *people* as distinct from the city (comp. ch. xxiii. 12). "Virgin" does not mean "unconquered;" for Babylon had been taken by the Assyrians some half-dozen times ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 58, 130, 149, 157, 164, 175, etc.). **Sit on the ground:** there is no throne; rather, *sit on the ground throneless*, or *without a throne*. Hitherto the "virgin daughter" had sat, as it were, on a throne, ruling the nations. Now she must sit on the ground—there was no throne left for her. It is the fact that Babylon was never, after her capture by Cyrus, the capital of a kingdom. Under the Achæmenian kings she was the residence of the court for a part of the year; but Susa was the capital. Under Alexander she was designated for his capital; but he died before his designs could be carried out. Under the Seleucidæ she rapidly dwindled in consequence, until she became a ruin.

Thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate; or, *delicate and luxurious* (Cheyne). Babylon had hitherto been one of the chief seats of Oriental luxury. She was "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (ch. xiii. 19), "the golden city" (ch. xiv. 4). She was given to revelry and feasting, to mirth and drunkenness, to a shameless licensed debauchery (Herod., i. 199; Baruch vi. 43). All this would now be changed. Her population would have to perform the hard duties laid upon them by foreign masters.

Ver. 2.—**Take the millstones, and grind meal.** Do the hard work commonly allotted to female slaves. Turn the heavy upper millstone all day long upon the nether one (comp. Exod. xi. 5). Babylon having been personified as a *female* captive, the details have to be in unison. **Uncover thy locks.** Babylonian women are represented in the Assyrian sculptures as wearing close-fitting caps upon their heads (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 500). **Make bare the leg . . . pass over the rivers.** On the way from their own city to the land of their captivity, they would have to wade through streams, and in so doing to expose parts of their persons which delicacy required to be concealed.

Ver. 3.—**I will not meet thee as a man**; literally, *I shall not meet a man*; i.e. "I shall not find any one to oppose me."

Ver. 4.—**As for our Redeemer, etc.** Mr. Cheyne suspects, with some reason, that this is "the marginal note of a sympathetic scribe, which has made its way by accident into the text." It is certainly quite unlike anything else in the song, which would artistically be improved by its removal. If, however, it be retained, we must regard it as a parenthetic ejaculation of the Jewish Church on hearing the first strophe of the song—the Church contrasting itself with Babylon, which has no one to stand up for it, whereas it has as "Redeemer the Lord of hosts, the Holy One of Israel."

Ver. 5.—**Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness.** The second strophe begins, like the first, with a double imperative. The fallen people is recommended to hide its shame in silence and darkness, as disgraced persons do who shrink from being seen by their fellows. **Thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.** Babylon can scarcely have borne this title in Isaiah's time, or at any earlier period, unless it were a *very* remote one. She had been secondary to Assyria for at least six hundred years when Isaiah wrote, and under Sennacherib was ruled by viceroys of his appointment. But Isaiah's prophetic foresight enables him to realize the later period of Babylon's prosperity and glory under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, when she became the inheritress of the greatness of Assyria, and exercised rule over a large portion of Western Asia. Nebuchadnezzar was, no doubt, as he is called by both Ezekiel (xxvi. 7) and Daniel (ii. 37), a "king of kings;" and Babylon was then an empress-state, exercising authority over many minor kingdoms. It is clear that, both in the earlier and the later chapters, the prophet realizes this condition of things (see ch. xiii. 19; xiv. 4—6, 12—17; as well as the present passage).

Ver. 6.—**I was wroth with my people** (comp. 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13—17). **I have polluted . . . and given**; rather, *I polluted and gave.* The reference is to the conquest of Judæa by Nebuchadnezzar. **Thou didst shew them no mercy.** We have very little *historical* knowledge of the general treatment of the Jewish exiles during the Captivity. A certain small number—Daniel and the Three Children—were advanced to positions of importance (Dan. i. 19; ii. 48, 49; iii. 30), and, on the whole, well treated. On the other hand, Jehoiachin underwent an imprisonment of thirty-seven years' duration (2 Kings xxv. 27). Mr. Cheyne says that "the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel do not suggest that the [bulk of the] exiles were great sufferers." This is, no doubt, true; and we may, perhaps, regard Isaiah's words in this place as sufficiently made good by the "cruelties which disfigured the first days of the Babylonian triumph" (Lam. iv. 16; v. 12; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17). Still, there may well have been a large amount of suffering among the rank-and-file of the captives, of which no historic record has come down to us. Ps. cxxxviii. reveals some of the bitter feelings of the exiles. **Upon the ancient**; rather, *upon the aged.* The author of Chronicles notes that Nebuchadnezzar, on taking Jerusalem, "had no compassion on young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age" (*l. s. c.*). There is no reason for giving the words of the present passage an allegorical meaning.

Ver. 7.—**And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever.** The idea of "continuance" is one of the primary instincts of human nature. Hence we regard it as certain that the sun will rise on the morrow. We expect things to "continue in one stay," and "to-morrow to be as to-day," if not even "more abundant." Babylon was not much more arrogant than other nations when she assumed that she would be "a lady for ever." And she had more excuse than almost any other nation. Her capital was one of the most ancient cities, if not *the* most ancient city in the world (Gen. x. 10;

xi. 1—9). **Though** not unconquered (see the comment on ver. 1), she had yet for two millennia or more maintained a prominent position among the chief peoples of the earth, and had finally risen to a prouder eminence than any that she had previously occupied. Still, she ought to have remembered that "all things come to an end," and to have so comported herself in the time of her prosperity as not to have provoked God to anger. **So that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart.** "These things" must refer to the calamities about to fall upon Babylon, of which she may have heard before the end came—since they had been prophesied so long previously—but which she did not take to heart. **The latter end of it**; *i.e.* "the probable issue of her pride and cruelty" (Kay).

Ver. 8.—**Therefore**; rather, *and now*. The third strophe begins here, but with a single, instead of a double, imperative. So also the fourth strophe in ver. 12. **Thou that art given to pleasures** (see the comment on ver. 1, *sub fin.*). **That dwellest carelessly**; or, *that sittest securely*; i.e. in an imagined security. Herodotus says that, when Cyrus invested the city, the inhabitants "made light of his siege" (i. 190), and occupied themselves "in dancing and revelry" (i. 191). The Nabonidus Tablet seems to show that very slight and insufficient preparations for defence were made. **I am, and none else beside me.** This is not self-deification, but only a boast of superiority to all other earthly powers. Zephaniah expresses in exactly similar terms the pride and arrogance of Assyria (ii. 15). **I shall not sit as a widow**; *i.e.* in solitude and desolation (Lam. i. 1), deserted by the crowds who had sought her marts and delighted in her luxury. This result, which now impended, had never been anticipated by the "careless" one, who had expected to be for ever "the lady of kingdoms." **The loss of children**; *i.e.* diminution of population.

Ver. 9.—**In a moment in one day.** The day of the capture of the city by Cyrus, which was the third of Marchesvan, B.C. 539. Then, "in a moment," Babylon lost the whole of her prestige, ceased to reign, ceased to be an independent power, became a "widow," had a portion of her population torn from her, was brought down to the dust. **Loss of children, and widowhood** came upon her **in their perfection**; *i.e.* "in the full extent of their bitterness" (Cheyne). Not that Cyrus imitated her common practice by carrying off her entire population; on the contrary, she continued for more than two centuries to be a flourishing and populous town. Twice she revolted from Darius Hystaspis ('Beh. Ins.,' col. i. par. 16; col. iii. par. 13), once, perhaps, from Xerxes (Ctes., 'Exc. Pers.,' § 22). Alexander the Great found her walls and her great buildings in ruins, but still she was a considerable place. Cyrus, however, no doubt, carried off a portion of her population, which thenceforth began to dwindle, and continually became less and less as time went on, until she sank into a solitude. That extreme desolation which the prophets paint in such vivid colours (ch. xii. 19—22; xiv. 22, 23; Jer. l. 10—15, 38—40; li. 36—43) was potentially contained in the capture by Cyrus, which was the work of a single day. **For the multitude of thy sorceries . . . of thine enchantments** (comp. ver. 13; and see also Dan. ii. 2; v. 7). The word here translated "sorceries" probably means "incantations" or "enchantments," while that translated "enchantments" means "spells." The addiction of the Babylonians to magic is largely attested by the classical writers, and has been proved beyond a doubt by the lately discovered native remains. By these it appears that their magic fell under three principal heads: (1) the preparation and use of spells and talismans, which were written forms engraved on stone or impressed on clay, and worn on the person or attached to the object on which their influence was to be exerted; (2) the composition and recitation of formulæ of incantation, which were supposed to act as charms, and to drive away demons and diseases; and (3) the taking of observations and framing of tables of prognostics and of omens for general use, together with the casting of horoscopes for the special advantage of individuals (see Rawlinson's 'Egypt and Babylon,' p. 58; and comp. Lenormant, 'La Magie chez les Chaldéens,' and Professor Sayce's papers in the 'Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæol.,' vol. iii. p. 145, *et seqq.*; vol. iv. p. 302, *et seqq.*). The first and second forms of magic are glanced at in the present passage; the third is noticed in ver. 13.

Ver. 10.—**Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness**; *i.e.* in thy incantations and spells, which were supposed to work in secret, and which could not be counteracted if their victim was not aware of them. **Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee.** The astronomical "wisdom and knowledge" of the Babylonians, confessed by the Greeks to have been the origin of their own astronomical knowledge (Plat., 'Epinomis,' p. 987; Hipparch. ap. Procl., 'In Tim.,' p. 71; Phœnix Coloph. ap. Athen., 'Deipnos.,' xii. p. 530, E.; Diod. Sic., ii. 31, etc.), led them on to that perversion of true science, astrology, which, when once entered upon, seduces the mind from all genuine and fruitful study of the celestial phenomena, and leads it into a labyrinth of absurdities

It also puffed them up, and made them regard themselves as altogether superior to other nations (see the comment on ver. 8, *sub fin.*).

Ver. 11.—**Therefore shall evil come upon thee.** Connect this with the first clause of ver. 10, "Thou hast trusted in thine own evil (moral), therefore shall evil (physical) fall upon thee." The same word, *ra'ah*, is used in both places. **Thou shalt not know from whence it riseth.** So the Vulgate, Vitringa, Gesenius, and Dr. Kay. But the bulk of modern commentators (Hitzig, Ewald, Delitzsch, Nagelsbach, Weir, Cheyne) render, "Thou wilt not know *how to charm it away*." Both meanings are possible, and are almost equally good; but the parallelism of the clauses is in favour of the latter rendering. *Shâkhrâh* should correspond in construction, as in sound, with *kapp'râh*. **To put it off**; literally, *to expiate;* i.e. to get rid of it by means of expiatory rites. **Which thou shalt not know**; or, *of which thou shalt not be aware.* (On the carelessness and want of foresight displayed by the Babylonians, see the comment on ver. 8.)

Ver. 12.—**Stand now.** The fourth and concluding strophe now begins; it opens, like the third, with a single imperative. It has, as Mr. Cheyne observes, "a strongly ironical tinge, reminding us of Elijah's language to the priests of Baal in 1 Kings xviii. 27." The irony is, however, confined to the first half (vers. 12, 13); giving place in vers. 14 and 15 to a scathing sentence of judgment and ruin. **Enchantments . . . sorceries**; rather, *spells . . . enchantments* (see the comment on ver. 9). **If so be, etc.**; rather, *perchance thou wilt be able to profit; perchance thou wilt cause terror.* The prophet gives a pretended encouragement to Israel's adversaries. "If Babylon uses all the resources of her magical art, perhaps she may succeed—who knows? Perhaps she may strike terror into the hearts of her assailants."

Ver. 13.—**Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels.** Mr. Cheyne's rendering is more intelligible, "Thou hast wearied thyself with the multitude of thy consultations." Those at the head of affairs had consulted the diviners of all classes, till they were utterly weary of so doing (compare the "consultations" of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar with such persons, Dan. ii. 2—11; v. 7, 8). Yet let one further effort be made. **Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up.** These are scarcely three classes of persons, but rather the same class under three designations: "astrologers" (literally, "dividers of the heavens"); "star-gazers," or observers of the stars; and "monthly prognosticators," or almanack-makers. The astronomy of the Babylonians consisted primarily in "dividing the heavens" into "houses," or constellations, and thus mapping them out in such a way that the infinite multiplicity, which at first baffles the beholder, might be grasped, reduced to order, and brought within the sphere of distinct cognizance. This work was an eminently useful one, and maintains its place in astronomy to the present day ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 573). After the heavens were mapped out, and the courses of the sun and moon through the "houses" laid down, "star-gazers" directed their attention mainly to sun, moon, and planets, noting eclipses, occultations, conjunctions, and the like. All this was legitimate science; but, finally, the greater part of the astronomers launched into astrology, and undertook to prognosticate events from the changing phenomena of the heavens. Almanacks were put forth, in which predictions were made, either specially for a particular year, or generally for all time, based upon astronomical considerations; and on these great dependence was placed. (For a specimen of such an almanack, see 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. pp. 158—161.)

Ver. 14.—**Behold, they shall be as stubble** (comp. ch. v. 24; xl. 24; xli. 2). A favourite metaphor with Isaiah for extreme weakness and incapacity of resistance. In ch. v. 24 it is connected, as here, with fire. No doubt in Palestine, as elsewhere, an accidental fire from time to time caught hold of a stubble-field, and speedily reduced it to a mass of blackened ashes. The threat here is that God's wrath shall similarly sweep over Babylon. **They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.** Mr. Cheyne translates, with much spirit, "They cannot *rescue their soul* from the *clutch* of the flame." Like those who are caught in the midst of a fire in a prairie or jungle, they have no escape—the flame is on all sides—and they cannot but perish. **There shall not be a coal to warm at**; rather, *it is not a charcoal-fire to warm one's self at.* A return to the sarcastic tone of vers. 12, 13. The conflagration which spreads around is something more than a fire to warm one's self at—it is an awful widespread devastation.

Ver. 15.—**Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured.** The foreigners who have participated in the toils and labours of Babylon shall share in her punishment. The flame of judgment shall not spare even them. **Even thy merchants.** Babylonian commerce is the subject of an important chapter in Heeren's 'Asiatic Nations' (vol. ii. pp. 190—260), and is discussed also in the present writer's

'Egypt and Babylon' (ch. viii. pp. 127—144). It was carried on both by land and sea, and was very extensive, including both a large import and a large export trade. Her merchants were, in part natives, in part foreigners. It is the latter who are here specially intended. Seeing the gradual closing in upon Babylon of the Persian armies, and anticipating the worst, they fly in haste from the doomed city, each one making for his own country, and having no thought of interposing to save the people which have so long encouraged and protected them. Probably the greater number of these foreign merchants were either Phœnicians or Arabians. **They shall wander every one to his quarter.** Not his own quarter of the town, but his own quarter of the earth; *i.e.* his own country (comp. ch. xiii. 14, "They shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land").

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The fall of ancient states a warning to modern ones.* History has been defined as "philosophy teaching by examples." It is only on the supposition that there are lessons to be learnt from them that historical inquiries or historical records can be regarded as of any value or importance. In a certain sense it is no doubt true to say that "history never repeats itself." The exact circumstances, even of those historical events which most nearly resemble each other, are always in many respects dissimilar. But the value and use of history lies in the fact that, speaking broadly, history does repeat itself. Its events, as Thucydides observes, recur—"the same, or nearly the same"—and will do so "while human nature remains what it is" (Thucyd., i. 22). Hence history teaches lessons, and among its most important lessons are those that it teaches to existing states or communities, by the example which it sets before them of the careers and ultimate fates of former states and communities, which existed under more or less similar circumstances. In most cases we have to speculate on the causes which produced the decline and fall of empires, kingdoms, countries; and thus our conclusions can seldom be more than probable conjectures on the subject. Still, they are often of a high value. But a very much higher value attaches to the instances when an inspired writer delivers to us the Divine view of the causes which brought about the fall of a nation; for here we stand on firm ground—we have a solid and assured basis upon which to rest; and we may draw out the lesson which the writer's words convey with a certainty that we shall not mislead or cause an unfounded alarm. Now, according to Isaiah, the downfall of Babylon was produced by four principal causes; and the lesson to be learnt from her fall is avoidance of four vices. The fall of Babylon warns states—

I. AGAINST LUXURY. Babylon was "given to pleasure" (ver. 8), was "tender and delicate" (ver. 1), or "delicate and luxurious." It is generally allowed that luxury saps the vigour of states, destroying the severer virtues of courage, manliness, and endurance, and at the same time producing a degeneracy of the physical nature, a loss of muscle, of tone, of fibre. It is, no doubt, difficult to draw the line, and to say what exactly constitutes luxury; but certain practices, common in most modern as well as in many ancient states, may be distinctly regarded as "luxurious." The worst and most fatal of these is unchastity. If the manhood of a nation indulges generally, or widely, in licentiousness, if purity in man is a rare thing, we may be sure that the national character and the national strength are being undermined. The vice of unchastity gnaws at the roots of a nation's vigour, and brings a premature decay. States should take such measures against it as they take against a pestilence. They should strive to keep it out. Having once admitted it, they should seek to stamp it out. If they cannot do this, if the vice is too deeply ingrained to be got rid of, then they must look out for speedy disaster, culminating in ruin. Another dangerous vice, likewise to be carefully guarded against, is intemperance. This, too, affects both body and soul, inflames and so exhausts the one, degrades and enfeebles the other. Of less account, but still coming under the head of luxury, and therefore to be avoided, are gluttony, sloth, effeminacy, over-refinement. Of such it may be said, "Hoc nigrum est; hoc tu, Romane, caveto."

II. AGAINST CRUELTY. Babylon "showed no mercy" (ver. 6); "upon the aged, very heavily she laid her yoke" (ver. 6). Cruelty has less direct tendency to weaken

a nation than luxury; but still it weakens in certain ways. It alienates the subject races towards whom it is shown. It exasperates foreign enemies, and causes a people to be hated even by those who have not themselves suffered at their hands. But its deleterious effect is probably, in the main, due to God's hatred of it. God abominates oppressors (ch. i. 21—24; iii. 12; v. 23, etc.), and takes care to punish them. "Woe to the oppressing city!" says God by Zephaniah (iii. 1); and again, by Nahum (iii. 1), "Woe to the bloody city!" "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth" (Jer. li. 25). God pours out his anger against the cruel and truculent, making them experience in their turn the sufferings they have caused to others (Jer. li. 24, 35, 36, etc.), and thus bringing them to destruction.

III. AGAINST PRIDE. Babylon thought that she was "a lady for ever" (ver. 7). She "said in her heart, I am, and none else beside me" (vers. 8, 10). She had such an overweening opinion of herself that she "dwelt carelessly" (ver. 8), despised her enemies, made slight preparation against them. Her pride, therefore, like her luxury, by its natural working, seriously diminished her strength for resistance, making her negligent and improvident. But it was also among the causes which especially called down God's judgment. "Pride," as we are told, "goeth before destruction" (Prov. xvi. 18), and nothing seems so to provoke the Divine vengeance. "By that sin fell the angels." God "brings down the high looks of the proud." "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (ch. ii. 11). When God brought low Assyria, the object was to "punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (ch. x. 12). When Babylon was chastised, it was "because she had been proud against the Lord—therefore were her young men slain in the streets, and all her men of war cut off" (Jer. l. 29, 30). Pride, therefore, is a vice especially to be eschewed by states, if they desire continuance, and would fain be "ladies for ever."

IV. AGAINST FOOLISH SUPERSTITION. There is a δεισιδαιμονία which is praiseworthy, rather than blamable, as was that of the Athenians (Acts xviii. 22, Revised Version). Babylon is not rebuked because she really venerated her gods, poor shadows of Divinity as they were. She is blamed because she superseded, or overlaid the worship of her gods with various meaner superstitions. Bereavement and widowhood came upon her "for the multitude of her sorceries, and for the great abundance of her enchantments" (ver. 9). It is addiction to magic which is especially "her wickedness" (ver. 10), in which she has "trusted;" and it is this wickedness, together with the other three vices already spoken of, that has caused the sentence of destruction to go forth against her. Modern states may well take the warning to heart. When religion is discredited, superstitions speedily usurp her place. Such monstrosities as Mormonism and spirit-rapping, which disgrace the nineteenth century, are superstitions as degrading as any to which the Babylonians gave way, and may well bring down a Divine judgment on the nations which encourage them or think lightly of them. Such superstitions certainly cannot "save" those who trust in them (ver. 13); but it is not so certain that they may not destroy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The fall of Babylon.* This is a scoffing song at the overthrow of Babylon. It is divided into four nearly equal stanzas. Luxury, ambition, and the practice of magic—the one sin worse than the others—were prevalent at Babylon. Each of these is lashed in the first three stanzas. There is a climax, the scorn of the prophet reaching its highest point in the last stanza (Ewald). Spiritually considered, the picture may represent the course of "this present world" in its godless pride.

I. BABYLON AS TYPICAL OF LUXURY. The city in ancient fancy is ever thought of as a woman—in all her beauty and glory, or in all her shame. The great city here appears as the haughty and luxurious courtesan. The just judgment has fallen upon her impurity. She is violently torn away from her life of softness and refinement, and reduced to the status of a common slave—has to ply the hard labour of grinding meal (Exod. xi. 5, 12; Job xxxi. 10). Or, like a captive stripped of all her finery, she has

to wade barefoot through streams. Every hidden shame will be exposed to the light of day. Only in Israel—as ch. xlii.—xlvi. have repeatedly proclaimed—is salvation to be found. These calamities of the proud city are in retribution for her sins—the just vengeance of an offended God.

II. BABYLON AS TYPICAL OF PRIDE AND AMBITION. This "daughter of the Chaldeans" is no longer to be termed "lady, or mistress, of kingdoms." When Jehovah was wroth with his people, and desecrated his heritage, giving them into her hands, she showed no pity, but laid a heavy yoke upon the aged, thinking in her heart, "I shall be mistress for ever." She did not consider the end, which has now come upon her. While Israel enjoys freedom, she must pass into the darkness of the prison-house (ch. xlii. 7, 22).

III. AS TYPICAL OF SUPERSTITION. In her carelessness and pride she has exalted herself above Jehovah (Zeph. ii. 15). She thinks she will never lose her protector, the Chaldean king; and her children, the stout burghers of the city. But sudden conquest will deprive her of both, and she will be as a widow, forlorn. Her third and inexcusable sin is superstition. Her wisdom and science have led her astray to a point of blinding self-conceit. But now an evil has come upon her which no incantations and spells can charm away—a mischief for which none of her rites can atone. Her false confidence has blinded her to the true faith in the eternal God (with vers. 10, 11, cf. ch. xlv. 18; xix. 11, etc.). And the result must be sudden and crushing ruin.

IV. BABYLON'S FALL AS TYPICAL OF THE WISDOM THAT IS BROUGHT TO NOUGHT. What can all her learned astrologers and magicians do for her now—they whose guidance has so long been followed (cf. ch. xlvi. 6, 7; xliv. 12; xliii. 23)? Let them stand by her in her need, those star-gazers and moon-gazers. But all are dumb, and, so far from helping, flee for their own safety from the fire—no gently warming hearth-fire (ch. xliv. 16), but one most horrible and devouring, from which there is no escape (ch. l. 11; xxxiii. 11—14; v. 24).

V. LESSONS. All the great sins are connected together as links in a chain. They are drawn as with a cart-rope. Sensuality and luxury bring pride and contempt in their train; and these, again, blindness and bewilderment of mind. And where no affliction nor humiliation have been known, there will be no sympathy nor pity towards others. Yet religion is ever a necessity to man; and, if the true religion be rejected, some counterfeit must take its place. The most foolish and the darkest superstitions flourish in such times. So it was again when Christianity was making its way in the decaying Roman world. True religion, rooted in humanity and the fear of God, and in light-loving intelligence, alone can deliver the nation and the individual.—J.

Ver. 13.—*Many counsellors.* "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels." The mind of man will seek counsel. For men everywhere, in the old Athenian groves and gardens, and in the fellowship of modern clubs and associations, will seek for "opinion" to guide and help them. They are so slow to trust alone to conscience and to God.

I. THE UNSATISFYING ORACLES. "Thou art wearied." You have tried them so *often* without results of guidance and good. All is vain. Men go here and there, but, alas! too often to those who are the most likely to fall in with their desires and whims. Like Absalom, men consult counsellors like Ahithophel, who pander to their folly. Then, when times of real emergency and anxiety come, when the poor tired heart needs rest and peace, it is led to new pleasures, new excitements and interests, until weariness ensues. How contrasted is the Christian's lot! "Commit thy way unto him."

II. THE MANIFOLD FAILURE. It is a failure all round. Think of the multitude of counsellors. Men go to a minister instead of to the Bible; or to a priest instead of to a Saviour; or to their passions instead of their conscience; or to man instead of to God. Humbly let us seek the heavenly guidance. "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."—W. M. S.

Ver. 6.—*What we owe to the aged.* "Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke." This wrong-doing is selected, out of all others, to point the reproaches of the prophet. If Babylon would do that, it was merciless enough to do anything. Hard, indeed, is the heart that will show no pity for old age, but will lay a heavy yoke on its shoulders. We may let this sentence suggest to us the light in which a Christian man

will look at age. What is its due? How shall we exhibit the temper our Master would approve in our bearing towards it?

I. THE CONSIDERATENESS WHICH IS DUE TO THE WEAK. Many passages from both Testaments invite our attention to the considerateness of the Divine Father, of the gracious Lord, to the weak, to the burdened, to the defenceless (see ch. xl. 11). To be patient and considerate in our relations with those whose power is reduced, and who are going back to the feebleness out of which they once came, is to be "the children of our Father who is in heaven," is to be "disciples indeed" of the great Exemplar.

II. THE RESPECT WHICH IS DUE TO THE EXPERIENCED. There are truths which nothing but experience seems able to teach. What evils might not be shunned, what sorrows escaped, what happiness and what usefulness secured, if we would but let the wisdom of the experienced direct our thoughts and guide our steps! They only who have sounded the waters of life can tell their depth; they only who have drunk of its many cups can tell us where the killing poison or where the curing medicine is to be found. Age, instructed by experience, has a wisdom which youth and maturity do well to reverence and to master.

III. THE GRATITUDE WHICH IS DUE TO THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED US. There are many aged men who have lived selfish lives, and to whom we owe no gratitude at all; but there are others who have toiled and suffered, not perfunctorily or of constraint, but freely and magnanimously,—to these far more is due than the pecuniary payment they may have received, and they will go to the grave unrecompensed if those who reap the fruits of their labours and trials do not render them the honour they have earned.

IV. THE SERVICE WE SHOULD RENDER TO THOSE WHO WILL SOON BE BEYOND OUR REACH. It is an affecting and constraining thought that there remain but a very few times more when we can do anything for one of our neighbours—that he will soon be where our hand cannot reach to rescue or to enrich him. The aged will soon be gone from amongst us. A few weeks or months will take them where no kindness of ours can make their path smoother, their heart happier, their character more noble. To them, most of all, applies the gracious sentiment—

> "Be kind to each other;
> The night's coming on,
> When friend and when brother,
> Perchance, will be gone."

1. Unkindness to the aged is peculiarly displeasing to God. 2. Considerateness and succour shown to the aged will draw down the special favour of Christ. They, too, are among the "little ones" whom it is at our peril that we "offend," to render whom the simplest act of love is to win a Saviour's blessing.—C.

Vers. 7—11.—*Spiritual infatuation.* This is a striking picture of infatuation. We note—

I. ITS ESSENTIAL NATURE. Under the perverting influence of sin men come into a mental and spiritual condition in which everything is strange, unnatural, distorted. Something has "perverted" them (ver. 10). It is a condition in which things seem to them other than they are—in which they fail to discern what ought to be quite palpable to them, in which they are subject to unhappy and hurtful delusions. Knowledge does not instruct them, facts do not affect them, reasons do not convince them, truth does not enlighten them. They are duped by semblances, betrayed by errors, ruined by the falsehoods which they entertain and cherish.

II. THE FORMS WHICH IT ASSUMES. 1. An extravagant and offensive *egotism.* "Thou sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me." It is a very common effect of sin to produce in men a sense of their own importance carried to a painfully high degree; they think and feel as if their present interests were the only things to be consulted. Everything else must make way, every one else must give way to them; *their* comfort, *their* advantage, absorbs all other considerations whatever. None else beside them is of any account. 2. A blind *disregard of the future.* "Neither didst remember the latter end of it." Many men regulate their lives as if they would always remain as strong and healthy as they are to-day. Many indulge in courses which tend to weakness or to dishonour, or even to utter ruin, without concerning themselves as to the goal toward

which they are travelling. They know that death is in front of them, that judgment awaits them; but they do not "lay it to heart"—they remember not "the latter end of it." 3. An *overweening estimate of their own power.* "I shall be a lady for ever. . . . I shall not sit as a widow." Men "say in their heart," "Other men have made great mistakes, but I shall avoid them; other men have suffered in their circumstances or in their health, but I shall escape; on other men judgment and penalty have fallen, but I know how to avert the blow," etc. They imagine themselves to be possessed of an ingenuity, a sagacity, a power of defeating the operation of penal laws, which does not belong to them. No one else credits them with this extraordinary faculty; everybody else is convinced that they will be bitterly undeceived: they are infatuated by their sinful folly. 4. A belief in the excellency of *animal enjoyment.* They are "given to pleasures" (ver. 8). One of the infatuations of sin is that sensuous delights will satisfy a human soul. It is a complete delusion. As men yield to the temptations of the flesh they find that pleasure lessens as the craving grows: they eat, but are hungry still; they drink, but are thirsty as before. The lower gratifications do not fill the heart which God created for himself and for his service and friendship. 5. A *fatuous infidelity.* "None seeeth me" (ver. 10).

III. ITS INEVITABLE DOOM. "Therefore shall evil come upon thee," etc. (ver. 11). The doom of spiritual infatuation is: 1. *Sometimes sudden.* "Desolation comes suddenly;" when men are saying, "Peace, peace," then sudden destruction. 2. *Often mysterious.* Men do "not know whence it ariseth." Concealed beneath the surface are the seeds of sorrow and of death; they are invisible, but they are there. 3. *Always inevitable.* Men are "not able to put it off." Wealth cannot purchase its departure; authority cannot order it away; ingenuity cannot escape its power. A voice which none may disregard or disobey will be heard exclaiming, "Get thee into darkness" (ver. 5).—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Humiliation the Divine judgment on pride.* The point here, according to some, is that Babylon loudly boasted about her never having been captured; so she called herself, and was called, a "virgin" city. The figure suggests all the delicacy, all the luxuriousness, all the pride, of the Eastern princess. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." The humiliation of Babylon is presented in precise accordance with the circumstances and sentiments of a grand and proud princess. The hands that were never soiled shall do menial work; the lady who sat in state, in her lovely boudoir, shall sit on the ground and work the household handmill; she who walked alone, attended by her maids, shall be tied to a group of captives, and dragged to foreign slavery; and the delicate dame who had been royally clothed and modestly veiled shall be exposed to the jests and sneers and rude gaze of rough and brutal men. It is a picture of crushing judgments, such as must surely, sooner or later, overtake proud persons, proud cities, and proud nations. God works by humblings, as well as by actual sufferings. The force of the picture presented here lies in the command to the exquisite princess to "take the millstones, and grind meal." This was the most servile form of female labour, and those engaged in it are often squalid and half-clad. Poor blind people go from house to house to grind, and thus earn a pittance. The indignity expressed in the command to "uncover thy locks" can only be understood as it is known that Jewish women are not permitted to show their hair after marriage, and their head-dress is so contrived as completely to conceal the hair. The expression, "pass over the rivers," alludes to the demand to wade the streams as the humiliated princess journeys to the place of her captivity. Illustrate—

I. THE HUMILIATION OF PROUD NATIONS. Such striking cases may be dealt with as the ruin of commercial Tyre; the dismantling of strong and gorgeous Babylon; the overthrow of imperial Rome; the discomfiture of Xerxes and his immense army; the prostration of Napoleonic France. Bushnell has a fine argument for the dignity of human nature as shown by its ruins, and he illustrates by references to the utter desolation and ruin of what were once the great cities of great nations.

II. THE HUMILIATION OF PROUD CLASSES. The calamities of war, famine, pestilence, trade depression, most quickly and grievously affect them, because of the thousandfold fictitious wants which their pride creates. There are no miserable creatures so miserable as those who are born to riches, and, having none or losing all, are left in their helplessness.

III. THE HUMILIATION OF PROUD INDIVIDUALS. Show the various shapes it takes in this life, and illustrate from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the certainty and hopelessness of it in the next life. Of this we may be quite sure—God has *woe* in store, in this life and in the next, for all the proud.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Doing God's work unworthily.* "Thou didst not show them compassion." God had entrusted Babylon with the work of executing his Divine judgments on his people. The work was done, but God could not approve of the way in which it was done. Compare, for illustrative purposes, the cases of King Saul and of Jehu. Saul was made executioner of the Divine judgment on Amalek, but God could not approve of his work: he erred on the side of laxity. Jehu was made executioner of the Divine judgment on the house of Ahab, but God could not approve of his work: he erred on the side of severity. The complaint God makes against Babylon is that it had "shown no mercy," and one specific instance is given—there had been no considerateness shown towards the *aged* among the captives; even "upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke." Even the old people were made to do the tasks of bond-slaves. "They respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders" (Lam. iv. 16); "Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured" (Lam. v. 12); "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction" (Zech. i. 15). "The writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel do not suggest that the Jewish exiles were great sufferers. Perhaps the prophet may refer to the cruelties which disfigured the first days of the Babylonian triumph; or possibly the conduct of the Babylonians varied, according to the flexibility and submissiveness of the conquered" (Cheyne). The general topic suggested is that God's work entrusted to us becomes a Divine agency for the searching and testing of our characters. God will be sure to take account, not only of the fact that we have *done* the work, but also of the *spirit* and the *manner* in which we have done it. No parent can be satisfied with obedience that is a mere act. God watches the character of our obedience. It may be shown that we do God's work unworthily, and come under his reproof, when we—

I. DO IT TO SERVE SELFISH ENDS. This spoils all obedience. The motive in it is wrong. But how searching it would be to us all to try and read our actions in the light of the motives that prompted them! Babylon served itself, so it can expect no approval or acceptance from God.

II. DO IT OTHERWISE THAN AS GOD WISHES. For he who properly takes up a work for God keeps himself open to Divine leadings and teachings as to the way in which it should be carried out. We often err by taking up work, and then severing ourselves from any close and daily dependence on God in the doing of it.

III. DO IT WITHOUT DUE CONSIDERATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS. Here the reproach is that no "mercy" was shown. God's judgments are always considerate in their applications; they are mercy-tempered; they take due account of "remnants" and "faithful few." In this man almost always fails, and so he does not represent or honour God even in his work for him.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Due regard to consequences.* "Neither didst remember the latter end of it." The experiences of mankind have brought the conviction that moral laws are always and uniformly working, as surely as physical laws. Wrong universally leads on to ruin. Whatsoever a man sows he reaps. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." This is all so certain that, if any man proposes to take any particular course in life, he may duly consider the "latter end of it"—he may estimate it in the light of that "latter end." He is foolish indeed if he does not take into account final issues and results. And yet this is precisely what men usually fail to do. The thief takes no account of the prison; the forger of penal servitude; or the murderer of the gallows. The proud will not see the certainty of life-humblings, or the violent the evil which the bitterness of the crushed and insulted will bring upon them. If we asked ourselves, before entering on self-willed courses, Where shall we be, what shall we be, ten years hence? we should hesitate and step back. Babylon enjoyed pride, and refused to see any consequences resulting from high-handedness and defiance of God and cruelty to man. But if the Nemesis moves slowly, it moves surely; its tread is firm, its advance is

certain. The "lady for ever," in her own vain imaginations, sits down at last a desolate captive, a humbled, childless widow, the most helpless and miserable creature that Eastern imagination can conceive (vers. 8, 9). "The guilt of Babylon is intensified by her reckless arrogance. She presumed that the colossus of her power would never be broken, forgetting the danger of provoking the God of gods."

I. CONSEQUENCES HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THE CHARACTER OF THE COURSES WE CHOOSE. We may be hurried into acts and scenes of life by excitement and passions; we may be deluded by the mere appearances of things as they pass. We only know what things really are as we sit down quietly and count up their issues, see them working out their results. We know sensuality thus; for he that soweth to it reaps corruption. We know frivolity thus; for it works out into a wretched unfitness for all the solemn scenes and responsibilities that must come to us all. We know pride thus, when we see it driving from us all who could render us service of love, and leaving us to suffer and die in the hands of the hireling.

II. CONSEQUENCES SHOULD WARN US FROM EVIL COURSES. The drunkard should run from the cup, at the bottom of which lies the awful picture of the drunkard's body, the drunkard's mind, the drunkard's home, the drunkard's hell. And so of other deceitful sins and lusts. Alas! that men will not "consider their ways" in the light of their "latter end"!—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Man's helplessness in presence of Divine calamities.* The point impressed is that disaster takes unexpected and overwhelming forms, against which the wisest man fails to take precautions. Man can only affect the smallest of circumstances that are put into his control, and the few persons who are under his immediate influence. But each one of us belongs to a great whole, and is affected by great forces, which God alone controls. We are carried whither we would not. We are borne down by evils which we seem to have done nothing to create. We are helpless before the hurricanes and earthquakes and pestilences with which God can smite. After illustrating and impressing this point, show how we ought to stand to the Divine order. We may so stand that no event arranged by the Divine wisdom can take shape for us as *calamity*.

I. WE MAY STRIVE TO BE FREE OF THE DIVINE ORDER.

II. WE MAY RESIST THE DIVINE ORDER.

III. WE MAY PUT OURSELVES IN HARMONY WITH THE DIVINE ORDER. That involves our fitting our will to the Divine will; and that self-seeking man will never do until he is "humbled under God's mighty hand."—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The weariness of self-service.* "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels." Babylon was trusting self, trying to find its own way out of calamities; and it was proving what weary, hopeless work that always is. Astrology was the final resource of the despairing Babylonians.

I. THE WEARINESS OF VARIETY. A vain searching for some new device. A restless dissatisfaction with everything.

II. THE WEARINESS OF MULTIPLICITY. Bewildered with the many helpers, who yet were all vain helpers. Multitude is suggested by the different terms, "astrologers, star-gazers, monthly prognosticators." Illustrate by the weariness of Athens, in her multiplicity of idols and altars.

III. THE WEARINESS OF REPEATED FAILURES. Nothing is more depressing than to fail again and again. Yet precisely this is the ever-repeated consequence of self-trust and self-help. Blessed is it when weariness does not pass into despair, but leads to the abandonment of self-reliances, that full trust may be placed in God.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The present chapter, which terminates the second section of Isaiah's later prophecies, consists of a long address by God to his people, partly in the way of complaint, partly of combined promise and exhortation. The address is divided into three portions, each commencing with a call on Israel to pay attention: Vers. 1—

11, "Hear ye this," etc.; vers. 12—15, "Hearken unto me," etc.; vers. 16—22, "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this," etc.

Vers. 1—11.—THE FIRST ADDRESS consists mainly of expostulation and complaint. Israel has not called on God "in truth and righteousness" (ver. 1). They have had "necks of iron" and "brows of brass" (ver. 4). God has given them prophecies of different kinds (vers. 3—7); yet they have neither "heard" nor "known;" they have "dealt treacherously" and been "transgressors from the womb" (ver. 8). God might justly have "cut them off" for their rebellion, but he has "deferred his anger," and "refrained" himself—not, however, for Israel's sake, but for his own honour.

Ver. 1.—**Jacob . . . Israel** (comp. ch. xl. 27; xli. 8, 14; xliii. 1, 22; xliv. 1, etc.). "Jacob" is the natural and secular designation; "Israel" is a spiritual or covenant name (Cheyne). Both terms being appropriate to the ten tribes no less than to the two, and the present address being intended especially for the Jewish captives, a further designation is appended—**which are come forth out of the waters of Judah** (comp. Ps. lxviii. 26, "Ye that are of the fountain of Israel," marginal rendering). **Which swear by the Name of the Lord.** Swearing "by the Name of the Lord" is an evidence of true religion, to a certain extent (Deut. vi. 13; x. 20). It indicates that there has been, at any rate, no open apostasy. Still, it does not necessarily prove more than this, and, in the present case, it scarcely showed anything beyond mere outward formal conformity. The bulk of the captives "swore by the Name of Jehovah, and made mention of the God of Israel" (comp. Josh. xxiii. 7), but did so **not in truth, nor in righteousness**; *i.e.* "without their state of mind or mode of action corresponding to their confession, so as to prove that it was sincerely and seriously meant" (Delitzsch). The condition of the majority of the exiles was that expressed in the words, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but in their hearts are far from me" (Matt. xv. 8).

Ver. 2.—**For they call themselves of the holy city.** It is an indication of their real want of truth and righteousness, that they lay such stress upon what is so entirely outward and formal, as the fact of their belonging to "the holy city," Jerusalem. Compare the boast of the Jews in our Lord's time, "We be Abraham's seed" (John viii. 33). **Stay themselves upon the God of Israel.** Not resting upon him in real faith and true humble dependence, as those Israelites who are mentioned in ch. x. 20, but trusting to the facts that they were "Israel," and that God was "the God of Israel," and therefore bound to protect them. God reminds them that, if he is "the God of Israel," he is also "the Lord of hosts"—a term, as Dr. Kay notes, especially connected with the holiness of God.

Ver. 3.—**I have declared the former things from the beginning** (comp. ch. xli. 26; xliii. 9, 10; xliv. 7, 8, etc.). "Former things" are here contrasted with the "new things" of ver. 6. Two cycles of prophecy seem to be intended—one of comparatively ancient date, the other quite fresh—both equally showing forth the power of God and his infinite superiority to the idols. It is difficult to determine what the two cycles of prophecy are. Delitzsch suggests that "the former things are the events experienced by the people from the very earliest times down to the times of Cyrus," while "the new things embrace the redemption of Israel from Babylon, the glorification of the people in the midst of a world of nations converted to the God of Israel, and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth." Dr. Kay thinks that the "former things" are those mentioned in the prophecies concerning Babylon generally, the "new things those about to be announced in ch. xlix.—lvi. **I did them suddenly**; rather, *suddenly I wrought.*

Ver. 4.—**I knew that thou art obstinate**; literally, *hard*, or *stiff*—the adjective used in the phrase translated in our version "stiff-necked." The idea is still more forcibly expressed in the following clause—**thy neck is an iron sinew**; or rather, *a band of iron*, as stiff as if it were made of the hardest metal. **And thy brow brass.** The exact simile here used does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. It seems to be the origin of our expressions, "brazen," "brazen-faced," "to brazen a thing out." The forehead may be hardened for a good or for a bad purpose; in obstinacy or in a determination to resist evil (comp. ch. i. 7 and Ezek. iii. 8 with Jer. v. 3; Ezek. iii. 7; Zech. vii. 12). Here the hardening is evil, marking defiance and self-will.

Ver. 5.—**I have even from the beginning declared it** (comp. ver. 3). The declaration here made is that God rendered his prophecies more than ordinarily marvellous on account of Israel's obstinacy, not punishing them for it, but seeking graciously and lovingly to overcome it by adding to the weight of the evidence to which he would fain have had it yield. Had his prophecies been less astonishing, had they in a less degree transcended ordinary human experience, Israel might conceivably have ascribed them and the accomplishment of them to

the false gods. **As it was, this was barely possible. Mine idol . . . my molten image.** It has been already observed (see the comment on ch. xl. 18) that there was a strong tendency to idolatry among the Jews, not only before, but during the Captivity. Ezekiel says that those among whom he lived were "polluted after the manner of their fathers, and committed whoredom after their abominations; made their sons pass through the fire, and polluted themselves with *all their idols*" (xx. 30, 31); nay, went so far as to declare boldly, "We will be as the heathen, as the inhabitants of the countries, to *serve wood and stone*" (xx. 32). The "prevailing tendency," as Delitzsch remarks, was "to combine the worship of Jehovah with heathenism, or else to exchange the former altogether for the latter." We cannot conclude anything concerning the mass of the community from the character of those who returned. Those who returned were the sincere worshippers of Jehovah—the irreligious did not care to return. It is always to be borne in mind that it was "the great mass even of Judah," no less than of Israel, that "remained behind" (Delitzsch); and these "became absorbed into the heathen, to whom they became more and more assimilated" (ibid.). **Hath commanded them;** *i.e.* "hath caused them (the events) to take place" (comp. Ps. xxxiii. 9).

Ver. 6.—**Thou hast heard, see all this;** rather, *thou didst hear, (now) see it all*; i.e. see all the prophecies now fulfilled, which thou heardest in days gone by. **Will ye not declare it?** Will ye not for very shame make known generally the accordance between the prophecies and the events, which you cannot fail to see? Will ye not become "my witnesses" (ch. xliii. 10), and turn away from your idols? **I have showed thee;** rather, *I show thee;* i.e. "I am about to show thee **from this time new things, even hidden things,** which thou knewest not"—things belonging to the new cycle of prophecy, not previously announced, but reserved for the present crisis (see the comment on ver. 3). On the whole, the language used seems most consonant with the view of Dr. Kay, that the "new things" are those about to be revealed in the next section of the prophecy (ch. xlix.—liii.), things belonging to the coming of Christ, and the "new creation" which it will be the great object of his coming to bring about.

Ver. 7.—**They are created now.** The revelation to man of what has lain secret in God's counsels from all eternity is a sort of creation. As Nägelbach well says, it converts the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος into a λόγος προφορικός, and therefore is one step towards actual accomplishment. The mystery of "the Servant of the Lord," and of atonement and salvation through him, had hitherto been hid away—"hid in God" (Eph. iii. 9), and was now for the first time to be made known to such as had "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" by the teaching of the evangelical prophet. **Even before the day when thou heardest them not;** rather, *and before to-day thou heardest them not.* Whatever shadows of evangelic truth are discernible in the Law and in the earlier psalms, they did not constitute a revelation of the way of salvation at all comparable to that contained in Isaiah's later chapters. **Lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.** If the "new things" of Isaiah's prophecy had been revealed many centuries before, they would not have impressed the Jews of Isaiah's time, or even of the Captivity period, as they did by having been reserved to a comparatively late date. They would have seemed to most of them an old and trite story.

Ver. 8.—**Thou heardest not . . . thou knewest not.** Again we seem to hear the voice of complaint, as in vers. 1, 2, 4. Israel had not "ears to hear" to any purpose such highly spiritual truths as those of the coming section. They had not profited by what was taught concerning Christ in the Law and the Psalms. **From that time that thine ear was not opened;** rather, *from that time thine ear hath not been open.* "From that time" means "from of old," or "from the beginning."

Ver. 9.—**For my Name's sake will I defer mine anger.** Israel's insincerity (ver. 1), obstinacy (ver. 4), addiction to idols (ver. 5), blindness (ver. 8), and general resistance to God's will (ver. 8), could not but have provoked God's "anger." He will, however, "defer" it, "refrain" himself, not "cut Israel off," "*for his Name's sake.*" God, having selected one nation out of all the nations of the earth to be his "peculiar people" (Deut. xiv. 2), and having declared this, and supported his people by miracles in their struggles with the other nations and peoples, was, so to speak, committed to protect and defend Israel "for his Name's sake," lest his Name should be blasphemed among the Gentiles (see Exod. xxxii. 12; Numb. xiv. 13; Deut. ix. 28; Ps. lxxix. 10; cvi. 8, etc.). He was also bound by the promises which he had made; and, still more, by the position which Israel occupied in his scheme of salvation, to allow the nation still to exist, and therefore to condone its iniquities and restrain his anger. But the dregs of the cup of vengeance were poured out at last.

Ver. 10.—**I have refined thee, but not with silver;** rather, *but not as silver* (Cheyne),

or, *but not in the manner of silver* (Delitzsch); *i.e.* not with the severity with which silver is refined (see Ps. xii. 6). **I have chosen thee**; rather, *I have tested thee.* The **furnace of affliction** is here the Babylonian captivity. The object of the Captivity was to "test" and "refine," or purify God's people to a certain extent—not with extreme severity, but in such sort as to fit them to "bear his Name before the Gentiles" for another five hundred years.

Ver. 11.—**How should** my Name **be polluted?** *i.e.* how should I allow of its pollution or desecration (see the comment on ver. 9)? **I will not give my glory unto another** (comp. ch. xlii. 8). God would have ceded his glory to some god of the nations, had he under existing circumstances forsaken Israel.

Vers. 12—15.—THE SECOND ADDRESS. The tone of complaint is now dropped. Israel is invited to reflect seriously on the chief points urged in the preceding chapters. (1) Their near relation to Jehovah (ver. 12); (2) Jehovah's eternity and omnipotence (vers. 12, 13); (3) the superiority of Jehovah to the gods of the nations, as shown by his prophetic power (ver. 14); and (4) the near approach of deliverance by Cyrus (vers. 14, 15).

Ver. 12.—**O Jacob and Israel** (comp. ch. xl. 27; xli. 8, 14; xliii. 1, 22; xliv. 1, 21; xlvi. 3; xlviii. 1). The figure is used which rhetoricians call *hendiadys.* The two names designate one and the same object. **My called.** "Called" and "chosen" from of old, out of all the nations of the earth (comp. ch. xli. 9; xliv. 1, 2, etc.); therefore bound to "hear" and to attend. Still more bound, considering who it is by whom they have been called—I AM HE—*i.e.* "I am the absolute and eternally unchangeable One, the Alpha and Omega of all history" (Delitzsch). **The First, and also the Last,** "*from* whom and *to* whom are all things" (Rom. xi. 36).

Ver. 13.—**Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth** (comp. ch. xl. 12, 22, 26, 28; xlii. 5; xliv. 24; xlv. 12, 18). As the Maker of heaven and earth, God is entitled to the attention and obedience of all the dwellers in heaven and earth. **My right hand hath spanned the heavens**; *i.e.* measured them, as with a span (ch. xli. 12)—fixed their limits and dimensions. **When I call unto them, they stand up together** (comp. ch. xl. 26). Heaven and earth, and all things that are in them, except man, are prompt to perform God's will, and rise up at once at his call to show their readiness. The metaphor is drawn from the conduct of intelligent agents.

Ver. 14.—**All ye, assemble yourselves.** "Once more the nations are challenged to say which of their deities has foretold the work that the Lord has willed to perform on Babylon" (Kay) (see above, ch. xliii. 9). If none has done so, will not Israel see and acknowledge the superiority of Jehovah to such blind deities? **The Lord hath loved him.** It had not been previously declared in so many words that Jehovah "loved" Cyrus; but it had been sufficiently indicated by the way in which he was spoken of in ch. xliv. 28 and xlv. 1—5. God "loves" all who "in an honest and good heart" seek according to their lights to do his will and servo him faithfully. Nebuchadnezzar is called his "servant" (Jer. xxv. 9; xxvii. 6; Ezek. xxix. 18, 20), Cyrus (in ch. xlv. 1) his "anointed." It is but going one step further to call the latter his "loved one." **He will do his pleasure**; *i.e.* "God's pleasure," not his own (see ch. xliv. 28). **His arm shall be on the Chaldeans.** The Hebrew is very harsh, and perhaps requires emendation; but the meaning can scarcely be other than that expressed in our version.

Ver. 15.—**I have called him** (comp. ch. xlvi. 11, "*Calling* a ravenous bird from the east"). Cyrus is represented as raised up by God, "called" by him, and commissioned by him "to do all his pleasure." God has **brought him** on his way, and **made that way prosperous.** According to the account of Herodotus, Cyrus received no check of any kind until the last expedition, in which he lost his life. His "prosperity" was beyond that of almost any other commander.

Vers. 16—22.—THE THIRD ADDRESS. Israel is reminded of God's merciful teaching and leading in the past (vers. 16, 17); expostulated with on their disobedience (vers. 18, 19); exhorted to go forth boldly and joyfully from Babylon (vers. 20, 21); and finally warned that God's blessings—even such a blessing as deliverance—are no blessings to any but the righteous (ver. 22).

Ver. 16.—**I have not spoken in secret from the beginning.** God, "from the beginning," *i.e.* from his first dealings with Israel, had raised up a succession of prophets, who had declared his will, not "in secret," or ambiguously, but openly and plainly, so that all who heard might understand (comp. ch xlv. 19, and see the comment *ad loc.*). **From the time that it was, there am I**; *i.e.* "from the time that the earth was, there (in the succession of my prophetic messengers) was I." It was I who spake by their mouth, and thus announced my will publicly. **And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath**

sent me. Dr. Kay supposes that "one Divine Personage is here sent by another" —the Second Person of the Holy Trinity by the First and by the Third; but it is against the analogy of faith that the Third Person should send the Second. Probably Mr. Cheyne is right in suggesting that "here a fresh speaker is introduced," and also right in his supposition that the fresh speaker is "the prophet himself," who tells us that he is now carrying on the goodly succession which has been "from the beginning," and is sent to deliver his message by God (the Father) and his (Holy) Spirit. On the tendency of Isaiah to "hypostatize" the Spirit of God, see the comment on ch. xl. 13; and compare Mr. Cheyne's note on the same passage ('Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. i. p. 243).

Ver. 17.—**The Lord . . . which teacheth thee to profit.** God's teachings are all directed to the "profit" of those to whom they are addressed; and, if received in a proper spirit, actually "profit" them more than anything else can do. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable*" (2 Tim. iii. 16). Very profitable also are the teachings of God's providence, which chasten men, warn men, and tend to keep men in the right path.

Ver. 18.—**Oh that thou hadst hearkened!** (comp. Ps. lxxxi. 13—16, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries," etc.) Some render, "Oh that thou wouldst hearken!" etc., on the analogy of ch. lxiv. 1; but unnecessarily. Dr. Kay says that God "upbraideth not," referring to Jas. i. 5. But he may expostulate. What is it but expostulation, when our Lord says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28)? To look back on the past, and see what we have missed, is a good lesson for the future. **Then had thy peace been as a river**; literally, *as the river* (i.e. the Euphrates), abounding, overflowing, continuous. **Thy righteousness.** Not "thy prosperity" (Cheyne), but "thy good deeds." If Israel had clung to God, then God's blessing would have been poured upon them, and have enabled them to bring forth abundant fruits of righteousness. **As the waves of the sea**; *i.e.* innumerable and unceasing.

Ver. 19.—**Thy seed also had been as the sand.** Israel, at the close of the Captivity, was "a remnant" (ch. xxxvii. 31), a "very small remnant" (ch. i. 9); the ten tribes were for the most part absorbed into the heathen among whom they had been scattered; the two tribes had dwindled in number through the hardships of the Captivity, and were scarcely more than a "handful." Less than fifty thousand returned with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 64); less than two thousand males with Ezra (Ezra viii. 2—20). Had Israel not been disobedient, the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have been literally fulfilled, and the descendants of Abraham would have been millions upon millions, instead of being one or two hundred thousand. **The offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof**; rather, *like the grains thereof*; i.e. the grains of the sand. **His name**; *i.e.* "Israel's name." **Should not have been cut off.** Israel's name had not been *wholly* "cut off" or "destroyed." But it had been approximately "cut off." Israel was no more a people, but only a horde of slaves. The restoration to Palestine was a resurrection—the re-creation of a nation which, humanly speaking, had ceased to be.

Ver. 20.—**Go ye forth of Babylon.** A sudden transition from expostulation to exhortation. It might have seemed that no exhortation would be needed; that, as soon as the prison-doors were set open, there would be a general rush to escape. But, when the time came, it was not so. Those only availed themselves of the edict of Cyrus "whose spirit God had raised to go up and build his house" (Ezra i. 5). The wealthier classes, Josephus tells us ('Ant. Jud.,' xi. 1), remained. The *very* poor, it is probable, *could* not leave. Motives of various kinds detained others. The result was that probably a larger number elected to continue in the country than to return to Palestine. Hence the exhortation to "go forth from Babylon and flee from the Chaldeans" was far from being superfluous. **Flee ye from the Chaldeans.** Not "flee before them" (see ch. lii. 12), as enemies to be feared; but quit them hastily, as corrupters to be avoided. **With a voice of singing**; rather, *with a voice of shouting* (Delitzsch), or *with a ringing cry* (Cheyne). The cry was to reach even to **the end of the earth.** All the nations were to be informed of the great event, in which they might not *feel*, but in which they *were*, deeply interested—the deliverance of Israel out of Babylon, which was "the prelude of, and a preparation for, the world's redemption" (Kay).

Ver. 21.—**They thirsted not** (comp. ch. xliii. 19, and the comment *ad loc.*). The literal meaning is not to be altogether excluded. We have no historical account of the journey made by the bulk of the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel; but

they must almost certainly have experienced difficulties with respect to water; and it is quite possible that a miraculous supply was vouchsafed to them. Most commentators, however, are content to explain both this and the earlier passage as merely "symbolical." The Israelites—they say—had spiritual refreshment on their homeward journey, by God's goodness, constantly.

Ver. 22.—**There is no peace, etc.** This warning phrase occurs again, "in the manner of a refrain" (Cheyne), at the close of what most commentators regard as the second section of this portion of Isaiah's work (ch. lvii. 21). The third section closes with a still more solemn warning (ch. lxvi. 24).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Swearing by the Name of God.* Our Lord's injunction to his disciples is "Swear not at all;" and in a community where all were true Christians, swearing would be superfluous, and the injunction might be carried out to the letter. But in imperfect conditions of society, such as the old covenant contemplated, and such as alone exist under the new, "swearing by the Name of God" cannot be dispensed with. Life and property would be greatly endangered were courts of justice to decide causes on the unsworn evidence of witnesses, the majority of whom might have a very slight regard for truth. "Swearing by the Name of God" is thus lawful—

I. WHEN A WITNESS IS CALLED UPON TO DO SO IN A COURT OF JUSTICE. The Christian Church in all its branches has always allowed and approved of oaths being taken in courts of justice. Only a few sectaries have from time to time so strained our Lord's words as to consider them prohibitive of oaths of this kind. Such persons "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2). It is clear from the context that our Lord's injunction was levelled, not against judicial oaths, but against the habit of strengthening asseverations by oaths in familiar discourse (Matt. v. 34—37). And he himself, when adjured, or put upon his oath, did not rebuke the man by whom he was adjured, but gave an answer to his questioner, though previously he had refused to give one (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64).

II. WHEN THE CIVIL GOVERNOR CALLS UPON US FOR AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE, OR THE LIKE. The practice of Christian countries in this respect has varied; but where oaths of allegiance are required there would seem to be no reasonable ground for objecting to them. The state is entitled to assure itself of the good will and fidelity of the citizens; and, unless it can be sufficiently assured by a mere affirmation, would seem to be entitled to the better security of an oath.

III. WHEN IN ANY VERY SERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES A VERY SOLEMN ASSURANCE IS REQUISITE. Bandits have captured two friends. One of them is allowed to leave the bandits' stronghold in order to obtain the ransom for both, but is required to swear that in any case he will return, otherwise both will be put to a lingering death. There would seem to be no sufficient grounds for refusing to make oath in such a case. The bandits will not accept a promise. The oath is a concession to their incredulity. It is given solemnly, seriously, almost judicially; since those who tender it possess, under the circumstances, the power of life and death. It cannot be thought the injunction, "Swear not at all," was given with reference to such a case any more than with reference to oaths in courts of justice.

The great end is to avoid light swearing, unnecessary swearing, profane swearing. Let these forms of swearing be carefully eschewed, and a Christian man's conscience need not be greatly exercised in respect of the oaths which he is called upon to take as witness, as subject, as friend, as husband, as citizen.

Ver. 12.—*God the First and the Last.* It is readily intelligible, though not by finite minds conceivable, that "God is the First." Something must have existed from all eternity, or nothing could ever have existed. The first existence must either have been matter or spirit, or both. But it could not have been matter alone, since matter could never have produced spirit; and it was not matter and spirit, since the "things that are seen were not made of things that do appear" (Heb. xi. 3). It was therefore spirit alone; and that primeval Spirit which existed apart from matter, and apart from any created spirit, was God. Thus "God is the First"—the First Cause—before all

things—the Origin of all things—"Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things, both visible and invisible." But how is he "the Last"? Eternal life is promised to all created beings who do not fall from their first sinless estate, and also to all who, having fallen, repent and amend, turning to God, and putting their whole trust in the atonement of Christ. They will live on eternally in his eternal glory. Actually, then, God will not ever be in the future a single solitary Being, as he once was, but will always be a King and Governor of innumerable hosts of happy spirits, created by himself. *Actually* he will never be "the Last." But *potentially* he is "the Last." He *could*, if he so pleased, destroy with a word all that he has ever created, and be once more alone, without a second. And further, all things are "to him" and "for him"—they exist for his sake; he is their Aim and Object; their sole, final τέλος.

Ver. 16.—*The separate personality and Divine authority of the Holy Spirit.* The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, like most of the other great and mysterious doctrines of true religion, was gradually revealed to mankind. In one sense we may call it an exclusively Christian doctrine; but in another we must assign it an antiquity far higher than that of the Christian era. God, in his several revelations to mankind, gradually paved the way for its acceptance. In the revelations which he made to Noah and Abraham (Gen. ix. 6, 16; xvii. 7, 8), God announced himself as *Elohim*—a word of plural form. In the revelation which he caused to be put forth by his servant Moses, he distinguished between "God" (*Elohim*) and "the Spirit of God" (*ruakh Elohim*) which moved, or brooded, upon the face of the primeval chaos (Gen. i. 2). By David he made it known that there was a "God," whose "throne was for ever and ever," whom "God, even *his* God, would anoint with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Ps. xlv. 6, 7; comp. Heb. i. 8, 9). To the same great saint he revealed it that his Holy Spirit could be given to man and taken from him (Ps. li. 11). Isaiah, in the present passage, proclaims that he is sent "by the Lord Jehovah" (*Adonai Yehovah*) and also by "his Spirit." The doctrine of the Trinity in Unity is thus faintly shadowed out, and to a certain extent implied in the books of the Old Testament, though first openly preached and emphatically set forth in those of the New (see a paper by Dr. Paul Kleinert, in the *Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie* for 1867, pp. 3—59).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Lessons from the past to the future.* Those addressed are the people "named from Israel and sprung from Judah's spring;" who swear by Jehovah's Name and render homage to Israel's God—not, alas! so sincerely as they should. Still, they have learned to find their true reliance in Zion and in Jahveh. Let them, then, hear the exhortation of Jehovah.

I. THE ORACLE OF THE PAST. Jehovah has in former times predicted events by the mouth of his prophets which came to pass. Those predictions were disbelieved; the fulfilment was delayed; and yet suddenly the ideal was translated into fact; and the unexpected had come to pass. In general, history is the oracle of the Eternal. An empire founded on force or fraud cannot stand; *the* kingdom which subsists by righteousness and for righteousness carries with it vitality and enduring dominion. It was said by a great statesman, "The unexpected always happens." And in truth the purposes of God are not seldom known by their fulfilment in sudden and surprising events. He thinks long, but acts promptly. As in Northern climates, the winter of human discontent breaks as if by magic into spring. Such experiences should tend to subdue the obstinacy of incredulity. God knew that the Israelites were prone to unbelief and hardness of heart, and therefore had plied them with so many proofs of his providence. George Herbert mentions, "Bibles laid open, millions of surprises," among the means which God employs to bring the soul to himself. The "iron sinew and the brow of brass" are significant of the state of mind which he had to encounter in the people. "Some are so obstinately bad and confirmed in their vice, that judgments and afflictions are but thrown away upon them; and God's shooting at them is but shooting at a mark, which indeed receives the arrow, but does not at all feel it."

II. NEW PREDICTIONS. Again, things hidden from human penetration shall be made known by the Divine oracles. The events could no more be anticipated than could an act of creation from the operation of natural causes. And so the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and the deliverance of the exiles from bondage, could be known by no human foresight or sagacity. But "their ears were not open." They were infidel and rebellious at heart. The open ear means the affected heart, the awakened understanding, the cherishing memory, the steady, fruitful perseverance in action. If there be defect of these, the soul is no better than if it had not heard at all. Nay, it may be worse (cf. John v. 25; vi. 45; Acts ii. 37).

III. THE GREAT DIVINE MOTIVE. Not because the people have deserved it will Jehovah act thus, but for his honour's sake, because he is not yet known among the Gentiles. And it is through Israel that his purposes to the heathen must be carried out. Yet this people had not been found pure metal after their trial in the furnace of affliction. They were wicked, sinful, and unbelieving. It is his glory, then, in the spread of true religion and justice in the earth, that is the principle and the end of the procedure of Jehovah. As he can swear by no higher, so he can work for no more majestic object, than himself. But he must have instruments, he must have men, however imperfect, to work out his purposes. "God's glory is the motto inscribed upon every created being; and wheresoever God reads, he owns this superscription. It is all the creature has, under God's hand and seal, to show for its life. Wherever we are, we are not our own, but his. All men are by nature servants to the interest of his glory."—J.

Vers. 12—22.—*The new revelation.* The verses contain a summary of the contents of ch. xl.—xlvii. God is the First and the Last—the sole Creator. Prophecy is an evidence of his claims; and so is the mission of Cyrus.

I. THE REVELATION CONCERNING GOD. First Jacob and Israel, the chosen people, are called to listen. Jehovah is the Alpha and the Omega of the universe. The First Cause and Reason of things; he gave the first impulse to their course, the goal of which will still be himself. Before the earth and the heavens were, his was the creative hand, guided by the creative mind. Then the idolatrous nations are summoned to assemble, and challenged to produce a power of prophecy to rival that of Jehovah.

II. CONCERNING CYRUS. "He whom Jehovah hath loved," to whom he hath spoken, whom he hath called, shall have a prosperous career, performing the Divine pleasure on Babylon and on Chaldea. In ver. 20 the prophet sees the destruction of Babylon as an accomplished fact. Thence let a ringing cry go forth to the end of the earth! Jehovah hath redeemed the people! Already they have drunk of the refreshing waters in the desert. And that peace, which is the sum of all blessings, and which can never be the portion of the ungodly, is theirs.

III. APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE AND EXPERIENCE. Let the chosen people draw near and commune with their God. From the first he has spoken to them, not in dark and ambiguous oracles, but in words of clearness and unmistakable purport. And now he is to speak again by the mouth of his present servant, and to crown his revelations by the greatest of them all. And what of Israel? Doubly tender is the reproach and the expostulation. Why have the people not walked in the straight way in which he would have led them? He is their "Teacher to their profit;" why have they chosen what is unprofitable? and followed after the "not-profitable" gods (Jer. ii. 11; cf. Micah vi. 8; Ps. xxiii. 3)? He would lead them in the straight path, but Israel has forced him, as it were, to lead them by the circuitous path of affliction. The appeal to experience turns upon this point—the *profitableness of godliness*, which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. "Deep down in human nature lies the idea of a covenant between the worshipper and his god. In return for external service, the god gives help and protection. The prophets, with a generous freedom, retain so much of this theory as matches with the truths revealed to them. Jehovah's protection is still conditional, but the conditions extend to the inner as well as the outer man" (Cheyne). Obedience alone brings peace and prosperity. If men had but hearkened to God, their peace would have been as the great volume of the Euphrates, and their blessedness, reflecting the favour of Jehovah, as the multitudinous waves of the sea; its posterity as the sand of the sea, or as the fishes that swarm in its

waters. Its name would have been imperishable. It is, then, the "hearing ear" and the "perceiving heart" which above all are needed as conditions of true temporal and spiritual well-being. To hear so as to be pricked in heart; to hear so as to follow and prosecute the things we hear;—this alone is to hear in the Scripture sense. And here we are reminded of the need of the Holy Spirit's influence, without which we may see and never perceive, and hear and never understand. There must be an aptness between the object and the faculty. Things sensible must be known by sense; things mental by the mind; and things spiritual by some principle infused into the soul from above. "Two sit together and hear the same sermon. One finds a hidden spiritual virtue in the Word, by which he lives and grows and thrives. Another finds no such virtue in it; perhaps it pleases his reason, and there is an end. This proceeds from the want of the spiritual, perceiving heart. Why is it that a man is so affected with music that all his passions are moved by it, while brutes are not at all pleased? Because there is in man a principle of reason concurring with his sense, which discovers the sweetness and harmony of the sounds that bare sense is not able to discern." And so of the things of God. Open thou mine eyes and mine ears; let my noblest faculties be ever in communion with the noblest, my spiritual nature be awakened by the Spirit, and again respond to his influence!—this should be our prayer. We will hearken unto and obey him who hath the words of eternal life: this should be our resolve.—J.

Ver. 4.—*The revealing truth.* "I knew that thou art obstinate." We blame this in a child. We sometimes falsely call it firmness in a man. This is a mistake. Firmness is only in a *moral* sense such, when it is infused by faith, governed by reason, approved by conscience, and consecrated to some noble and godlike end.

I. HERE IS A REVELATION OF HUMAN POWER. Man *can* stand out against God. This is marvellous, but it is at the basis of all moral freedom and responsibility. The original Hebrew means "hard"—so hard that the tenderest revelations of Divine love cannot melt the heart; so hard that the spectacle of the ruin and misery which rebellion everywhere brings does not create repentance and "returning."

II. HERE IS A REVELATION OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. "I knew." Man cannot see his brother's *inner countenance.* God can. "Thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." Let not man say that any law of necessity has compelled his defiant course. Let him not say that it has been demanded of him by the idols of fashion and custom. "Before it came to pass I showed it thee, lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them." God knows that the soul has stood out against all Divine warnings, invitations, rebukes, and interpositions. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!"—W. M. S.

Ver. 6.—*Hidden things.* "Hidden things." The earth is full of latent forces. These are concealed. Take heat, for instance: how it hides in the secret places more stealthily than the panther! Take electricity: here it is quite close to us—within us; and what a masterful power it is!—how it can rend the rock and lay low the lofty palaces! These are beneficent forces, though, and do their work well, for the security, health, and comfort of man. There are hidden forces that are baneful. The latent seeds of disease lie hidden behind that pearly skin—that pure and radiant complexion. And when we have to speak of sin, what a latent force that is hidden in the breast of a child!—concealing itself under the cloak of outward respectability in manhood, and by its manifestations here and there like the volcano, telling us what depths of evil there are in the human heart, which only Christ and his cross can overcome. Men understand much, but they do not understand *themselves.*

I. WE HAVE HIDDEN FORCES OF JOY IN US. In a human sense it is so. Look at those children, all eager for their own little possession, their own way; they know not *now* what love will do: how for that bright little maiden yonder, presently, in a few brief years, one human heart will give up time and thought, and all that earnest love can give! What a force! but hidden yet. So in marriage; that young wife cannot be informed, or instructed, or inspired by others to feel what maternal love is; but when the cry is heard, and a child is born into the world, the latent instinct leaps into life in the heart, and she knows for the first time what that slumbering force really is. So there are in our souls hidden forces. We have latent faculties of faith in us which the

Holy Ghost can call forth, whereby we walk in a new world of wonder and hope and joy in God. We have latent faculties of energy in us which, once awakened, will make us emulate the earnest of every age; and when religion sets a man to work, he finds that there is a joy in service which he was unconscious of before; he discerns that, whilst by love he serves others, he is also with each service opening up new joy-fountains in his own heart.

II. WE HAVE HIDDEN FORCES OF PAIN IN US. We know not what they are, it may be, at present; but we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and we shall be a surprise unto ourselves in this respect also. 1. *There is the sorrow that hides in love.* We know not the measure of love save by loss! Then we know. We are tempted to think in our youth that our older friends are too pensive sometimes, too little open to the all-gladdening influences around them. Alas! we know not the bread they eat. There are forces of memory in their hearts that we cannot see. 2. *There is the sorrow that hides in sin.* It is so bright-presenced at first, so fascinating, so attractive; speaks in such dulcet tones; no memory at work yet; no consciousness of shame yet; no sense yet of the disturbance that sin works in God's beautifully ordered universe. To-morrow the serpent that hides at the bottom of the cup will have stung! 3. *The sorrow that hides in wrong or neglect in relation to others.* While they were with us here we did not feel it so much; but *now!* Oh, the curtain that hides! the silence in which there is no voice! the quivering heart that puts out the untouched hand! Eternal Father, we were not what we wished, or all we wished, to them. But they are *gone*, and the place which knew them once shall know them no more. Death is not a tidal river; its waters never return.

III. WE HAVE HIDDEN FORCES OF EVIL IN US. Power to sin! Forces which temptation may set fire to, as a spark to the tow! We see this illustrated in nature. The officer who played with his beautiful glossy pair of cub-tigers did not understand his danger till they tasted blood as they licked a little cut in his hand; and then came the surly growl, and with the officer a sword for them or death for himself. We see this in the history of the disciples. How ignorant they were of their own hearts! What latent scepticism in Thomas! what cowardice beneath Peter's enthusiasm! what pride in those who wanted chief places in Christ's kingdom! Ah! yes; but they recovered from their folly. But think of Judas; think of Demas; think of Hymenæus and Philetus. We see this in the warnings of our Saviour. "Watch and pray." Yes; Mark you, Christ does not say, "Watch and pray in *youth*," or "in *manhood*." He says it to us all. He knows the potency of evil, and that there are temptable places in our nature even unto the end. For instance, "When every other passion is old, covetousness is young," says the proverb. We must be on our guard till the last hour. Then will come release and victory.

IV. WE HAVE HIDDEN FORCES OF IMMORTALITY WITHIN US. Christ revealed these. He "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." All men do not equally feel these; but there is a "power of the world to come," which more or less affects everybody. When outward life pleases, and we have vivacities of friendship, extensive and elaborate functions of duty to fulfil; when we are absorbed in the outward life;—we do not always feel the great beatings of the pulses of immortality within us. But in silent meditative hours there comes over us all the consciousness alike of sin and immortality. "How abject, how august, is man!" The great conservative power of religion is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Let that be ignored or denied, and materialism will make very rapid strides. 1. *The sense of immortality alters our estimate of the world.* Makes us feel the "tent-like" character of our homes. "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come." We know that there remaineth a rest, and that affliction is but for a moment. 2. *The sense of immortality alters our estimate of friendship.* We long, even in *that*, to lay hold of the everlasting, to link our love with the immortal years—to feel that it is of such a character as to survive in glory. Hidden the force may be, but it is real, and the strongest of all the bulwarks against atheism and materialism. When Christ speaks we feel that he spake with authority. Men trembled before a vision of themselves so searching and severe. Not only the "hidden things" of darkness, however, did he reveal; the bright diamond of the mind flashed forth its beauty in the light of his all-revealing words. "Honour all men," says St. Peter. A beautiful commandment, for the gospel has shown the

hidden glory behind the veil of the meanest life. "For I have shown thee hidden things" may therefore suggest to us the reverence which we ought to entertain for the soul. Sin is not a subject for mere scorn; it is a subject for deepest sorrow. "When Jesus came near the city, he beheld it, and wept over it." Something more magnificent than the marble temple filled his vision; he wept over souls where the altar was overthrown and the love of God cast out. Let preachers, teachers, authors, workers in the field of the Lord, realize once more the Divine grandeur of their work. The sublimest creation of this universe is hidden in the heart of man: "God made man in his own image."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—9.—*Things worth heeding concerning God and man.* "Hear ye this:" this is something well worth the earnest attention of men; their truest worth and their lasting interests are bound up in the knowledge and regard of it.

I. MAN'S CRIMINAL INCONSISTENCY WITH HIMSELF. (Vers. 1, 2.) Men may go very far in conduct which is quite at variance with "the spirit which is in them:" they may *say* or *do* one thing, and *be* the very opposite. One might think that though this were so in their dealings with one another, it would never be true in their attitude toward the heart-searching God. Yet in nothing is there more insincerity, more hypocrisy, than in religion. Men "swear by the Name of the Lord . . . but not in truth." To pretend before God, to affect a piety which is not felt, is not only useless and worthless; it is in the last degree offensive and perilous (see Matt. xxiii.).

II. MAN'S HARDENING OF HIMSELF. (Ver. 4.) Men are *obstinate*, or hard (marginal reading): they harden their heart before God and against him, so that their neck is "an iron sinew, their brow brass." 1. They will not *be* what God requires that they should become—his children, his servants, his friends, his followers. 2. They will not *do* what he charges them to do—will not work righteousness, justice, equity; will not refrain from impurity, from intemperance, from dishonesty, etc. 3. They will not *hear* what he summons them to heed; they turn a deaf ear to his entreaties and his warnings (Prov. i.). They go so far in obduracy, in hardness, that, though they know that their Divine Father, their gracious Saviour, is speaking to them, they close their souls to his message of truth and love.

III. GOD'S EVIDENCE CONCERNING HIMSELF. (Vers. 3, 5—8.) God adduces proof from his foreknowledge and revelation that he is unquestionably the true and living God—that One in whom and in whom alone they should put their trust. It is not only by such proof as this, but by many evidences, that God establishes his claims upon us. He "leaves not himself without witness;" he abundantly confirms his truth: the material universe, with its beauty, its bounty, its order, its magnificence; the spiritual nature of man, including his conscience; the life, the works, the truth of Jesus Christ; the character and design of the gospel of peace and righteousness; its glorious achievements, etc.

IV. GOD'S REASONS IN HIMSELF. (Ver. 9.) 1. Ample reasons for Divine beneficence are to be found in the Divine nature—that God is what he is accounts for all the grace and mercy which abound in the earth. 2. In the interests of the universe God must act so that his children shall revere and praise him. Otherwise the most disastrous disbelief would prevail.—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The Divine aim in human affliction.* We infer—

I. THAT THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE OF GOD'S SENDING. To the unrighteous they wear the aspect of inflictions, but to the servants of God they are chastisements or refining processes; either way, they are regarded as events which come in consequence of, or (at the least) in accordance with, the ordination of God (see ch. xlv. 7; Amos iii. 6). Jesus Christ has taught us that the smallest incident cannot happen without Divine permission; much less (as he wishes us to infer) any serious trial to the people of God (Luke xii. 6).

II. THAT THE DIVINE AIM IS DOUBLY BENEFICENT. 1. *Our refinement.* "I have refined thee." God refines us by passing us through the furnace of affliction, and he does this not for *his* advantage—"not for silver"—but for *our* profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness (see Heb. xii. 10). By the distresses of the soul the dross of worldliness, of selfishness, of trust in temporal securities or in human alliances, of

sensuous indulgence, is purged away, and the pure gold of piety and purity is left. Our heavenly Father resorts to this refining process in one of two cases. (1) When he sees us falling under the power of temptation, and finds our Christian character becoming alloyed with error and evil. (2) When he wants agents of the highest kind for the noblest work on earth or in heaven, and knows that no abundance of privilege will purify and perfect as will the refining discipline of his own hand. It is a real and important feature of the Divine beneficence that in parental chastisement God is seeking: 2. *His exaltation in the minds of men.* "For mine own sake will I do it: for how should my Name be polluted," etc.? It is to the interest of his creation, in the very highest degree, that God's Name should be exalted, that the glory which is his due should not be paid to another. For: (1) False worship shows a constant tendency to decline in the worthiness of its objects. When men abandon the service of the living God, and "go after Baal," they pursue a downward course; they go from the high to the less high, from the low to the lower, from the lower to the lowest; until they worship devils. (2) The character of the Deity men adore is always reflected in that of its devotees: as is the god so is the idolater. We have the highest interest in rendering our homage to the righteous Father of all, and any discipline that weans us from any kind of idolatry renders us priceless service. If God regards the well-being of his creation, he *cannot* give his glory to another.

III. THAT WE MUST ACTIVELY CO-OPERATE WITH HIM, OR HIS PURPOSE WILL BE DEFEATED. (See 2 Cor. vii. 10.)—C.

Vers. 17—19.—*Human freedom and Divine regret.* In these fervent and eloquent words of the prophet we learn—

I. THAT GOD DESIGNS GOOD AND EVEN GREAT THINGS FOR THE OBEDIENT. If Israel had only been obedient to the Divine commandment, it would have rejoiced in: 1. *Abounding prosperity.* Its peace (prosperity) would have been "as a river," flowing on continuously, without break, night and day, generation after generation. Victory in war and fruitfulness in the field would have been their happy heritage (see Ps. lxxxi. 13—16). This is the offer which Christ makes to his obedient disciples (Mark x. 29, 30). Not that prosperity always comes to the Christian disciple in the shape of "increase of corn and wine;" but it *does come* in one form if not in another—often in the shape of indwelling peace and overflowing joy when the home is of the humblest and the lot of the hardest kind. 2. *Advancing rectitude.* Its righteousness would have been "as the waves of the sea," coming on and coming in with steady, irresistible flow. Righteousness is an incomparably greater blessing than prosperity. To be a "righteous nation" is to be vastly more than a triumphant or wealthy nation. Christ promises to those who are the true subjects of his kingdom that their blest heritage shall be "*righteousness* as well as peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;" spiritual rectitude; the heart in its true and loyal attitude towards God, towards man, towards truth and life. 3. *Abiding influence.* (Ver. 19.)

II. THAT WE ARE LEFT FEARFULLY FREE TO THWART HIS GRACIOUS PURPOSE. Jehovah laments that Israel had forfeited its heritage, had used its freedom to disobey, had cut itself off from his generous design (ver. 18). What God would gladly have bestowed, the foolish nation had resolved to refuse. Such power of choice has the Creator given to his creature, man. And what fearful use has man made of this his freedom! It is not Israel alone that has elected to forego splendid opportunities. What might not Rome have been, and Egypt, and those European lands to which the knowledge of the gospel has been carried! It is not too late to ask—*What may not England be?* The record of her history is not yet complete; her sands are not yet run; her gate of opportunity is not yet closed. She may yet rise to the height of her privilege, as she may yet sink grievously and fatally beneath it. With the same solemn and awful freedom every individual soul is invested by its Creator. Every one of us is at liberty to thwart his gracious purpose if we choose; at liberty also to realize it, in all its glorious fulness, if we will.

III. THAT OUR DISOBEDIENCE AND DISINHERITANCE ARE A SOURCE OF DIVINE REGRET. Do we not hear an undertone of deep sorrow in this lament? Our heavenly Father, our Divine Friend, regards the sad abuse of our freedom with a sorrow which is all his own. The human parent who has been deeply disappointed in the character and career

of his beloved child is likely to have the truest insight into the grief of God when he witnesses our rejection of his truth and grace. But as "God only knows the love of God," so he only knows the depth and fulness of his grief.

IV. THAT WE MAY RECOVER ALL IF WE LISTEN WHEN GOD SPEAKS AGAIN. The Holy One is our *Redeemer:* he "teaches us to profit;" he "leads us in the way," etc. (ver. 17). He comes in holy discipline, in fatherly correction, to call us from our folly, to save us from our sin. If we will only know the profitableness of his redeeming truth, we may be restored and reinstated; we may yet wear the robe and the ring of sonship, and sit down at the Father's board.—C.

Ver. 22.—*Peace: appearance and reality.* "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." We may look at—

I. THE ANTECEDENT LIKELIHOOD that there would be none. For the wicked are: 1. In rebellion against the Lord of all righteousness and power; *i.e.* against one who *is bound* to visit sin with penalty and who is *able* to do so. 2. In an element of disturbance and disorder. They are in a wrong and false position; they are in a sphere which is unnatural and unlawful; they stand where storms may be anticipated, where calms are things to be surprised at and suspected.

II. THE DELUSIVE APPEARANCE of peace in the case of the unrighteous. It is continually happening that ungodly men, that unbelieving men, that even vicious men, spend lives of domestic comfort, prosper in the calling in which they are engaged, are untroubled in their conscience for considerable periods of time, die without great alarm or even serious apprehension. It often appears as if there were peace to the wicked. These facts, however, are consistent with—

III. THE ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY that guilt and peace are never found together. It is not only true: 1. That crime is almost always attended with a haunting dread of exposure and penalty. 2. That vice and irreligion are commonly associated with a sense of guilt and with the rebukings of conscience. But it is also true: 3. That *no guilty soul can possibly have* that in his heart which *deserves the name of peace.* He may have insensibility or false security; but these are not peace. Peace is the blessed calm which belongs to a consciousness of rectitude before God; it is the possession of those alone who *are* right with God, and who *believe that they are so.* No hardihood, no delusion, can confer this. A man who is living apart from God, unreconciled to him, unaccepted by him, *must* be destitute of the peace of God—of the peace which Christ gives to his own.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The offence of insincerity.* "Not in truth, nor in righteousness." The prophet mentions the usual outward marks of the true Israelite; but, in the case of those whom he addressed, these were mere formalities, they were disconnected from a personal and living faith in God. These people said they were Jews, but they were not. Their professions could not stand the examinations of the Heart-searcher. To the good man—and how much more to the great and holy God!—insincerity is absolutely offensive; we have scarcely even pity for the man who has no reality of life and feeling to match his professions, whose words do not represent his heart. Unspeakably painful to the prophet must have been the condition of the many Jews in his day, and in his pleading the ideal attributes of Israel are pressed in contrast with their actual state of hypocrisy and unrighteousness. "How high their profession soared! what a fair show they made in the flesh! and how far they went towards heaven! what a good livery they wore! and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart!" (Matthew Henry). On the subjects of insincerity and hypocrisy there is much familiar teaching, which needs constant repetition. We only suggest two points.

I. INSINCERITY IS SOMETIMES A DRIFT. We get into it, and it becomes a confirmed condition we scarcely know how; we are not conscious of having exercised any will in the matter. With some there is a great idea of "keeping up appearances," and the effort to do this tends to nourish insincere habits and ways. And sometimes we are carried into expressions of religious feeling and experience that are quite beyond us, by surroundings of religious excitement; and the pleasure of the insincere fascinates us. We drift into this evil by the use of sensational hymns, and by listening to ecstatic religious experiences; and there is no graver danger besetting the Church of our day

than this tendency to nourish the insincere in the expressions of religious life. God's reproaches fall on many who think themselves very holy, but whose professions are not really matched by heart and life.

II. INSINCERITY IS SOMETIMES A SCHEME. Then it is a shame and disgrace, and brings us under the overwhelming judgments of God. Illustrate by Judas Iscariot. For selfish ends men determine to keep up before the world all the appearances of piety, when they know that the life of piety has died out of their souls. Christ's sternest words were spoken to conscious and purposed hypocrites, those "whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones." In view, then, of the danger of drifting into insincerity, and of the sin of scheming to be insincere, every good man will watch and strive and pray against the evil, lest, in some subtle form, it should assail and overcome him. —R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Obstinacy.* The figures used are the stiff, unbending neck, that will yield to no persuasions; and the hard brow that can resist, as does the brow of the butting animal. The point which may be variously illustrated and enforced is that such obstinacy is a result of previous conduct. The obstinacy that is only a stubbornness of natural disposition can be dealt with efficiently by educational methods. The obstinacy which results from prolonged moral conditions is well-nigh irremediable, and brings a man under crushing Divine judgments.

I. THE BEGINNING OF MORAL OBSTINACY IS A LOSS OF SPIRITUAL SENSIBILITY. The proper attitude before God is one of openness, humility, and self-distrust. The renewed soul is delicately sensitive to every expression of the Divine will, and to everything that is in harmony with the Divine mind. And the maintaining of that sensitiveness is absolutely essential to the keeping of right relations with God. Piety is closely akin to meekness and gentleness. It loves to obey, to follow, to be led. We have no will but God's will for us. To lose this "sensibility" is grave danger. It is to step on a slippery slide. Therefore should we "keep our heart with all diligence," and be most jealous over those various spiritual influences that help to make our hearts more tender.

II. SUCH LOST SENSIBILITY MAY BE RECOVERED. At least in the earlier stages of it. But our peril lies precisely in this, that it is a very subtle form of spiritual disease, and, like some forms of bodily disease, it does not plainly show itself until it has gained strength, and gripped us with a firm hold. Our best sign of the presence of the evil is fading pleasure in Christian worship and devotion. We are in danger if we have lost the *joy* out of our religious duties and associations; and we should seek at once for the recovery of tone and fervour.

III. SUCH LOST SENSIBILITY MAY PASS INTO SELF-RELIANCE. It certainly will if earnest efforts toward recovery are not made. The man who feels he is getting to be alone will try to stand alone. He who looses the hand that steadied him will try to walk steadily by himself. He who refuses to humble himself and recover his lost place will puff himself up with pride and vain confidences.

IV. SUCH SELF-RELIANCE IS IN DANGER OF BECOMING HOPELESS OBSTINACY. The man who persists in forcing his own way finds that ever fresh strength must be put into the forcing, until, like Pharaoh of old, he becomes hardened to resist even God's judgments.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*God's supreme motive.* "For my Name's sake I defer mine anger, and for my praise I am temperate towards thee, not to cut thee off" (Cheyne's translation). It may seem strange that God did not utterly destroy the Jews as a nation, in his just indignation at their unfaithfulness, hypocrisy, and rebellion. God here explains the supreme reason which led him to deal so considerately with them. He was under covenant engagements with them. His Name and honour were pledged to the maintenance of the covenant. Overwhelming severities would have produced wrong impressions concerning God among the nations around. His Name would be dishonoured in their view. And it was of the utmost importance that this should not be, because, in good time, these heathen were to become subjects of the one Divine King. Junius very truly says, "Even legal punishments lose all appearance of justice when too strictly inflicted on men compelled by the last extremity of distress to incur them."

(For God's Name, see Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) For a New Testament plea, drawn from the jealousy for the honour of the Divine Name, recall the sentence, "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." It may be shown that—

I. GOD IS SEVERE, FOR THE SAKE OF HIS HONOUR. That he may not be blasphemed, and represented as indifferent to the obedience offered to his commandments. "Behold the severity of God," which should be a theme of admiration, and a bulwark of confidence to us.

II. GOD IS PATIENT, FOR THE SAKE OF HIS HONOUR. In order that he might reveal himself as the Good, and win confidence. "Behold the goodness of God," into which we may run and find shelter. See the Name of God as revealed to Moses. The most marvellous triumphs over human self-willedness are won by patient mercy, Divine long-suffering. Forbearance and enduring love are some of the sweetest things in the Divine Name.

A more subtle course of thought is indicated by the following two divisions.

I. GOD IS ANXIOUS THAT MEN SHOULD HONOUR HIS NAME. And this anxiety he cherishes for *their sakes*. It is supremely important that men should have high thoughts of God.

II. GOD IS ANXIOUS TO BE FOUND TRUE TO HIS OWN NAME. And this anxiety he cherishes for *his own sake;* for his rest involves the sense of being true to himself. —R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The refining power of affliction.* The likeness of Divine dealings to the refining of metals by fire is somewhat frequent in Scripture. In this passage there is a qualification which is peculiar. God's message, through his prophet, is, "Behold, I have refined thee, *but not as silver*." There was evidently something unusual about the treatment of silver, and we get some idea as to what it was from an expression of the psalmist (xii. 6), "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified *seven times*." In the case of silver great severity and many repetitions were necessary. Had God treated Israel with the severity due to its iniquity, it must have been cut off. He therefore reined in, restrained, qualified his anger, and corrected them only "in measure." "God would refine them, but not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they would be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and, as such, might justly be put away, as reprobate silver. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly." "The art of smelting ore, which must have been known to the Israelites from the time of their sojourning in Egypt, but had, probably, been brought into fresh prominence through intercourse with the Phœnicians and with Sheba, is here used as an illustration. Wonderful as is the separation of the pure metal from the dross with which it has mingled, there is something yet more wonderful in the Divine discipline which purifies the good that lies hid, like a grain of gold, even in rough and common natures, and frees it from all admixture of evil" ('Speaker's Commentary'). Dr. Guthrie says, "It is rough work that polishes. Look at the pebbles on the shore! Far inland, where some arm of the sea thrusts itself deep into the bosom of the land, and, expanding into a salt loch, lies girdled by the mountains, sheltered from the storms that agitate the deep, the pebbles on the beach are rough, not beautiful, angular, not rounded. It is where long white lines of breakers roar, and the rattling shingle is rolled about the strand, that its pebbles are rounded and polished. As in nature, as in the arts, so in grace; it is rough treatment that gives souls as well as stones their lustre; the more the diamond is cut, the brighter it sparkles; and in what seems hard dealing their God has no end in view but to perfect his people's graces. Our Father, and the kindest of fathers, he afflicts not willingly; he sends tribulations, but hear St. Paul tell their purpose: 'Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope.'"

I. GOD'S PURPOSE CONCERNING HIS PEOPLE. This may be expressed in the word "redemption," which means much more than rescue from peril. It means deliverance from all evil, and more especially from the evil within. The full idea of God's purpose is best realized through the purpose concerning her child of a saintly mother. She seeks her child's redemption. She would have him delivered from his various

evils, and established in goodness. That supreme purpose gives point and tone to all her dealings with him, and relations to him. As high as God is above the best of mothers, so much higher is God's purpose concerning us than hers concerning her child. He would have us whiter than snow, whitened so as no earth-fuller can whiten.

II. GOD'S DEALINGS IN WORKING OUT HIS PURPOSE. 1. His supreme aim is kept in view in his ordinary everyday dealings. This we do not adequately keep in mind. We see God in the few great things, but not in the thousandfold little things. And yet the preciousness of life in God's lead lies in our confidence that he is working by small and continuing influences, making all work for good. 2. His purpose is wrought through all dealings that are of a satisfactory character. We easily miss observing this. God is in all the good things that please us. He works in and through our joys—through human love, through beauty, grace, wisdom, society, friendship, success; and makes the pleasant things of life become man's severest testing. 3. His purpose is further accomplished through disciplinary dealings. This is so familiar a topic that its illustration may be left to the preacher.

III. GOD'S AGENTS THROUGH WHOM HE WORKS HIS HOLY WILL. They may be things or they may be persons. The point is that they can be presented under the figure of fire, and their influence can be indicated by the action of fire. This may be opened out by showing (1) that fire causes suffering; (2) fire separates; (3) fire finds out what is worthless; (4) fire cleanses; (5) fire is a continuing force; (6) fire can take different degrees of force. God's agents may be (1) men; (2) things; (3) circumstances. Any one, anything, into which God can put a *refining* force. Each one of us may be one of God's refining forces, for those with whom we have to do; and at the same time, each one of us is under the refining influence of others for our own purifying.

IV. GOD'S QUALIFICATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF HIS WORK. This is the point more especially presented in the text. God does not treat Israel in the severe way in which silver is treated by the refiner. He knows his metal; he knows what each can bear. He never suffers us to be tested above that we are able to bear. He damps down the fires when they blaze too high. He never goes beyond our strength. Because we have this conviction so settled into our souls, therefore we can let God undertake for us; refining in his own ways, and securing at last his own pure image in the cleared metal.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*The blessings of obedience.* "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." What might have been! How often we reproach ourselves with thinking over the "might have beens"! How searching it is to find God helping us regretfully to realize what might have been (comp. Ps. lxxxi. 13—16)! "Peace" and "righteousness" here both stand as terms to express "prosperity," that best of prosperities which comes as the manifestation of Jehovah's righteousness or fidelity to his promises. The figures used may be thus explained: If they had been faithful to their covenants their national prosperity would have followed on, age after age, like the ceaseless current, day and night, of a noble river. If they had been obedient, they would have mastered all forms of difficulty and opposition with a resistless power like that which belongs to the waves of the sea. The time of exile in Babylon was a sad break in the national prosperity. There would have been no occasion for it if Israel had been faithful and obedient. J. A. Alexander says, "Nothing could well be more appropriate at the close of this division of the prophecies than such an affecting statement of the truth, so frequently propounded in didactic form already, that Israel, although the chosen people of Jehovah, and as such secure from total ruin, was and was to be a sufferer, not from any want of faithfulness or care on God's part, but as the necessary fruit of its own imperfections and corruptions." Two of the blessings that always follow on obedience are indicated here—they are permanence and power.

I. PERMANENCE AS A RESULT OF OBEDIENCE. This is one of the most marked impressions made on sensitive minds by the sight of the full-flowing river, especially in Eastern lands, where it is, in such a marked way, contrasted with the mountain wadies that are sometimes dry and at other times roaring with flood. The river flows on for ever. Men come and go. Cities rise and fall into decay on its banks. Commerce now uses and now neglects it. Dynasties last their little while. The river flowed on

ages ago just as it flows now; it will flow still, when we have "had our little day and cease to be." So nothing can occur to stop the current of true prosperity in the obedient. "Patient continuance in well-doing" involves continued conditions of well-being. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

II. POWER AS A RESULT OF OBEDIENCE. The steady advance of the tide is an impressive illustration of quiet, persistent power. The rush of the wind-driven wave is the illustration of majestic masterful power. He that does the will of God overcomes himself; and he who overcomes himself need never fear that he will meet a mightier foe.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Christ's peace and righteousness.* Illustrating the meditative and spiritualizing method of treating prophetic Scripture, the following outline, after R. M. McCheyne, is given.

I. THEIR PEACE WOULD HAVE BEEN AS A RIVER. 1. It has a source. It begins at the fountain of Christ's blood. 2. It is fed from above. Rains and showers feed the rivers. The shower of grace feeds the rivers of peace. 3. It has inundations, as the Nile. An awakening providence often makes it overflow. Afflictions and the consolations under them always, if the sufferings are the sufferings of Christ. Sacramental times also; hence the desirableness of frequency in the administration of the Lord's Supper. 4. It gets broader and broader to the sea. Illustrate by such a river as the Tay. "The path of the just is like the shining light." 5. It is fertilizing. It conveys nourishment. Egypt owes all its fertility to the Nile. The peace of Christ makes every grace grow. Holiness always grows out of a peaceful breast.

II. THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS WOULD HAVE BEEN AS THE WAVES OF THE SEA. The righteousness of Christ is compared to the waves of the sea, because: 1. It covers over the highest sins. 2. It covers again and again. 3. It is infinite righteousness. You cannot count the waves of the sea. *Application.* God wants men to be saved. God sometimes pleads with men to be saved for his own pleasure; it would be pleasant to him; it would make him glad, as in the parable of the lost sheep. Sometimes he pleads for his own glory (Jer. xiii. 16; Mal. ii. 1). But here it is for the happiness of sinners themselves (Ps. lxxxi. 13). And he pleads with men, because unwilling that any should perish (2 Pet. iii. 9).—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The unrest of the wicked.* "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the ungodly." There may be what the world calls success and prosperity, without peace. Peace is an inward state and condition. It is not a matter of circumstance, but of mood. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." It is not a specially sent threatening, that there shall be no peace to the wicked; it is the permanently appointed Divine arrangement. By the constitution of things there can be no peace to the wicked—"no peace with God, or their own consciences, no real good, whatever is pretended to." It may be urged that the ungodly have no inward peace, because—

I. OF THE DISSATISFACTION WHICH WICKEDNESS BRINGS. Bad men cannot rest in their badness, cannot regard it with pleasure. They want to get away from it to something else. A new excitement alone can clear away the thought of old sins. That is the saddest thing for the wilful and wayward man—he can never be happy in his wrong-doing. Excited he may be, never restful.

II. OF THE SMITINGS WHICH CONSCIENCE GIVES. For though a man may gag and stifle Conscience, she will find her way to speak. The one thing absolutely impossible to the most wilful man is the silencing of Conscience. She has a way of waking up, and looking daggers when we think she is dead. If a man will force his own way against God, he must take into account that, as long as he lives, he shall have no peace; for he shall fight daily against his own conscience. It will lie down with him; it will go forth with him.

III. OF THE FEARS WHICH WICKEDNESS SUGGESTS. There are always consequences to actions. Every act is a cause. Every result is appropriate to its cause. Sow to the flesh, and you must reap corruption. The bad man fears (1) the circumstances which his wilfulness may create; (2) the enmities which his wilfulness may excite; (3) the future in which all the power may—nay, must—lie in the hands of the God he

insults. Wherever the ungodly man walks he can know no real peace; "fears are in the way."

IV. OF THE DISTURBANCES OF THE DIVINE ORDER WHICH HIS SELF-WILL OCCASIONS. There is a Divine order; and it involves the very highest well-being—up to its capacity—of every creature, great and small. That order is based upon man's obedient and submissive harmony with God's will. This the wicked man refuses, and so this order the wicked man breaks. Alas! spoiling the peace, not for himself alone, but for all with whom he has to do. The everlasting peace will come when we are "all righteous," and not a moment before.—R. T.

SECTION III. THE MISSION OF THE SERVANT OF THE LORD (CH. XLIX.—LIII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLIX.

The connection of the present section is especially with ch. xlii. 1—7, where the mission of the Servant of Jehovah was first announced. That mission was there described with extreme brevity. It has now to be fully set forth, for the instruction, consolation, and comfort of all Israel, which is represented as sunk in despondency, deeming itself forgotten of God and forsaken by him (vers. 13, 14). In the present chapter Jehovah's attestation of his Servant's mission is set forth (vers. 1—12), and Zion is comforted in her despondency (vers. 13—26).

Vers. 1—12.—JEHOVAH'S ATTESTATION OF HIS SERVANT'S MISSION. Jehovah called his Servant from the womb; mentioned him by name; made his mouth a sharp sword; held him in his hand; caused him to be a polished weapon; appointed him his Servant; assured him of a right and a recompense; appointed him, not only to restore and recover Israel, but to be a Light to the Gentiles, and to give salvation to the ends of the world (vers. 1—6); chose him (ver. 7); will help him (ver. 8); through him will both deliver the captive everywhere (ver. 9), and cause joy to break out in every part of heaven and earth (vers. 11—13). It is quite impossible that these things can be said of aught but a person, or of any person other than him in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. xxii. 18).

Ver. 1.—**Listen, O isles** (comp. ch. xli. 1; xlii. 1, 4, 6). Since the beginning of ch. xliii. Israel alone has been addressed. Now that the mission of the Servant of Jehovah is to be treated of, all the world must be summoned to hear, for all the world is directly interested. **Ye people**; rather, *ye peoples*, or *ye nations*. **The Lord hath called me from the womb.** Isaiah could not have said this of himself, for his "call" took place when he was of mature age. But Christ was designated for his office from the womb (Luke i. 31—33). He was also still "in the womb of his mother" when the name of Jesus was given to him (Matt. i. 21; Luke i. 31).

Ver. 2.—**He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.** The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "the Word of God" generally "is . . . sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow" (Heb. iv. 12). Christian experience testifies that this keen, searching, cutting power attaches in an especial way to the sayings of Jesus, which pierce the heart as no other words can do, and rankle in the soul, which is quite unable to forget them. The imagery recurs in the Revelation of St. John (i. 16; ii. 12, 16; xix. 15, 21). **In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me.** Either keeping him safe from the malice of his enemies, or reserving him until, "in the fulness of time," it would be fitting to reveal him to the world. **And made me a polished shaft.** A weapon even keener than a sword, smoothed and polished, so as to make it pierce the deeper, and kept hid in God's quiver until the time came when it could be launched with most effect against the hearts of ungodly men.

Ver. 3.—**Thou art my Servant, O Israel.** That the literal "Israel," is not intended appears plainly from ver. 5. The Servant himself is addressed as "Israel," because he "would stand as a new federal head to the nation" (Kay), which would be summed up in him, and also because he would be, in a truer sense than any other, an "Israel," or "Prince with God." **In whom I will be glorified** (comp. John xiii. 31, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and *God is glorified in him*"). He who is "the Brightness of the Father's glory" sets forth that glory before men, and causes them to glorify him, both with their tongues and in their lives.

Ver. 4.—**Then I said, I have laboured in vain**; rather, *and I, for my part, had said.* The Servant had momentarily desponded, seeing the small results of all his efforts to reclaim Israel, and had felt a natural human regret at so much labour apparently expended in vain; but his despondency had been soon checked by the thought that God would not suffer any "labour of love" to be wholly in vain, but would give it the recompense which it merited. The verse brings strongly out the true humanity of the "Servant," who feels as men naturally feel, but restrains himself, and does not allow his feelings to carry him away. Compare with this despondency the grief exhibited by our Lord on two occasions (Matt. xxiii. 37; John xi. 35), and the depression which extorted from him the memorable words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). **My work**; rather, *my reward*, or *my recompense.*

Ver. 5.—**And now, saith the Lord**, etc.; rather, *and now the Lord hath said—he that formed me from the womb to be a Servant to him, that I might bring back Jacob to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him; for I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is become my Strength—he hath said—It is a light thing*, etc. The whole of ver. 5, after the words, "and now the Lord hath said," is parenthetic. (On the service which our Lord continually rendered, while on earth, to the Father, see Luke ii. 49; iv. 43; John iv. 34; vi. 38; xvii. 4.) The Revelation of St. John shows that in heaven he is still engaged in carrying out his Father's behests. **Though Israel be not gathered.** This reading, as Mr. Cheyne remarks, "entirely spoils the symmetry of the verse." The practice of writing fresh copies of the Scripture *from dictation* is answerable for the double reading of ℵ and ℶ both here and in other places. **Yet shall I be glorious.** The "Servant" would receive glory even by such a partial conversion of the Jews as took place through his ministry. It is never to be forgotten that all the original twelve apostles were Jews, that Matthias was a Jew, that Paul and Barnabas were Jews, and that the original Church was a Church of Jews (Acts ii. 41—47). All that was truly spiritual in Judaism flowed into the Church of Christ, as into its natural home, and the Jewish element in the Church, if not numerically great, was yet the predominant and formative element.

Ver. 6.—**It is a light thing.** God rewards his servants *according to* their works. He is supremely just. He was not content that even Nebuchadnezzar should be insufficiently rewarded for the service that he rendered against Tyre (Ezek. xxix. 18), and he therefore gave him Egypt in addition as his recompense (Ezek. xxix. 20). It would have been "a light thing"—"too light a thing" (Kay, Cheyne)—to have rewarded the labours of Jesus with the conversion of the Jews only. God therefore gave him as his recompense the gathering in of the Gentiles also, and made him a means of salvation even to the uttermost ends of the earth. **The preserved of Israel**; *i.e.* the "remnant" that had not perished through previous judgments. **I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles** (comp. ch. xi. 10; xxxiv. 1; xlii. 6; lv. 5, etc.). Greeks (Ἕλληνες) were brought into contact with our Lord himself shortly before his crucifixion (John xii. 20). He wrought a miracle for a Syro-Phœnician woman (Mark vii. 25—30). His apostles, after a little time, understood that the gospel was for the world at large, and declared that in Christ there was no difference between Jew and Greek, nay! between Jew and barbarian. Christ had died for all—had come to be a Light to all, would have all come into his Church and obtain salvation through union with him. **That thou mayest be my Salvation.** Christ is called "Salvation," as the Bearer of salvation—he through whom alone can any man be saved (Acts iv. 12). So he is called "Peace" (Micah v. 5), as the Giver of peace.

Ver. 7.—**His Holy One**; *i.e.* "the Holy One of Israel." **To him whom man despiseth**; literally, *who is despised of souls.* This is the first place in the prophecies of Isaiah where this note of the Messiah is brought forward. It is found earlier in the Psalms, as especially in Ps. xxii. 6, *et seqq.*, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people;" and later on it is expanded into a chapter (ch. liii.). **Whom the nation abhorreth**; rather, *whom mankind abhorreth.* The term used is *goi*, which points to the Gentiles rather than to the Jews. Mankind at large dislikes a "Holy One," since he is a perpetual reproach to it (see ch. xxx. 11; and comp. Plut., 'Republ.,' vii. 2, *ad fin.*). It is not the Jews only who exclaim in such a case, "Away with him! away with him!" (John xix. 15). There is such an antagonism between sin and holiness, that the ungodly everywhere and in all ages detest the godly and virtuous. **A servant of rulers**; or, *a slave of despots*; treated as a slave, *i.e.* by such irresponsible rulers as Herod (Luke xxiii. 11) and Pontius Pilate (John xix. 1, 16). The "King of kings" bowed himself to a slave's death. **Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship** (comp. Ps. lxxii. 10, 11; ch. lii. 15; lx. 3, 10, 11, etc.). According to a tradition —which, however, cannot be traced back to any very ancient source—the Magi who came to worship our Lord at Bethlehem

were "kings." The prophecy is, however, to be regarded as having its main fulfilment in the coming to Christ of so many kings and princes, since his ascension into heaven (comp. ver. 23). And **the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee**; rather, *the Holy One of Israel, that hath chosen thee.* Kings will rise from their thrones, and prostrate themselves before Messiah, convinced that Jehovah is faithful in the performance of his promises, and has chosen the Son of Mary to be the Redeemer so long announced as about to appear on earth.

Ver. 8.—**In an acceptable time**; literally, *in a time of good pleasure*; i.e. the time fixed by my good pleasure from the creation of the world. **Heard thee . . . helped thee.** The Father "heard" and "helped" the only begotten Son through the whole period of his earthly ministry (Luke ii. 40, 52; John iii. 2; viii. 28; xii. 28; xiv. 10, etc.). **I will give thee for a Covenant of the people** (comp. ch. xlii. 6, and the comment, *ad loc.*). **To establish the earth**; rather, as in ver. 6, *to raise up the earth*, to lift it out of its existing condition of meanness and degradation. **To cause to inherit the desolate heritages**; *i.e.* to cause the desolate heritages of the earth—the places devoid of true religion—to be possessed, and as it were "inherited," by those who would introduce into them the true knowledge of God. As Israel inherited Canaan (Deut. iii. 28; Josh. i. 6), so would Christian nations inherit many "desolate heritages," where ignorance and sin prevailed, with the result that light would penetrate into the dark regions, and, ultimately, all flesh see the salvation of God.

Ver. 9.—**That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth.** "The prisoners" here are not the captives in Babylon, but the servants of sin throughout the world. Christ would say to them, "Go forth." He would summon them by his messengers to repent and be converted, and quit the service of sin, and "go forth" from the kingdom of darkness, and "show themselves" as lights of the world (Matt. v. 14; Phil. ii. 15), walking "as children of the light" (Eph. v. 8). It is a narrow exegesis which confines the prophet's forecast to the mere return of the exiles to Palestine, and their re-settlement on their ancestral estates. **They shall feed in the ways**, etc. The returning "prisoners" are now represented as a flock of sheep (comp. ch. xl. 11), whom the good Shepherd will "lead" and "guide" by ways in which they will find sufficient pasture, which shall not fail them even when they pass over bare "hill-tops" (see John x. 11—16; xxi. 15—17).

Ver. 10.—**They shall not hunger nor thirst** (cf. John iv. 14; vi. 35). God's grace is sufficient for his faithful ones. They are content with the sustenance which he awards them, and neither "hunger" nor "thirst." **Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them**; rather, *neither shall the glowing sand nor the sun smite them* (see ch. xxxv. 7). To those who walk at noonday over the "glowing sand" of the desert, the heat which "smites them" seems to come as much from below as from above, the white ground reflecting the sun's rays with a force almost equal to that wherewith the rays themselves beat down upon them from the sky. The Lord's faithful ones, in their passage through the wilderness of life, shall be free from these fearful trials. "The sun shall not smite them by day, neither the moon by night" (Ps. cxxi. 6). **He that hath mercy on them**; or, *that hath compassion on them*—that sympathizes with their sufferings, and pities them in their trials (comp. vers. 13 and 15). **Shall lead them** (comp. Ps. xxiii. 2; ch. xl. 11). The Oriental shepherd for the most part goes before his flock.

Ver. 11.—**I will make all my mountains a way.** No obstacles shall prevent the return of the wanderers. Mountains shall be as roads, and as highways lifted up.

Ver. 12.—**These shall come from far.** The nations shall flow in from all sides to the Redeemer's kingdom (ch. ii. 2; xi. 10; lx. 1—5, etc.). They shall come **from the north and from the west**; literally, *from the north and from the sea*, which generally means "the west," but which, in one enumeration of the points of the compass (Ps. cvii. 3), is certainly "the south." They shall also come **from the land of Sinim**, by which most recent interpreters understand China. But it is highly improbable that an ethnic name which was not known to the Greeks till the time of Ptolemy (A.D. 120) should have reached Palestine by B.C. 700. And if "the sea" means "the south" in the preceding clause, the Sinim may be those of Phœnicia (Gen. x. 17), who were among the furthest inhabitants of Asia towards the west. In any case, the reference is, not to the dispersed Jews, but to the remote Gentiles, who would pass from all quarters into the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Vers. 13—26.—ZION COMFORTED IN HER DESPONDENCY. While the future is thus glorious, both for the "Servant of the Lord" and for his people Israel, the present is gloom and misery. Zion—not here the city, but the people of God—desponds and says, "Jehovah has forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me" (ver. 14). This burst of grief, though arising from weakness of faith, is forgiven by the compassion of God,

and "afflicted" Israel is "comforted" and consoled through the remainder of the chapter (vers. 15—26).

Ver. 13.—**Sing, O heavens** (comp. ch. xliv. 23). Heaven and earth are called upon to rejoice and "break forth into singing" (1) because of the glory that awaits the Redeemer (vers. 5—12); and (2) because of the gracious intentions of God with respect to Israel (vers. 16—26). **O mountains.** The majesty of mountains seems to have deeply impressed Isaiah. Throughout his writings they are continually introduced as the grandest of the works of God (comp. ch. ii. 2, 14; v. 25; xiii. 4; xiv. 25; xxii. 5; xxx. 25; xxxiv. 3; xxxvii. 24; xl. 4, 9, 12; xli. 15; xlii. 11, 15, etc.). He expects them to be especially ready to sympathize with man. Such a feeling would be natural to one accustomed to the hill-country of Palestine and the lofty heights of Hermon and Lebanon, but could scarcely have been developed in an exile of the time of Cyrus, born and brought up in the dead level of Babylonia. **Hath comforted . . . will have mercy.** Both verbs designate the same action, which is really future, but in God's counsels is already accomplished. The perfect is thus, once more, that of prophetic certitude.

Ver. 14.—**But Zion said.** "Zion" is here the "daughter of Zion," or the people of Israel, as in ch. li. 16. The meaning is a rare one. **The Lord hath forsaken me** (comp. ch. xl. 27). It is not surprising that Israel—even faithful Israel—sometimes desponded, or perhaps despaired, during the long and weary time of the Captivity. Even the "Servant of the Lord" knew moments of despondency (see above, ver. 4, with the comment).

Ver. 15.—**Can a woman forget? . . . yea, they may forget.** In the siege of Samaria by Benhadad, King of Syria, a mother, we are told (2 Kings vi. 28, 29), boiled her son for food. In the last siege of Jerusalem similar horrors are reported (Joseph., 'Bell. Jud.,' vi. 3, 4). Mothers have even been known in England who have forced their tender and innocent daughters to commit deadly sin. **Yet will I not forget.** The love of God surpasses that of either father or mother. "When my father and my mother forsake me," says David, "then the Lord will take me up" (Ps. xxvii. 10). "God is love" (1 John iv. 8) in his very essence; and his infinite love is deeper, tenderer, truer, than finite love can ever be. Still, that which is nearest to it upon earth is, doubtless, the love of a mother for her children (see ch. lxvi. 13).

Ver. 16.—**Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.** The prophet has passed here from the living Zion, Israel, to their material home, Jerusalem. The metaphor which he uses is no doubt drawn from the practice, common both in ancient and in modern days, of burning or puncturing figures and other mementos upon the hand, the arm, or some other part of the body, and then rendering the figures indelible by rubbing in henna, indigo, gunpowder, or some other coloured substance Pilgrims in the East have almost always such marks put upon them when they have accomplished their pilgrimage. English sailors are fond of them, and few are without some such mark on their breast or limbs. The meaning here is that God has the thought of Zion as constantly present with him as if her image were indelibly marked on the palms of his hands. (On the anthropomorphic representation of God as having "arms" and "hands," see the comment on ch. xl. 10.) **Thy walls.** It is the city, Zion, the emblem of the people, that can alone be "graven" or "portrayed." This city has, of course, walls. God bears them in mind perpetually, since he is about to cause them to be built up (Neh. iii., iv.).

Ver. 17.—**Thy children shall make haste;** *i.e.* "thy exiled children shall hasten, when the appointed time comes, to return to Zion, and rebuild its temple and towers and walls." At the same time, **thy destroyers and they that have made thee waste,** who are regarded as still carrying on their devastations, **shall leave thee and go forth of thee.**

Ver. 18.—**Lift up thine eyes round about and behold** (comp. ch. lx. 4, where the same phrase occurs in connection with the conversion of the Gentiles). **All these gather themselves together** (comp. ver. 12). **Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament** (comp. Zech. ix. 16). The restored Church, receiving adhesions from the nations on all sides, will be like a bride who puts on her ornaments, and is thereby made glorious to look upon (ch. lxi. 10, *ad fin.*). The entire Church, not any one part, is designated as the "Bride" of Christ in the New Testament (2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 29, 32; Rev. xxi. 2, 9; xxii. 17).

Ver. 19.—**The land of thy destruction;** or, *of thy overthrow*—i.e. where thou wert overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar—**shall even now be too narrow,** etc. This must not be understood literally. Palestine, after the return from the Captivity, was at no time over-populated; and when the conversion of the Gentiles took place it caused no influx of fresh settlers into the Holy Land. The object of the prophet is simply to mark the vast growth of the Church, which would necessarily spread itself far beyond the limits of Palestine, and would ultimately require the whole earth for its habitation.

Ver. 20.—**The children which thou shalt**

have, after thou hast lost the other; literally, *the children of thy bereavement*; i.e. the Gentiles who shall replace those many faithless Israelites who refused to return when Cyrus issued his edict, and became lost to the Church of God. **The place is too strait for me** (see the comment on ver. 19).

Ver. 21.—**Who hath begotten me these?** The Jewish Church is astounded at the influx of the Gentiles, and asks, "Where did they come from? Who has made them my children? Who has trained them?" That they are not her natural children she is sure, since she knows that she has been for a long time "bereaved and unfruitful" (Cheyne)—a captive, and a "wanderer" (Kay). It is certain that the Jewish Church did not at first altogether welcome the incoming of the Gentiles (Acts xi. 1—3; xv. 1—11; Gal. ii. 11—14, etc.). But the guidance of the Holy Spirit surmounted the difficulty (Acts xv. 28).

Ver. 22.—**I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles.** The new children—the new converts—are to come from the Gentiles; the fresh "sons" and "daughters" will be carried by the nations in their **arms**, and by the peoples **upon** their **shoulders.** It is usual to expound this and parallel passages (ch. lx. 4; lxvi. 20) of the return of the Jews to their own land by favour of the Gentiles, either when the decree of Cyrus went forth, or at some still future period. But perhaps the children intended are *foster*-children, actual Gentiles, whom their parents will bring to baptism. In the Assyrian sculptures, mothers are constantly represented as carrying their children *upon their shoulders* ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 480).

Ver. 23.—**Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers**; or, *thy foster-fathers . . . thy foster-mothers.* Kings and queens (sultanas) shall put themselves at the disposal of the Church, to nourish and cherish **such** of the Church's children as may be entrusted to their care. **They shall bow down.** They shall not seek to lord it over the Church, but shall acknowledge in the officers of the Church a spiritual authority superior to their own, before which they shall "bow down," as Theodosius did. They shall even be willing, when they are conscious of guilt, to "lick the dust" under the Church's feet, or subject themselves to deep humiliation, that they may be restored. **They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.** Such as wait patiently and trust in the fulfilment of all these gracious promises shall escape shame, for the promises will assuredly be fulfilled.

Ver. 24.—**Shall the prey be taken,** etc.? The incredulous among the exiles thought it well-nigh impossible that Babylon should be forced to disgorge her prey—the captives whose labours were so valuable to her. Babylon was **mighty.** By the laws of war she had a rightful claim to her captives. How was she to be induced or compelled to give them up?

Ver. 25.—**The captives of the mighty shall be taken away.** The answer to the questions of ver. 24 is that, if Babylon is mighty, God is mightier. God will "take away" the captives, and "save" his "children."

Ver. 26.—**I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh** (comp. ch. ix. 20). Civil disunion is intended, which will break the power of Babylon, and render her an easy prey to the Persians. The recently discovered inscriptions clearly show that this was the case. Nabonidus had alienated the affections of his subjects by changes in the religion of the country, and during the course of the war with Cyrus, many Babylonian tribes went over to the invaders, and fought against their own countrymen (see the 'Cylinder of Nabonidus;' and comp. Sayce, 'Ancient Empires of the East,' p. 387). **The mighty One of Jacob** (see the comment on ch. i. 24).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 5—12.—*The lowest humiliation and the highest glory meet in Christ.* The Messiah was to be "glorious in the eyes of the Lord" (ver. 5); God was to be "his Strength;" "kings" were to "see him and arise;" "princes also" were to "worship" (ver. 7); he was to "raise up the earth;" to "cause to inherit the desolate heritages" (ver. 8); he was to loose the prisoners (ver. 9), to "restore Israel" (ver. 6), and to carry salvation to the ends of the world (ver. 6); yet, at the same time, he was to be "despised of men, an object of abhorrence to the nations, a servant [or, 'slave'] of rulers" (ver. 7). That such opposites should meet in one person must have seemed, anterior to the event, most improbable; yet the prophet utters no "uncertain sound." He proclaims alike, with the greatest distinctness, both the glory (ch. ix. 6, 7; xlii. 1—8; xlix. 1—6) and the humiliation (ch. xlix. 7; liii. 2—12), both the exaltation and the depression, of the Redeemer. And the event justified him, in both respects alike.

I. CHRIST'S EXTREME HUMILIATION. Christ "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 7, 8). Note the chief points of the humiliation. Being "in the form of God" and "equal with God," he consented (1) to be born on earth as a man; (2) in a humble station; (3) to be laid in a manger; (4) to be "subject" to earthly parents; (5) to be cast out of his native city by his fellow-townsmen; (6) to have not where to lay his head; (7) to have his teaching rejected by the mass of his countrymen; (8) to be betrayed; (9) bound; (10) smitten; (11) derided; (12) spit upon; (13) scourged; (14) crucified; (15) buried. The steps of the humiliation were progressive. First it was negative rather than positive, while he worked as a "carpenter" in his reputed father's shop. Then it received aggravation, when he became a homeless wanderer, was "rejected of men," bidden to "depart out of their coasts," threatened with stoning, declared to "have a devil," "hated," plotted against. Finally, it culminated in that night and day of agony when one disciple betrayed him, and the rest forsook him and fled, and he was led before three tribunals, mocked, buffeted, crowned with thorns, smitten with a reed, scourged judicially, nailed to the cross, flouted, railed on, finally buried out of men's sight, as though all was indeed "finished" with him, and the earth would hear no more of One who had lived an outcast's life, and died the death of a malefactor!

II. CHRIST'S EXALTATION AND GLORY. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9—12). Note the chief points of the exaltation. No sooner is he dead than he descends to Hades, "preaches to the spirits in prison," and deprives hell of its prey; then rises, "loosens the bonds of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it," cheers his "little flock" with his presence for forty days, ascends to heaven, and sits at God's right hand, King of kings and Lord of lords for evermore. On earth he has "a Name above every name." The Roman empire bows down to him; the barbarians are in great part converted; more and more nations flow into his kingdom; and at the present day three hundred millions of men, more than a fourth part of the world's inhabitants, nominally at any rate, confess him for their Master and Lord. In heaven the angels worship him; he sits upon the great white throne, and before him are the four and twenty elders, and the host of angels, and the ten thousand thousand saints, and the song is sung, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb;" and all the angels stand about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fall on their face before the throne, and worship him, saying, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. vii. 9—12).

Vers. 13—16.—*The love of God for his Church.* The love of God for his Church is no doubt something mysterious, inscrutable, as are all the Divine attributes; but it is so pointedly set before us in many places, both of the Old and the New Testaments, that it must certainly be intended we should meditate upon it. We may with reverence consider it (1) in its origin; (2) in its action; (3) in its results.

I. IN ITS ORIGIN. God's love for his Church would seem to originate in the fondness with which all intelligent beings regard the work of their own hands; that on which they have spent toil, time, labour, thought, care. God in creating the world had, primarily, his Church in view; he made all material things for the sake of man; and he made mankind with a view to his Church. He was moved to the creation of the world by a desire to have for all eternity a body of pure, good, happy, intelligent worshippers dwelling with him in heaven. He began by making man "in his own image" (Gen. i. 27), with a moral nature, free-will, consciousness, personality, memory. He knew that, with these gifts, man would fall; but he determined from the first that out of fallen humanity he would raise up a certain number—as many as would allow him—save them, purify them, make them his "peculiar people" (Deut. xiv. 2), his Church. In idea, we may say that God loved his Church before he had created it; for,

knowing what it would be, he loved it by anticipation, recognizing in it the best, and so the dearest to him, of all his works. Such was his love for his Church in its origin. We have now to consider it—

II. IN ITS ACTION. As a means of obtaining that Church triumphant in heaven which he desired, God saw good to create a Church militant on earth, which should be its shadow and representative, and to make that Church the peculiar object of his care. For this Church he showed his love by unwearied, ceaseless watchfulness, by supernatural interpositions from time to time, by patient endurance of provocations, by occasional chastisements, by warnings, by providential guidance, by direct teaching from Sinai, by indirect instruction through a long series of inspired prophets and seers. Never forgetting, never forsaking Israel, he delivered them out of Egypt, led them through the wilderness, gave them Canaan, subdued the nations before them, saved them from the power of Assyria, brought them forth out of Babylon, sustained and supported them, until, in the fulness of time, he gave the strongest possible evidence of his love by sending forth his Son to die for his Church, and by his death to infuse into it fresh life, and transform it from a national into a world-wide society, from the Church of the Jews into the "holy Catholic Church"—the Church of all nations. And this Church he has built upon a rock; he has promised to be with it always; he has declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This Church he "nourisheth and cherisheth" (Eph. v. 29), guiding it with his Spirit, sanctifying and cleansing it (Eph. v. 26), protecting it from its secret foes, delivering it from its avowed enemies. The Church of Christ for nearly nineteen hundred years has triumphed over all attempts to crush it and destroy it, not by its own strength, but through the love and care of the Almighty. The action of God's love for his Church is thus, in the first place, to keep it in being; in the second, to purify and perfect it. It only remains to consider this precious love—

III. IN ITS RESULTS. The present results are: 1. That there is a witness for God in almost every land—a witness which testifies unceasingly to the existence, power, and goodness of the Almighty; to the free offer of redemption through his Son, and to the free gift of sanctification through his Spirit. 2. There is a body which preaches holiness of life, even if it very imperfectly practises it. 3. There is a community which witnesses to the spirituality of man, to free-will, moral responsibility, the absolute and eternal difference of right from wrong, a future life, and judgment to come. 4. There is a body which hands on religion from age to age as a real living thing; a power seen in its fruits; a transforming, energizing power; not a philosophy, but a life. In the future the great result will be—that which the Revelation of St. John indicates—the eternal existence in heaven of a Church triumphant; "a multitude which no man can number," consisting "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who will "stand before the throne of God, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," praising him and ready to do his pleasure for ever (Rev. vii. 9, 10).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Jehovah and his Servant.* The Servant of Jehovah is wearied with the obstinacy of the Israelites, and turns to the lands afar off, that he may unfold to them his high mission and its purport. The offer of salvation is to be extended to the heathen world.

I. HIS CALL. From his very birth he has been destined as a missionary to the heathen world (cf. Jer. i. 5; Gal. i. 15; Luke i. 31). The emphasis is on the *fact*. He was not self-called, and there was no presumption on his part. There is all the difference in the world between calling one's self missionary, or apostle, or minister, and feeling that "God has made mention of one's name."

II. HIS ENDOWMENT. His mouth has been made a *sharp sword;* a vehicle for that Word which is elsewhere compared to a sharp and two-edged sword, to pierce the conscience, to overcome the proud and the stubborn (cf. ch. xi. 4; li. 16; Heb. iv. 12; Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16; xix. 15. See also, for the *pungency* of eloquence, Eccles. xii. 11). It is a lesson: *pointless* speech is no speech for the minister of God. We do not

speak to "gain time," but to gain hearts. In some respects we may be compared to marksmen. In Gentile poets the like figures occur of the *sword* or the *arrow*.

> "His powerful speech
> Pierced the hearer's soul, and left behind,
> Deep in his bosom, its keen point infixt.
> Say through what paths of liquid air
> Our arrows shall we throw?"
>
> (Pind., 'Ol.' 2, 160.)

And so with the apostolic preaching. They told the world in plain terms "that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned." "This was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' It tickled not the ear, but sank into the heart; and when men came from such sermons, they never commended the preacher for his taking voice or gesture, for the fineness of such a simile or the quaintness of such a sentence, but spoke like men conquered with the overpowering force of truth." The Servant of God is also compared to a "polished shaft" (cf. Jer. li. 11). His words *penetrate easily*, because natural, familiar, and not above the capacity of the hearer. "Nothing is more preposterous than for those who profess to aim at men's hearts to shoot over their heads" (South).

III. HIS DEARNESS TO GOD. This polished shaft is covered in the quiver of God. The Almighty takes care of his tools, as every good workman does. Through Israel as his instrument, he designs to manifest his glory. "His Servant will become the Head of a regenerated and expanded Israel, which Jehovah will hold forth to the universe as his fairest prize" (Cheyne). This sense of being related to God and his purposes is the *source of the purest consolation*. It is true the Servant of God is tempted to despondency, as in the typical case of Elijah in the wilderness. The "flesh is weak." On the other hand, just when he is weak, then is the Servant of God strong. The cry of seeming despair in Ps. xxii. 1 is absorbed in the jubilant exultation of the singer at the close, in the prospect of the extension of the kingdom (cf. Matt. xxvii. 46). So here, after the melancholy outburst, "I have laboured in vain," etc., the Servant of Jehovah "gives the lie to all delusive appearances," assured that his recompense is with God. The Servant of God has his *rights*, founded on the nature of God himself and on his covenant. The missionary of the great King has a right to be protected, and to expect submission to his message. "The mention of recompense shows that 'Servant' here has a special meaning of its own. A slave can have no recompense" (Cheyne). He will have a "portion among the great" (ch. liii. 10, 12). And what *is* the great "recompense of the reward"? The noblest that can be thought of—to "bring back Jacob," to "gather Israel," and still more, to be the Light of the nations, to be the Instrument of Jehovah's salvation unto the earth's end. It is natural, it is noble, it is Christian, to have respect to such a recompense. The *quality* of life's rewards is the main thing to be considered. There can be no contradiction between the doctrines of grace and the hopes of reward, if that reward be conceived as, first and last, consisting in the favour, the friendship, the enployment of the righteous and merciful Governor of the world.

IV. GLIMPSES OF THE GREAT REWARD. Already faith, revived in the breast of Jehovah's Servant, is encouraged by large views of the future. 1. *His promised honours*. He is now heartily despised by man; but the "God of Israel," the Redeemer and Avenger, saith that he shall in his future fortunes be the Representative of Israel's glories. He is now under the sway of great despots, heathen lords. The time shall come when kings shall rise up to do him homage, and princes shall bow down before him; for behind him is Jehovah himself, the faithful Covenant-keeper, who has chosen, and therefore will support his Servant. 2. *His mediatorial office*. When the season of Providence has come, the Servant shall not only be helped and saved, but shall become the Source of salvation to others (cf. Ps. xxii. 23—27). He shall raise up the ruined land; he shall assign to the different families the heritages belonging to them; he shall say to the captive Jews, "Go forth!" and they shall return, like a well-shepherded flock, finding pasture everywhere on the way. They shall not be afflicted by the burning sun nor by the illusive mirage. Led by refreshing springs, and finding a highway through the mountains, they shall come from all quarters to the wished-for end of their pilgrimage. The description may be taken as an allegory of life's pilgrimage.—J.

Vers. 14—26.—*Despondency comforted.* I. THE TEMPTATION. "Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me." The temptation is to ascribe the cause of feeling in our own mind to a Being outside us; forgetting that "'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus." It does not follow, because our hearts are dry, that the fountain of comfort is sealed. It does not follow, because we feel ourselves lonely, that the good God has deserted us; nor, because we do not realize the Divine presence, that God has forgotten us. But the mind naturally leans on signs and symbols and outward manifestations. The act of faith—so simple to speak about—the "walk by faith, not by sight," is really most difficult. There are times when even the noblest of mankind are unequal to such an effort. Reason will hardly meet the case. "He that despairs," it has been said, "limits an infinite Power to a finite apprehension, and measures Providence by his own little contracted model." True; and the truth is not consoling. The sense and assurance of love alone can console.

II. DESPONDENCY MET. Not by censure, not by argument, but by the assurance of uninterrupted and undying love. It is a *Divine* love; surpassing, therefore, the noblest manifestations of human love—that of father or mother. A woman may, like a Lady Macbeth, allow some mightier passion to get the better even of maternal love. But there is no mightier passion in the heart of God than the love to his children. *Human memory is infirm; but God cannot forget.* The picture of Israel is graven on the palms of his hands. "It is indelible, like the sacred marks of devotees. Jehovah inverts the usual order. A worshipper needs a consecrating mark to remind him of his relation to God. Zion's God, though not needing such reminder, has condescended to grave Jerusalem on the palms of his hands. The objects of human interest are changing; *God concentrates his thought on his people.* "Thy walls are ever before me." The visible city was indeed destroyed, but God had his eye upon the preservation of the spiritual building for eternity. "Dost thou think that *that* is the city of which I said, 'I engraved thee on the palms of my hands'? Nay; that building is not now built in the midst of you. It is that which shall be revealed in my presence; it was prepared from the time when I meditated to produce a Paradise, and I showed it to Adam before he sinned; when he cast away my command, it was removed from him. And now, lo! it hath been kept by me, even as Paradise." *Men's thoughts decline to the material; God is concerned with the ideal and eternal.* And in this truth lies profound encouragement. Forms decay, institutions come down with a mighty crash; the building of the ages is ever going on. And it must go on by means of the labours of Zion's children. The desolate city will yet be clothed with ornaments like a lonely bride; and she who has been as a desolate widow will have a family too numerous to be contained within present narrow bounds.

III. UNFAILING HOPE IN JEHOVAH. At his bidding, and with the hearty aid of the Gentiles, the exiles shall return to their own houses, as the foster-father carries the child in the bosom of his garment. The custom is Oriental (see on 2 Kings x.). The meaning is that the princes of the Gentiles shall favour and respect Israel. Some fulfilment may be seen in the conduct of the Persian kings, of Alexander and his successors towards the Jews; another kind of fulfilment in the patronage of the Church by Constantine. But the full accomplishment of the prediction remains for the future. But incredulity breaks in. "Can the tyrant be made to disgorge his prey?" This shall take place. Jehovah shall appear in battle-might, as Avenger and Hero of Jacob, and the foes shall be put to shame. *Jehovah—those that hope in him shall not be ashamed.* The strain that began with the mutterings of despondency ends in the triumph of confidence and exultation. Hope in the Eternal—this must be our sure stay in the times of the nation's, the Church's, the individual's need. Our conduct cannot rise higher than our hopes, no more than the water in the pipe can rise higher than the spring-head. He who lives by the hopes of the present and passing world, acts and suffers with a strength that is less than might be his. Nothing in this world can support us against trials which threaten the loss of our worldly all. We can only be borne up by something mightier and greater than this world, not to be found in it, but in the Eternal himself.—J.

Ver. 4.—*A mistaken estimate.* "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." Oft-repeated words. Human ignorance,

surveying the fields, says, "No harvests; or at best no harvests accordant with the toil and tears of the sowing." What folly! As if we could see *beneath the soil* the slumbering seed waiting to spring forth; or the seeds that have been carried as by the birds of the heavens to far-away acres.

I. THE SORROWFUL WORKERS. The words have pain in them. "I have laboured in vain." No man likes to feel that. These are not the tears of indolence, but the sorrows of the toiler. We can sympathize with them; for we have all at seasons felt thus. But the words are: 1. Mistaken in their *main idea.* Who knows *what* success is, or *where* success is? "In vain?" Sometimes the largest harvests grow above the sower's grave. 2. Mistaken in their *central object.* "*I* said." Yes; but who are *you?* God is the Judge. Let no man make the attempt to enter the Divine observatory.

II. THE SAVING CLAUSE. "Yet!" Here comes wisdom after mistake. "Surely my judgment is with the Lord." 1. This quickens inspiration to duty. 2. This sanctifies the sorrow of disappointment. 3. This keeps alive the hope of reward. What a beautiful sentence!—"My work is with my God." It is in good hands.—W. M. S.

Ver. 6.—*A Light to the Gentiles.* "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my Servant, etc." How distinctly this prophesies concerning Christ!—

I. IN RELATION TO THE TRUE GLORY OF HIS KINGDOM. Not to exalt Jacob, or to preserve Israel, but to be a Light to the Gentiles.

II. IN RELATION TO THE HISTORY OF HIS MINISTRY. Why did the Jewish nation despise and crucify the Redeemer? It would have been a *light thing* to serve in such a cause as that which ministered to their glory by restoring their prestige and pre-eminence; but it was "heavy as the cross" to save the world.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*The claim, the confession, and the consolation of the Servant of God.* We may treat this passage either historically or practically. We look at it—

I. IN ITS REFERENCE TO JESUS CHRIST. He was, indeed, an Israel, a Prince with God, as never Jacob was. He was truly a Servant of Jehovah, doing his work as never prophet or nation did before. These words are most appropriate on his lips. 1. *He claimed the attention of mankind.* He said, in other words and ways, "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far." He said that "every one that was of the truth" would hear his words; that he would draw all men unto him. He summoned the weary hearts of men everywhere to come and find rest in him and in his service; he offered himself to mankind as the Light of the world, as the Bread of life, etc. He had the most penetrating truth to utter (ver. 2; see John vi. 63). 2. *He confessed a temporary, outward failure.* He had to acknowledge that the men of social standing and of ecclesiastical position did not believe in him; that many of his disciples fell away from him in the time of difficulty and trial; that he was left "alone." 3. *He found great consolation in God.* (1) In the consciousness that the Eternal Father called him to his work (ver. 1). The thought that "the Father had sent him" was his continual refuge. (2) In the assurance that the Father was with him, encompassing him with his protecting love (ver. 2; and see Matt. xxvi. 53). (3) In the confident belief that the future would justify his action and his words. He knew that the time would come when God would be glorified through his life and death (see John xii. 24; xvii. 4). (4) In the unfaltering conviction that his work would receive a Divine reward in his own exaltation (ver. 4).

II. IN ITS APPLICATION TO OURSELVES. 1. *We,* as true teachers, *make our claim.* We confidently believe that we have something to say which is worth the world's attention; which is fitted to penetrate, like a sharp sword, the thoughts, the purposes, the convictions, of mankind; which will give light to the understanding, peace to the conscience, nobility to the character, brightness and beauty to the life, of all who will listen and learn. 2. *We have to make our confession of defeat*—to acknowledge, often, that we have "laboured in vain" (see ch. liii. 1). The truth we preach, or teach, or print, does *not* penetrate; it is like the seed which falls on stony ground—it yields no fruit. Even the influence of our lives, and even the pleadings of our soul with God in earnest prayer, sometimes seem to be unavailing. 3. *We find our consolation in God.* In the conviction that he has called us to do the work in which we are occupied; that he is surrounding us with his Divine protection and inspiring us by his upholding

Spirit; that God will grant increase to our toil in the distant if not in the near future; that he will bestow on us a full reward when the hour of blessed recompense arrives.—C.

Vers. 5—7.—*The greater mission.* The main point of this passage is that far greater triumphs should await the Redeemer of Israel than any recovery of the scattered tribes; he was to be a Light to the whole Gentile world—to be "for salvation to the uttermost part of the earth." The fact that a true but small mission opens out into one that is very much larger, widening and deepening as it proceeds, is one that has many illustrations—

I. IN THE WORK OF THE LORD HIMSELF. As he "grew in wisdom," he found that "his Father's business" involved more than appeared to him when he was twelve years old. There was a time when he instructed his disciples to "go *not* into any way of the Gentiles:" and when he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 6; xv. 24). But later on, he not only recognized for himself that his work was to be wide as humanity and to embrace those furthest away from truth and from God, but he commanded his disciples to "baptize all nations," to "go unto all the world," etc. Under his holy hand his great mission grew, and it became that one which, for the vastness of its proportions and the beneficence of its aim, leaves every human enterprise immeasurably behind.

II. IN THE WORK OF THE APOSTLES OF OUR LORD. James and John, when they were asked by their Master whether they could drink of his cup, answered with sure confidence, "We can;" but they little knew what were the contents of that cup; they little imagined how great, how stupendous, was the task which their Lord would leave in their hands.

III. IN THE WORK OF INDIVIDUAL REFORMERS. At different times men have addressed themselves to some work of necessary reformation. They supposed that they could measure the extent of their task; but they found that as they proceeded it enlarged, and what they first attempted proved to be "a light thing" in comparison with all that they ultimately accomplished. Witness the work of Luther, Knox, Cranmer, Wesley, etc.

IV. IN THE WORK OF EACH CHRISTIAN CHURCH. A Christian Church, when first planted, is most anxious to establish and consolidate itself—to grow in numbers and in reputation and in strength. But before long it awakes to the truth that it has a greater mission to effect than this; it is called into being to exert a powerful influence for good on all the surrounding neighbourhood—to communicate spiritual health and eternal life to all human souls that can be reached and blessed. To establish itself is "a light thing" in comparison with this high and holy function.

1. The entrance on this greater mission should be in the spirit of pure devotion. We should feel that we are God's servants (ver. 5), called to do his work. 2. It should be carried on and completed in God's strength. "My God shall be my Strength."—C.

Vers. 8—12.—*The kingdom of Christ: a missionary sermon.* In an elevated strain, full of high hope and touched with the pure joy of anticipation, the prophet writes of Messiah's kingdom. He calls our attention to—

I. ITS MOST STRIKING CHARACTERISTICS. 1. *Spiritual restoration.* "To establish the earth," or rather to restore the land, and to bring about the repossession by their true owners of the "desolate heritages." In the kingdom of Christ humanity, that had "lain waste" and had produced all kinds of noxious and ugly growths, should be recultivated, bear its own true fruits of peace and righteousness, and be a "land restored." 2. *Spiritual freedom.* To the prisoners of sin, of folly, and of vice, the commanding word will be addressed, "Go forth" (ver. 9); and they will walk in the atmosphere of sacred freedom. 3. *Abundance of truth.* The disciples of Christ are "the children of light;" they walk in the light of his holy truth (ver. 9). 4. The *sheltering and providing power* of the sovereign Saviour. The present Lord shall satisfy their hungering hearts, shall slake their spirits' thirst, shall shelter them from the heats of strong temptation, shall supply them with all-sufficient grace for their recurring need (ver. 10). All its springs are in him and he is near to minister to all their wants.

II. THE OPENNESS OF THE WAY TO ITS FULL ESTABLISHMENT. (Vers. 11, 12.) In the arrangements of Divine providence, when Jesus Christ came and introduced his

gospel to the world, there were ready three things that were wanted to carry it over the world. 1. A missionary people—supplied by the Jewish nation, in whom were all the elements of moral worth and religious enthusiasm. 2. A suitable language—supplied by the Greeks. 3. A highway to distant lands—supplied by Roman roads and Roman laws. And the new faith, which seemed certain to perish as soon as it was born, grew and spread on every hand. It was as if the very obstructions were "away." Difficulties disappeared; a "great door and effectual was opened." And in our time the way is being further opened. Exploration, human science, international treaties, even war itself, is levelling the separating hills and bridging the dividing gulfs; and even into the very heart of China (Sinim?) the missionary is penetrating with the truth of Christ.

III. ITS ACCEPTABLE HOUR. The era in which we live is one in which the Father of all is disposed to bless and save. It is "a day of salvation." The atoning work is wrought; the Divine Spirit is ready to regenerate and renew; the Word of truth and grace is multiplied; great is the company of the preachers; the Churches of Christ are fast awaking to a sense of their obligation and their opportunity. It is a time to pray, to work, and to look for God's favouring presence and redeeming power.—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*God thinking upon us.* No language could be stronger than that which is here employed to assure us of God's remembrance of us. We are thankful for the fulness and force of the promise; for there are at least—

I. THREE TEMPTATIONS TO THINK OTHERWISE. There is: 1. *A consciousness of our littleness.* Thinking of the smallness of this earth as one little planet among the whole stellar universe; of the insignificance of any nation, group, or family of mankind; of the infinitesimal character of the individual,—we are apt to suppose that each one of us is, in the matter of intrinsic worth, undeserving of God's regard. This is very shallow reasoning; but it is not uncommon, nor is it without influence among men. 2. *A sense of our sin.* It is natural enough that we should conclude that our guilt in God's sight has so "separated between us and him" that he banishes us from his thought, as a human father who has been grievously wronged by his son dismisses him from his mind. 3. *An appearance of desertion.* When trial comes upon trial, when all the waves and billows of affliction go over our soul, when all things seem to be against us as they seemed of old to Jacob, it is not surprising if we look up despondently, or even despairingly, to heaven and say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There may come times to us, as to others, when we shall seem abandoned by men, and at length deserted of God—the darkest, bitterest, saddest hour of our life, even as it was of *his* (Matt. xxvii. 26).

II. THE STRONG DIVINE REASSURANCE. The tone of the text is as pathetic as its argument is convincing. The appeal is made to the tenderest human affection—that of motherly love. God says to us, "Though your love for one another *may* fail, even where the tie is the tenderest and strongest, yet my remembrance of you shall not fail." Human attachments do not suffice to indicate the fulness of Divine fidelity; that surpasses anything which our experience will illustrate. He further grants us the assurance that he is as one who has taken the most effective measures to secure the necessary mindfulness; he has, so to speak, made indelible impressions where he cannot fail to see them. He goes as far as language can go to implant in our minds the conviction that, however our logical understanding may argue, however appearances may be against it, we are never out of his mind; he always has us in his heart. The extremity will never come in which we may not say, "I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinketh upon me."—C.

Vers. 23, 25.—*The fear which may be fearless, etc.* We have two conditions indicated in these two texts which present us with a perfect contrast. We have—

I. THE FEAR WHICH MAY BE FEARLESS. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me," or "that hope in me." Reverent trust in the living God, in the Divine Friend of man, has nothing to fear. It may be seriously threatened, but it is secure. Sickness may come, adversity may assail, friends may forsake, bereavement may afflict, death may cast its shadows; but a confiding trust in the love and the faithfulness of God will never be put to shame. It will retain its calmness under all; it will triumph over all.

II. THE HOPE WHICH MUST BE HOPELESS. "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee." He who fights against the people, the truth, the cause of God, is fighting against the Almighty One himself. However promising outward appearances may be, he is foredoomed to utter and disastrous failure: his hope is hopeless.—C.

Ver. 2.—*Fitness for God's service.* The general idea of this section of Isaiah's prophecies needs to be borne in mind. In it "Israel himself, in all his contradictory characteristics, becomes the engrossing subject of the prophet's meditations. His restoration, still future, but indubitable, is celebrated in ch. lx. by an ode somewhat similar to that on the fall of Babylon in the preceding part. But the nearer the great event arrives, and the more the prophet realizes the ideal Israel of the future, the more he is depressed by the low spiritual condition of the actual Israel. Strange to say, this combination of apparently inconsistent data—the splendour of the future and the misery of the present—supplies the material for a specimen of dramatic description surpassing anything in the rest of the Old Testament" (Cheyne). By the "servant of Jehovah" we may understand those sent forth by God as the prophets and teachers of each age, bearing Divine messages of warning and of duty. These are personified, as it were, in the one great Divine Teacher, the Messiah. It was one of the most important features of the ministry in every age that it should convict of sin; therefore the work of the mouth is likened to that of a "sharp sword" (comp. Heb. iv. 12, "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"). Pindar employs the metaphor of the arrow in application to powerful eloquence. And the metaphor of a sword and an arrow, both in the best state of preparation, aptly sets forth the penetrating and subduing efficacy of the gospel. This one feature of fitness for doing God's work in the world—the eloquent, persuasive, convincing tongue—may introduce to us the general subject of "fitness for God's service."

I. IT LIES IN ENDOWMENT. The true servant of God is a *gifted* man—one to whom special powers have been committed, which powers indicate his work, and make him responsible for the doing of it. The proper idea of a Christian ministry is the separation to the work of preaching and teaching of all those who are evidently divinely endowed for preaching and teaching work. The right of a man to do any particular kind of work in the world is simply the right which comes from the divinely given capacity for doing it. If God made us painters, we must paint; if he made us poets, we must shape beautiful thoughts in verse; if he made us preachers, we must preach. Canon Liddon eloquently describes the endowed teacher. "Picture to yourselves a teacher who is not merely under the official obligation to say something, but who is morally convinced that he has something to say. Imagine one who believes alike in the truth of his message, and in the reality of his mission to deliver it. Let this teacher be tender, yet searching; let him win the hearts of men by his kindly humanity, while he probes, ay, to the quick, their moral sores. Let him pursue and expose the latent evil of the human heart through all the mazes of its unrivalled deceitfulness, without sullying his own purity, and without forfeiting his strong belief in the present capacity of every human being for goodness. . . . Clearly, such a teacher must be a moral power;" a "sharp sword." One thing greatly needed in our day is quickness to recognize Divine endowments in men, and brotherly aid to all endowed men in the due exercise of their gifts.

II. IT LIES IN THE DIVINE CALL. For the fact of possessing power is not, standing alone, authority for its being put forth and exercised. There must be the inward Divine call, which may or may not be heard through the voice of outward circumstances. This is the lesson taught by the records of the prophets—Elijah, Isaiah, Jonah, etc. They were endowed, but they did not act until they were called. The distinction is expressed, poetically, in Ps. xxxix. 3, "While I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue." Illustrate from apostles, who were endowed with the Holy Ghost, symbolized in tongues of fire; but who were also *sent ones*. It is one thing to be *able* to speak, it is quite another to be *called* to speak.

III. IT LIES IN RESPONSIVE GOOD WILL. A man may actually deliver God's message unwillingly and grumblingly, as Jonah did, but it is clear that this cannot be regarded as *fit* service. Only when we say, "Lord, just what thou wouldst have me do!

exactly what I desire to do," can we be regarded as servants indeed. This does not say that our good will towards what is God's will for us involves no effort, no conflict with self. The way of earthly prosperity may be the way of our own will; and the way of lifelong disability may be the way of doing God's will and work. Many a man has given up every earthly prospect to preach Christ to his fellow-men. And he is no fit preacher who does not preach with good will—preach from the heart. He should preach because he *must*; he should preach because be *wishes to*.

IV. IT LIES IN CULTURE OF GIFT. This is the human element in the fitness, which is as truly essential as the Divine element, the natural endowment. We cannot give the gift, but we can train it into efficiency. It has to be prepared for the work of a particular age, and for the demands of a particular sphere. The sword has to be furbished and sharpened. The "gift" has to use instruments; it must gain skill in the use of instruments. The culture properly takes two forms. 1. Self-culture, the whole responsibility of which lies on the would-be minister. 2. Culture by agencies, which can be secured by those who recognize in the would-be minister the Divine "gift." Let the endowed and cultured man *wait on God*, and of this we are sure—he will find both his place and his work.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Mistaken ideas of success.* None of us can properly understand or estimate our life-work. We do not know what it was designed to do, nor where it properly fits. Picturing the ideal "Servant of the Lord," Isaiah represents him as disheartened with the issues of his testimony and labour. The Messiah seemed to be "all day long stretching forth his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Mistakes about the success of work are quite common to God's servants. David thought it was no good to try any longer, and exclaimed, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Elijah moaned in his weariness and grief, "I am not better [more successful] than my fathers;" and Jonah, fainting in the sun beside the withered gourd, "It is better for me to die than to live. To him the Nineveh-mission appeared as an utter and disgraceful failure. We must leave God to estimate our successes. "The day" shall declare it. We must wait for the "day of God."

I. MAN IS REQUIRED TO WORK WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF RESULTS. And that is reasonable, (1) because his one work is obedience; (2) because the best results are long in coming; (3) because any one man's work is never more than a *part* of a whole, and results follow the united influence of all the parts; and (4) because any seeming result man may recognize is only a cause of other and better results that are quite beyond his estimating. George Macdonald makes one of his heroes reproach his brother for good advice given which had led to unpleasant consequences, and the brother gives the following forcible reply: "My dear fellow, I gave you no advice that had the least regard to the consequence of following it! That was the one thing you had nothing to do with."

II. MAN MAY BE CULTURED THROUGH HIS DISTRESS AT RESULTS. One point only is suggested. Seeming failure reveals the self-seeking which had been in his work. And it is the best of culture to get true knowledge of ourselves. The man who aims for results really works for himself—for his own praise. We must just work as God's servants, satisfied to do work that can stand his inspection; and none of us will find it easy to draw in our minds from *results*, and concentrate them on *work*.

III. MAN MAY BE SURE OF THE DIVINE ACCEPTANCE OF GOOD WORK. And that is an all-satisfying *result*. It is only man's poor view that makes results into the standard that tests the value of the work. The best work may produce little, but it is "best work" nevertheless. Many a minister has failed in his sphere. At least, so the world says. But its foolish estimate does not matter. Was it good work? God's judgment is of the work.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The great commission.* St. Paul uses this verse in his address to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 47). "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, (saying,) I have set thee to be a Light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." The truth illustrated is that no

man can have exclusive privileges; everything he has belongs to the whole race—it is the property of everybody. This can be illustrated in prominent cases. Aristotle's philosophic thoughts belong to the race. Raphael's paintings are the inspiration of the race. Homer's poetry is revelation for the race. Handel's music is song-praise for the race. The truth is true in the smallest things. Whatsoever any one of us has he has for others, he has for all, he has for "whosoever will." Our text declares this to be true of the Jewish race—as indeed of all races. Israel seemed to have some peculiar privileges. It had them for others. They could not be exclusive. Through Israel all men were to be saved. Their sound was to go out even to the ends of the earth. There could be no keeping to a limited sphere even the privilege of the Messiah being born into the Jewish race. Let him but grow to his manhood, and he will say, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring" (John x. 16). Getting practical application for this searching truth, we note—

I. MAN HAS INFLUENCE WITHIN THE RANGE OF HIS OWN PURPOSES. We may make our life-spheres. We may decide what we will do, and where we will do it. We may propose to limit ourselves to a certain number whom we will endeavour to aid and bless. Our energy can do much, and we often speak of men's influence as *limited.* And it is so far true that every man has a *first circle*—a sphere immediately round him; and it is well that it should have his best work.

II. MAN HAS INFLUENCE BEYOND ANY PURPOSES OF HIS OWN. You may break the scent-bottle to purify a room, but the fragrance will fill the house. Jesus came to the Jews, but his salvation has gone forth to the ends of the earth. We may live for a home, but the glory of gracious character fills a street. We may preach to a congregation, but strangers may hear, and from us carry inspiring words to the distant colonies. Every one of us may truly say, "Humanity is my congregation; the world is my sphere."

III. A MAN'S LARGER INFLUENCE DEPENDS ON THE CHARACTER SHOWN IN THE SMALLER SPHERE. Especially on his "individuality." By just that in which a man differs from other men, his sphere of influence is the whole world.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—"*The acceptable time.*" Called also a "day of salvation." There can be no doubt that by this expression is meant the period of the new dispensation, at the commencement of which the Messiah appeared, to effect the work of human redemption, and during which the blessings of that redemption are being communicated to mankind. We may say it is the period in which God had reconciled the world unto himself; in which sinful men can come to God, and deal with him in respect of their sins, through an appointed Mediator. "All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him. And this makes the gospel-time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, and reconciled and recommended to him" (Matthew Henry). Our Lord used this expression in his remarkable Messianic sermon at Nazareth, declaring that he had come to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke xiv. 19), probably taking his figure from the joyousness of the Jewish year of jubilee. From this passage, what is understood as a "simple gospel sermon" may be preached.

I. THERE MAY BE HINDRANCES TO DIVINE ACCEPTANCE. Get right apprehensions of God, and it will be understood that, under some circumstances, he cannot accept—he must reject, he must frown, he must be against man. Acceptance, to be any moral good to us, must be based on righteousness. We do not care for acceptance unless we are quite sure that God is *right* in accepting. Illustrate this in connection with the three prominent figures we use for God. 1. *King.* Certainly a king cannot always accept his subjects. 2. *Moral Governor.* A very intangible figure. But the addition of the word "moral" shows clearly that conditions are involved. 3. *Father.* True fathers must sometimes hold off their sons.

II. THE HINDRANCES MAY BE SUCH AS WE PUT IN THE WAY. It is easy to say the hindrances are *our sins;* it is much more searching to say they are the *sinfulness* of which our sins are the expression. It would be easy to forgive sins, if our sinfulness were put away. And Christ's mission brought to us an "acceptable time," because it bore upon getting away both the sinfulness and the sin.

III. THE HINDRANCES MAY BE SUCH AS GOD MUST PUT IN THE WAY. This the

preacher must deal with according to the notions he has of God's *Law* and God's *righteousness*. He has demands; acceptance must be hindered until they are reasonably met.

IV. WHEN GOD AND MAN AGREE TO PUT THE HINDRANCES AWAY, THE ACCEPTABLE TIME HAS COME. Man must put away his sinfulness in penitence. God will put away his claims in mercy; and righteousness and peace can kiss each other. Christ bears mediatorial relations both to God and man.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The ideal state.* The return journey of the exiles is here compared to that of a well-tended flock, which has no temptation to roam, for every need is supplied and every possible danger is averted from them. Prophetic figures can never be read aright unless we carefully distinguish between the pictured ideals of poets and prophets, and their realization in actual life. The actual never comes up to the ideal. The ideal is the best possible under the best of circumstances; the actual is the best possible under circumstances that come far short of the best possible. Ideals have their mission in keeping up our standards, and making us "aim high." Utopias are never found, but the world everywhere is the better because some of the human race have conceived Utopias, and presented their conceptions to their fellows. The absence of all elements of evil from the ideal state is figured by the removal of all sources of physical distress. This applies to the prophetic descriptions in the passage before us, and to the pictures of the heavenly given us in the Book of Revelation, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." The points which may be profitably treated are these two.

I. DISABILITIES ARE NEEDED WHILE MORAL CULTURE HAS TO BE CARRIED ON. If any proof were required of that fallen and deteriorated condition of man which is a matter of universal experience and conviction and really requires no proof, it would be found in the fact that man now will only learn his best moral lessons *through suffering*. We so readily think of suffering as arranged in the sovereign will of God; it is a sovereign *necessity* in meeting man's fallen condition. Why will we not learn without these disabilities? It is clear that we do not, and we will not. It is evident that we are biassed towards wrong, towards self-willedness. Bodily pain, life-distresses, are necessary to the culture of moral creatures who have become enslaved to self-will. Sorrow is graciously linked with sin, lest sin should come to be loved.

II. DISABILITIES MAY BE REMOVED WHEN MORAL CHARACTER IS ESTABLISHED. When men are *all holy*, then their surroundings may be *all beautiful*. There is no smiting heat, no chilling cold, no lack of food, no biting hunger, no raging thirst, no wearing pain, no blinding tears, no separating sea, no remorseless death, in heaven, because all who dwell there are established in goodness, and so there is no mission for disabilities to accomplish; their "occupation's gone." And just so far as we win goodness on earth we rise above all our disabilities, heaven is begun below; as with everything, so with love, "*perfect* love casteth out fear."—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Ever-recurring doubts.* What God has to complain of in every age is our "little faith." "He cannot do many mighty works among us because of our unbelief." The reproach here is of the great proportion of the Jewish people, who had become utterly despondent under their long captivity, and even began to complain, not *to* God, that would be right, but *of* God, which was wrong, saying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Consider—

I. THE HUMAN REASONABLENESS OF DOUBT. Days went on for those captives, the days made years, the years passed by the score, and with the utmost straining not one gleam of light could be seen in the nation's sky. Indeed, the political conditions and combinations made the hope of return more vain than ever. From the human point of view it was time indeed to doubt. "See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such times their temptations may be alarmingly violent. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, 'God has forsaken his Church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people'" (Matthew Henry). This text is "not an expression of absolute unbelief; it is the pain of seemingly unreturned affection, which borrows the language of scepticism. The highest act of faith is to see God with the heart when all outward

tokens of his presence are removed. There are times when even the noblest of mankind are unequal to such an effort" (Cheyne). So long as we are dependent on the senses, and our knowledge is strictly limited, for disciplinary purposes, so long there is a good sense in which it is reasonable for us to doubt.

II. THE DIVINE UNREASONABLENESS OF DOUBT. Knowing what he is, and what he is purposing and doing, man's doubt must always seem unreasonable to God; and his one response to every doubter is, "Cannot you *trust me*?" It is the love of God, the unchangeable love of God, which puts our best-grounded doubts and fears to shame. Exactly this is pressed on the attention of despondent Israel by God's comparing himself to a mother whose child is daily feeding on her own life. Such mothers have a most sacrificing, passionate love for their children, and no intenser simile could have been found. "Thou art more than mother dear;" then how can we doubt? Why not rest in the love, and be at peace? Illustrating the strength of mother-love, Lander says he frequently met, during his journey in Africa, with mothers who carried about their persons little wooden images of their deceased infants, to whose lips they presented a portion of food whenever they partook of it themselves, and nothing could induce them to part with these inanimate memorials.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The closeness of the Divine interest.* The idea of the passage is that the plan of Jerusalem remained in God's sight, though the Chaldeans had devastated it, and even broken down its walls. It could all be built again, after the plan in the Divine mind. Thus impressively it is suggested that nothing, no sort of outward circumstance or calamity, can remove us from God's thought and care. His supreme care is for *us*, and that abides through all conceivable changes of condition and circumstance. "It was the custom among the Hebrews and other Eastern nations to trace upon the palms of the hands the outlines of any object of affection or admiration. By this means the traveller always had before him a visible memorial of the city or place he had visited. The sketch, although necessarily imperfect, was nevertheless indelible, as it was produced by puncturing the skin with a sharp instrument, and introducing into the punctures a peculiar dye, very much in the same manner in which a sailor prints on his arm the figure of an anchor or the initials of his own name. From the indestructible nature of the sketch the process might be called a species of engraving." Dean Plumptre says, "The words point to the almost universal practice of tattooing. A man thus 'engraved' the name of his god, or the outlines of his home, or the face of her he loved, upon his hands or arms. So, by a boldly anthropomorphic figure, Jehovah had 'graven' Jerusalem on his hands. He could not act without being reminded of her." Roberts says that "he never saw or heard of things being engraved on the palms of the hands. The palms are, however, believed to have written on them the fate of the individual, and from this, it is common to say, in reference to men or things, they are written on the palms of his hands." The assurance given in this figurative form may be opened in two directions.

I. ALWAYS IN SIGHT, TO BE CARED FOR. This is true of friends who truly love one another—of husband and wife, of parent and children. They may not be always in bodily sight; they are always in thought, which is soul-sight. Of God it is said, "He careth for you." We are always in his thought. Round us, wherever we may be, are the "everlasting arms."

II. ALWAYS IN SIGHT, TO BE WORKED FOR. This is quite an additional idea. Others may care for us, who have nothing to do for us or can do nothing. God's care is an active care, finding due expression in tendings, watchings, providings, and arrangings. He keeps us before him, in order that he may do for us exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*No shame in waiting for God.* "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope. Quaintly stating the reasons for God's withholding his blessings from us awhile, Thomas Brookes (1650) says, "God oftentimes delays, that his people may come to him with greater strength and importunity. He puts them off, that they may put on with more life and vigour. God seems to be cold, that he may make us the more hot; he seems to be slack, that he may make

us the more earnest; he seems to be backward, that he may make us the more forward in pressing upon him." The particular shame here referred to is that which comes from *disappointment* of expectations and hopes.

"The hope that's built upon his word
Can ne'er be overthrown."

The line of thought suggested is this: Find the various sources whence comes our disappointment with men, and show, in each case, that they cannot possibly apply to God.

I. MEN PROMISE MORE THAN THEY CAN PERFORM. Often they do this in (1) gushing and impulsive generosity; or in (2) desire to produce an extravagant impression of their ability; or in (3) false estimate of their means; or in (4) simple but weak good nature. Such people are not thoroughly *true;* and we learn by experience never to trust their promises. We give them credit for meaning well, and then forget what they said. God's promises are strictly true to his intentions and his power.

II. MEN PROMISE WHAT THEY NEVER INTEND TO PERFORM. A man who had just parted from a female friend was overheard to say, "I told her more in a minute than she will find come true in a twelvemonth." Men intentionally deceive, and then we cannot but be ashamed and disappointed in them. Of this we may be quite sure—God intends to fulfil everything he promises. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

III. MEN PROMISE WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES NEVER ALLOW THEM TO PERFORM. With the best intentions, and the best ability at the time of promising, men cannot anticipate the changes of life, and may disappoint us through force of circumstances. But he who sees the end from the beginning makes his promises in view of every possible contingency; and

"His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that moves the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

R. T.

EXPOSITION

CHAPTER L.

This chapter seems to be made up of short fragments, which the collector, or collectors, of Isaiah's writings regarded as too precious to be lost, and which they consequently here threw together, though in reality they were detached utterances, and are not even connected in subject-matter. Vers. 1—3 are a rebuke to the exiles for deeming themselves wholly rejected, and not rising to the occasion now that deliverance is at hand. Vers. 4—9 carry on the account of "the Servant of the Lord" from ch. xlix. 12, further describing his humiliation, and declaring his steadfastness and his faith. Vers. 10, 11 are an exhortation to weak believers generally, and contain an encouragement and a warning.

Ver. 1.—Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? On account of her persistent "backsliding," God had "put away Israel," Judah's sister, and had "given her a bill of divorce" (Jer. iii. 8). **But he had not repudiated Judah;** and her children were wrong to suppose themselves altogether cast off (see ch. xlix. 14). They had, in fact, by their **transgressions,** especially their idolatries, wilfully divorced themselves, or at any rate separated themselves, from God; but no sentence had gone forth from him to bar reconciliation and return. **Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?** Neither has God exercised the right, regarded as inherent in a parent (Exod. xxi. 7; 2 Kings iv. 11; Neh. vi. 5, 8), of selling his children to a creditor. They are not sold—he has "taken no money for them" (Ps. xliv. 12; ch. lii. 3); and the Babylonians are thus not their rightful owners (ch. xlix. 24)—they are still God's children, his property, and the objects of his care. **For your iniquities . . . for your transgressions;** rather, *by your iniquities . . . by your transgressions.* The separation, such as it was, between God and his people was caused by their sins, not by any act of his.

Ver. 2.—Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? Such being the condition of things; Judah having rejected me, not I them—why, "when I came" and an-

nounced deliverance from Babylon, was there no response? Why did no champion appear? Is it that my power was doubted? that it was feared my hand was shortened, so that it could not redeem or deliver? But I am he who has power with his rebuke to dry up the sea (Exod. xiv. 21), to make rivers a wilderness (Exod. vii. 20; Josh. iii. 16, 17); in fact, to change the course of nature as seemeth him good, and accomplish his will against all obstacles. Is my hand shortened? *i.e.* "is my power less than it was?" Can any one suppose this? Surely what I have once done I can do again. If I delivered from Egypt, I can redeem from Babylon. Their fish stinketh (comp. Exod. vii. 21). But the object is rather to assert an absolute control over nature than to take the thoughts of the hearers back to any special occasions when control was exercised.

Ver. 3.—I clothe the heavens with blackness (comp. Jer. iv. 28; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; Joel ii. 10; iii. 15; Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 25; Rev. vi. 12). The Egyptian plague of darkness (Exod. x. 21—23) is not adequate to the expressions here used. God means to assert his power of leaving all nature in absolute darkness, if he so choose—a power necessarily belonging to him who said, "Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. i. 3). I make sackcloth their covering (see Rev. vi. 12, "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair").

Vers. 4—9.—A Soliloquy of the Servant of Jehovah. The separateness of this passage has been maintained in the opening paragraph. That it is not of himself that the prophet here speaks, appears (1) from the self-assertion (vers. 4, 5, 9); (2) from the depth of humiliation declared in ver. 6, which is beyond anything recorded of Isaiah. But if he does not speak of himself, he can scarcely speak of any other besides "the Servant," of whom he has already said much (ch. xlii. 1—8; xlix. 1—12), and of whom he has still much more to say (ch. lii. 13—15; liii. 1—12).

Ver. 4.—The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned; literally, *the tongue of disciples;* i.e. a trained tongue, a well-taught tongue. Christ "did nothing of himself; as the Father had *taught* him," so he spoke (John viii. 28). That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; rather, *that I shall know how to sustain by a word him that is weary.* Compare, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). He wakeneth morning by morning . . . mine ear. God held immediate and constant communication with the "Servant"—not enlightening him occasionally, as he did the prophets, by dreams and visions, but continually whispering in his ear. At no time did the Father "leave him alone" (John viii. 29) or cease to speak to him. "Morning by morning" is not to be narrowed to the bare literal meaning, but to be taken in the sense of "uninterruptedly." To hear as the learned; rather, *to hear as disciples hear;* i.e. attentively, submissively, gladly.

Ver. 5.—The Lord hath opened mine ear. Some understand this of the boring of the ear for perpetual service (Ps. xl. 6; Exod. xxi. 6); but it is perhaps better to regard it as intended to mark a contrast between the true Servant and the professed servants, or children of Israel. They "did not hear; their ear was *not* opened; they were treacherous and rebellious from the womb" (ch. xlviii. 8). His ear was opened to receive God's word perpetually; he was not rebellious, did not turn away back. Even when most tried, his final word was, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke xxii. 42).

Ver. 6.—I gave my back to the smiters (see ch. liii. 5, *ad fin.;* and comp. Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 26; John xix. 1). My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. This is a detail not historically recorded by the evangelists; but it may have had a literal fulfilment. Plucking off the hair was not unknown to the Jews as a punishment (see Neh. xiii. 25). I hid not my face from shame and spitting (see Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30). Spitting in the East marked at once contempt and abhorrence. It is a practice which continues to the present day.

Ver. 7.—For the Lord God will help me; rather, *but the Lord God will help me.* I shall not be left always in the hands of my enemies. In this confidence the Servant rests, and is not confounded, even when the worst happens to him. He sets his face like a flint; *i.e.* makes it hard, impassive, expressionless, and at the same time determined, fixed not to give way (comp. Ezek. iii. 8, 9).

Vers. 8, 9.—He is near that justifieth me. God, who knows his innocence, is near at hand, and will shortly "make his righteousness clear as the noonday." This was done when God raised up from the dead "the Holy One and the Just" (Acts iii. 14), whom cruel men "by wicked hands had crucified and slain" (Acts ii. 23). By the resurrection God acquitted Christ of the charge of blasphemy on which he had been condemned, and proclaimed him "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). Who will contend with me?

(compare St. Paul's words in Rom. viii. 33, 34, "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"). God is the sole Judge of all men—of the "Servant" in his human capacity, no less than of others. If he acquits, it is idle for any accuser to stand forth and "contend" or "condemn" (ver. 9). God will help the innocent, whom he has acquitted, and will destroy the accuser by a secret but most sure destruction. The moth shall eat them up (comp. Ps. xxxix. 11, and *infra*, ch. li. 8).

Vers. 10, 11.—An Address of Jehovah to his Church. Some suppose that the Church of Hezekiah's reign is addressed: others the exiles towards the close of the Captivity period. The first verse is an exhortation, encouraging those who fear God, but have insufficient light, to trust in him. The second threatens such as "kindle fire," or cause strife, with retribution.

Ver. 10.—That obeyeth the voice of his servant; that is, of "his servant" for the time being, whether Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or "*the* Servant" κατ' ἐξοχήν. That walketh in darkness. Not clearly seeing his way or knowing what his duty is, and so inclined to despond and doubt. Every such person is bidden to put aside his doubts, and trust wholly in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Hence light will shine in upon him, and his doubts will be resolved, and sufficient light will be granted him to direct his paths.

Ver. 11.—All ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; or, *with firebrands*. The persons intended seem to be those whose "tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (Jas. iii. 6), and who by means of it are employed in "stirring up strife all the day long." They are condemned to be scorched by the fire which they have themselves kindled, to be made wretched by the strife which they have themselves caused to spring up. Their end, moreover, will be to lie down in sorrow; or, *in torture* (Cheyne). God will punish them in the next world for the misery which they have brought about in this, and will thus exercise retributive justice upon the wicked ones, whose main object in life has been to embitter the lives of their fellow-men.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*God's power over nature.* Modern pseudo-science, or "un-science," as it has been called, seems to hold that nature, having been once for all arranged and ordered by God, was thenceforth left to itself, being an automatic machine, bound to work in a certain way, needing no superintendence, and brooking no interference thenceforward. Hence miracles are regarded as impossible, or at any rate as non-occurrent; and we are invited to ascribe to the combined influence of priestcraft and credulity all the statements with respect to supernatural interferences with nature which we find in the history of our race. The view of the sacred writers is the direct opposite of this. God is not regarded as having ever left nature to itself. On the contrary, he is always represented as working with nature and in nature. He "covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. . . . He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow" (Ps. cxlvii. 8—18). He is, in fact, ever in his laws, executing them continually—making the sun to shine, and the moon to give her light, and the stars to sparkle in the canopy of heaven, and the mountains to stand firm, and the winds to blow, and the rain to fall, and the earth to give her increase. The secret of the quasi-unvarying character of nature's laws is his unchangeableness—the fact that "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i. 17). But, as he thus holds nature in his hand, and does not let it go, so he is necessarily at all times omnipotent over nature, and can suspend or change any "law of nature" at his pleasure. In point of fact, he does not do so unless upon emergencies. But, let a fitting occasion come, and it is as easy for him to reverse a law as to maintain it. He can "dry up the sea" in a moment, "make rivers a desert" (ver. 2), "clothe the heaven with blackness" (ver. 3), cause the stars to fall (Matt. xxiv. 29), create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. xxi. 1), cast death and hell into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 14). To regard miracles as impossible is to be an atheist; to say that they are non-occurrent is to fly in the face of history. No doubt many false miracles have been alleged, and an alleged miracle is not to be

received without a searching scrutiny. But the summary rejection of all miracles, which modern pseudo-science proclaims, is as little reasonable as the wholesale acceptance of all alleged miracles without exception.

Vers. 8, 9.—*No condemnation for those whom God justifies.* Those whom God has justified may still be, sometimes are, arraigned (1) by Satan; (2) by their fellow-men.

I. SATAN'S ARRAIGNMENT VAIN. "Hast thou considered my servant Job," said Jehovah to Satan, "that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" To which the answer was given, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job i. 8, 9). Satan arraigned Job as selfish, hypocritical, irreligious, and was allowed to put him to the proof; but with the result that Job's integrity was established, and the accuser put to shame. Satan, however, gains no wisdom by experience. Still he remains "the accuser of the brethren, which accuseth them before God day and night" (Rev. xii. 10). All that can be said against them, doubtless, he says—misrepresents their motives, exposes their shortcomings, exaggerates their failings and their sins. But to what purpose? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. xii. 11). To them whom God has justified, whom God has forgiven, past sins are blotted out, past shortcomings are made up. The merits of Christ suffice to cover all their iniquities. Let them but have true faith in him, let them but cling to him, and then "their sins, though they be as scarlet, shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (ch. i. 18).

II. MAN'S ARRAIGNMENT IDLE. Man's arraignment of his fellow-men can have no effect at all excepting in this world. He may bring them before tribunals, obtain their condemnation, their execution, their temporal disgrace. He may gibbet them in history, misrepresent, malign, blacken their names and their reputations. But over their real selves he is powerless. God justifies them, pardons them, receives them into his kingdom, looks on them with favour, reckons them among his saints, gives them the blessing of eternal communion with him in heaven. What matters it to them that somewhere, in a paltry planet, ignorant and ephemeral mortals speak evil of them and brand their memories? "It is God that justifieth." One justifying word from him may well outweigh any amount of human dispraise, of human contumely. Their end in this world may have been "without honour;" but their entrance into the next is with words at once of promise and of high honour, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4—9.—*Jehovah and his Servant.* The passage is to be compared with ch. xlii. 1—4; xlix. 1—9. The manner in which God is referred to is peculiarly solemn—by his double name, the *Lord Jehovah.*

I. THE SERVANT'S ENDOWMENTS AND TEMPER. *The tongue of disciples.* The "facility of well-trained scholars" (ch. viii. 6; liv. 13)—"a discipled tongue, speaking nothing but what it has learned from God." A tongue the object of which is *comfort to the weary.* Not to astonish, dazzle, bewilder, but to edify and console. "The wisdom of Heaven does not bespeak man in an unknown tongue; nor design, what would be more miraculous than all miracles, that men should be saved by what they could not understand." But true eloquence implies the faculty of listening. "The things we have *heard* declare we unto you." They are things imparted to the *wakened* soul, in the clear conscious hours of calm contemplation, and in the mood of devout sympathy. "The Servant was not a mechanical organ of revelation, but had a spiritual sympathy with it, even when it told of suffering for himself. It is not that bare assent to the truth which is seldom followed by spiritual effects. Nothing is more common than to see men of rare knowledge and raised speculations in the things of God, who have no relish and savour of them in their hearts and affections. Their practice bids defiance to their knowledge. They never know God so as to obey him, and therefore never know him at all. To *hear the Word of God,* and to *hear God speaking in his Word,* are things vastly different" (South). Now, Jehovah had opened an ear to his Servant; and

ne "had not been defiant, had not turned back." All our duties as servants of God resolve themselves into faith, obedience, and patience; and the vital principle of all is submission. Faith, the submission of the understanding; obedience, the submission of the will to what God bids us to do; and patience, submission to what God bids us suffer. In contrast to this temper Jonah may be cited; and in exemplification of it, Jeremiah (xvii. 6; xx. 7). In such a temper humiliation and scorn may be patiently endured.

II. THE DIVINE PRESENCE AND HELP. "Against the crowd of mockers he places the Lord Jehovah." Jehovah is on his side; and therefore he can (in a good sense) harden his face like a flint against his foes, be confident, and not be disappointed. *A good conscience is a tower of strength.* "Near is he that justifieth me." "To justify," in the Old Testament, almost always means to pronounce a man righteous, or prove him so in act. The Servant is thinking of a trial through which he is passing, and where God is the Judge. But "while Job shrinks in terror from the issue, the Servant has no doubt as to a favourable result." The passage is full of a holy and strong confidence, in the strength of which he can face all his foes. Only he who has not defied God (ver. 5) is able to defy the world, and speak of his enemies as falling to pieces like a rotten, moth-eaten garment. And thus from personal experience he is able to comfort and to exhort others. "He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the Name of Jehovah, and rely upon his God." The opposition is between outward darkness and inward light—in the man's own "clear breast," where he "may sit in the centre, and enjoy clear day." To have a conscience defiled and obscured is to be left, in the time of adversity, "wholly in the dark." The man cannot tell whether God is his enemy or his friend; or rather, has cause to suspect him of being his enemy. Then, "if we would have our conscience deal clearly with us, we must deal severely with it. Often scouring and cleansing it will make it bright." We learn from the passage how the *habit of submission* to the Spirit of God, and hearty obedience to his will, tends to promote a reasonable confidence in every hour of trial. Not, indeed, one that is secure against all vicissitudes of wavering and distrust, any more than a strong physical constitution can be exempt from occasional attacks of disease. But in the will absolutely submitted to the Divine, vigorously exerted in the cause of right, may be found a confidence—short, indeed, of perfect assurance, yet "for the purposes of a pious life much more useful."—J.

Ver. 10.—*A searching query.* "Who is among you," etc.? What wonderful discrimination of character there is in Scripture! It *is* "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And it is ever associated with the Divine remedies. Go to a physician, and you often fear the worst. *That* never is so with the great Physician. Beautiful idea of trust! We cannot *force* either conviction or feeling. 1. The position described. 2. The remedy proposed.

I. THE POSITION DESCRIBED. Human life has its *terrible* side. So has nature. You see the broad Sea in her bewitching and entrancing beauty, and you forget how many boats have been lost in the wild tempest. This is said of a devout man: "one who *fears* God." Not, of course, strange that a man who does *not* fear God should feel like this. We may be children, knowing God's will, trying in our poor way to do it. 1. *A season of deep distress.* Other griefs are great; but we feel the religious life cold and indifferent! Not only at times do we feel weakened confidence in *man*, but in God! *Light* is so beautiful. It quickens life. It stirs the pulses of joy. It keeps the home in view. 2. *A season of weak faith.* Not so much in *a* Providence as in the ability to lay hold on the promises. To doubt our sincerity. To doubt our love. Given a man of exceeding faith: he will minimize his troubles, according to the extent of his faith. 3. *A season of pilgrimage.* Still has to *walk* on. Avocations call him forth. Relationships to others must be sustained. Opportunities must be made use of. Life is a continual forthgoing; and we *walk* on. What meditations! What regrets!

II. THE REMEDY PROPOSED. 1. *A Name.* How simple! God is not merely everlasting, or almighty: he is known to us by a *Name*. Christ has shown us the Father. Well, we cannot understand God apart from intuitions and relationships. I thank God for the *lexicon* of the family. 2. *A trust.* Not trying to hurry events. Refusing to judge by appearances. Why should I? Did the Old Testament heroes? Appear-

ances have *deceived*. Even untoward *health* and untoward fortune. 3. *A stay*. This is an old English word. I cannot stay myself on myself—cannot anchor a boat to itself. I can and do *stay* upon that which I see not. I can rely upon a God whose promise invites me. I may refuse to give up that rest, and say, amid human disappointments, "Beautiful tree, under whose shadow I pasture! Blessed rock, where I have refuge from the heat!" We love to feel that we are in him that is "true."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—3.—*Explanation of exile.* The Lord would impress on his exiled people that their calamities found their explanation not in him but in themselves; and we shall find, when we look, that this is the account of our estrangement and distance from God.

I. WHAT ACCOUNTED FOR ISRAEL'S EXILE? 1. It was *not any fickleness* in God. He had not acted toward Israel as a husband often acted toward the wife of whom he was weary; there had been no changeableness on his part. 2. It was *not his necessity*. The father might sell his son when hard pressed by pecuniary straits; but God could never, by any supposition, be reduced to such necessities. He who can say, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills," the generous Donor of all gifts, and bountiful Source of all treasures, cannot be in want of anything. 3. It is not *his inability to protect or to redeem*. There was abundance of Divine power to preserve from captivity or to rescue from it. He who could "dry up the [Red] sea," and in whose hand are the storms and tempests of the sky, could defeat any armies of the invader, or could bring out of bondage, if he chose. 4. It was *their own disobedience* which accounted for it—their iniquities, their transgressions (ver. 1); it was their heedlessness and disobedience when the voice of the Lord was heard rebuking and inviting (ver. 2).

II. WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR OUR ALIENATION FROM GOD? 1. *Nothing in him.* He is not *unwilling* that we should return and be reconciled; he does not weary of his children; he has been obliged to condemn us, but he "earnestly remembers us still." His attitude is one of gracious invitation: all the days of our life long he "stretches out his hands" toward us. He is not *unable*. The power which God shows in nature, in his control of the elements, in regulating the tides of the sea, and directing the tempest in the sky, is small and slight in comparison with that he shows in redeeming a fallen race; mechanical or miraculous power is of a far inferior kind to that which is moral and spiritual. And the Author of nature is the Redeemer of man; he has completed a glorious work of mercy and restoration. He has made it possible for the most guilty to be forgiven, for the foulest to be cleansed, for the most distant to return. There is no obstacle to our restoration in God. 2. *Everything in us.* We "*will not* come unto him that we may have life." (1) We do not *listen* when he speaks; we go on our way, regardless of the fact that God is speaking in his Word, in the sanctuary by Jesus Christ, in his providence. (2) Or we do not *reflect* when we hear. We may come and listen and understand, but go away "hearers only, and not doers;" we are the "people that do not *consider*." (3) Or we do not *decide*. We feel and we entertain the question of returning; we may say, "I will arise," but we do not; conviction loses the name of action; we defer, and remain in exile.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The hearing ear and the helpful tongue.* The whole passage (vers. 4—9) is strikingly appropriate to the spirit and the work of the Messiah; and this verse as much as the rest. For it was true in no small measure: 1. That Jesus received continual communications from the Divine Father. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John v. 19; see also John iii. 11; v. 30; viii. 28, 40). 2. That he spoke many words of cheer and succour (Matt. xi. 28; John xiv. 1—4, 16—18, 27, etc.). Many and manifold were "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." But we will take the text as applicable to the faithful servant of Christ now—more particularly to him who is the minister of Christ. And thus regarded, we infer—

I. THAT WE SHOULD HAVE AN OPEN EAR TO WELCOME ALL THE TRUTH GOD HAS TO TEACH US. Between the man who knows enough to find admission into the kingdom of Christ and the man who has been best instructed in that kingdom, there is a very

great difference, a very large distance. We stand somewhere along this line. But where? Near the starting-point or near the goal? It is a question of grave consequence. Not only because it is most desirable for our own sake that we should reach the highest attainable point of heavenly wisdom; but also, and principally, because the extent of our knowledge of God and of his truth is the measure of our power to influence and bless our fellow-men. A man who is learning daily of God is a man who is daily gaining power to teach and help his brethren. Therefore have the ear to hear, the mind to understand, the spirit of reverent, earnest docility. Learn of the written Word, of the human ministry, of Divine providence, of the discipline of life. Morning by morning be receptive of the truth which the Father is desirous of teaching; let no day pass on which something more of holy wisdom is not treasured in the mind, is not hidden in the heart.

II. THAT WE SHOULD STUDY TO BE HELPFUL IN OUR SPEECH. Some men speak as often to wound as they do to heal, to disturb and distress as to comfort and to cheer. Immeasurable is the opportunity we possess in the way of rendering help by simple but kindly speech. Not by a few elaborate endeavours, but by a multitude of friendly utterances, unchronicled and unconsidered, do we benefit and even bless our kind. To comfort the sad, to cheer the weary on their hard way, to guide the perplexed, to help the wavering to a wise decision, to strengthen those who are ready to faint in some field of holy usefulness, to whisper Christian hope in dying ears,—this may satisfy the ambition of the good and wise.—C.

Vers. 5—10.—*Signs of faithful service.* Whether this is intended to point to the Person and work of the Messiah, or to that of some living prophet, it treats of the faithful servant of God; it is applicable to any one among us "that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant" (ver. 10). We find here marks of fidelity in holy service.

I. COMING INTO THE SHADOW OF PERSECUTION. In doing this the faithful one: 1. Follows in the train of the noblest men of ancient time (Matt. v. 12). 2. Treads in the footsteps of the Divine Master (Matt. xvi. 24, 25; x. 22—25). 3. Takes the necessary consequence of his faithfulness. For the man who fearlessly speaks the truth, and unwaveringly follows the example of Christ, must come into conflict with the error and the evil which is in the world. He must (1) teach that against which the pride of human intellect will rebel (Mark x. 15; 1 Cor. i. 23; ii. 14; iii. 18); (2) say and do things which reflect upon the habits of men; (3) take up positions which militate against the temporal interests of men (see Acts xix. 25). It is still true, though the provocation and the resentment take different forms in our time, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12).

II. RESOLUTELY PERSISTING IN THE PATH OF FAITHFULNESS. Not "turning away back;" "setting our face like a flint"—immovably determined to go on in the direction in which truth is pointing, to which God is calling. "None of these things [neither bonds nor afflictions] move me," is the language of Christian fidelity (see Acts xx. 24; Phil. i. 20).

III. FINDING REFUGE IN GOD. "The Lord God will help me; and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (ver. 7); "He is near that justifieth me" (ver. 8). Let him that obeyeth and walketh in darkness trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God—upon his near presence, upon his parental pity, upon his upholding grace, upon his overruling, victorious power, which will make truth and righteousness to triumph in the end.—C.

Ver. 11.—*Ineffectual light and guilty darkness.* These words are not applicable to those who have had no special privileges, and to whom there has been no alternative but that of groping their way in such light as they could gain from their own reason and from the conclusions of other men. They apply to those only who will not walk in the light which is offered them. There are—

I. THOSE WHO SEEK NO DIRECT ILLUMINATION IN THEIR CHRISTIAN COURSE. If we would order our Christian life according to the will of our Divine Master, we must not content ourselves with regulating our daily conduct by the rules and maxims which are current in the circles in which we move, or by the notions of propriety we happen

to have formed from our elders and associates. We are bound to ask and to consider what the will of Christ is, as revealed in his Word and as illustrated in his life; and we are bound to seek the illumination of his Divine Spirit. Otherwise, we shall walk along a very much lower level than our Lord intended us to take. And though we be not finally condemned, yet will the time come when we shall awake to our grievous error, and be afflicted with a profound regret.

II. THOSE WHO PERSIST IN CONSTRUCTING THEIR OWN THEOLOGY. God has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ; in him and through him we know his nature, his disposition, his will concerning us; we know the way by which we can regain his favour, return to his likeness, ascend to his home in heaven. But there are those who will not learn and live; who proudly turn away from the Teacher that came from God to tell us of the holy Father of man. They prefer to construct their own theology; it is an utterly unsatisfying one; it is not the Bread of life, but the ashes of disappointment. And they pay, in a great and awful privation, the penalty of their folly and their sin.

III. THOSE WHO WILL NOT LEARN FROM GOD THE MEANING AND THE WORTH OF HUMAN LIFE. What are we here for? Can anything be made of the mortal life we are living? Is everything vanity? May we treat our life as a game to be played out; or as a mart where all things can be turned into money; or as a selfish scramble in which the strongest and swiftest secure the best prizes? There are many that say, "Who will show us any good? Life is *not* worth living." They walk in the light of the poor sparks their own wit has kindled. They will "lie down in sorrow;" they will come to mourn their great mistake, to reproach themselves for the greatness of their folly, the seriousness of their sin. For all the while that they were cynically dismissing their opportunities, there was shining on their life the light that comes from heaven. Christ was inviting them to make of their earthly life a holy sacrifice unto the living God, a noble and valuable service to their fellow-men, a time of pure and sacred joy, a discipline that would train the docile and obedient spirit for a broader sphere and a brighter life in a higher kingdom.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Selling ourselves.* "For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves." Reference is to the right which fathers in the East possessed, of selling their children into slavery; and also to the power of judges to condemn malefactors to slavery. The Jews sold themselves to work wickedness, and the judgment which came upon them, in their being sold into the hands of their Babylonian enemies, was consequently, in fact, their own work. They might say that they *were sold;* God convicts them by reminding them of the truth they preferred not to see. The deeper truth was that they *sold themselves.* Illustrate from Goethe's drama of 'Faust.' In Scripture a man who is fully resolved on a course of action, is said to have "sold himself" to that course (see 1 Kings xxi. 20); and a Divine judgment, which takes form as the conquest of a nation by its enemies, is called a "selling" to the enemy (see Judg. ii. 14; x. 7). St. Paul even uses the same figure in Rom. vii. 14, saying, "The Law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." The figure suggests that, by giving himself up to wilfulness, self-indulgence, and sin, a man expects to *get a price,* and deludes himself into the idea that the price will be worth the risk. Practical applications may be made by considering—

I. MAN, THE SELLER. 1. What has he to sell? Himself—his powers, time, gifts, relationships, influence, and possibilities. 2. Has he any right to sell? No real right, but an apparent right. It is the first sign of man's going wrong, that he claims the right to sell himself, or do what he pleases with his life. A man is really not his own. He has nothing that is his own, and so he has nothing to sell. He must take himself out of the hands of God before he can sell himself to anybody; and the possibility of doing this is the peril involved in trusting man with a limited *free-will.* Still, it should be clearly seen that, when any man sells himself, he sells stolen property, for a man is not his own—he is God's.

II. SELF, THE BUYER. It is the custom to personify evil, and call it Satan, and in the early stages of religious knowledge such personifications are helpful. But the worst Satan, the true Mammon, is Self. He is the purchaser; and no slave-master ever figured the tyranny with which "Self" rules the slaves he purchases.

> "He is the free man whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves besides."

III. PLEASURE, THE PRICE. Self-gratification, indulgence of the lower over the higher powers and faculties. Is the price ever, *even at first*, worthy of the thing sold? Christ has redeemed us from this slavery to self. The purchase price is spoken of as "his own blood." Redeeming us for himself is really buying back for us our own true selves.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Words in season.* The ability to speak suitable words, timely, wise, and helpful, is God's gift, and one of his best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver" (Prov. xxv. 11). We are often pleasantly, and often sadly, reminded how words which we spoke years ago lie in the memories of those who heard, and have exerted continuous influence for weal or woe. And there are few of us who look back over life without regret that golden opportunities for speaking helpful words were missed. "What awakened you?" said a Christian minister on one occasion to a young friend. "It was what you said to me one evening coming out of the lecture-room. As you took me by the hand, you said, 'Mary, one thing is needful.' You said nothing else, and passed on; but I could not forget it." It was a word spoken in the Spirit, and the Lord accompanied it with saving power. The words commended by the prophet are more especially those spoken to the weary; but Scripture connects a very wide meaning with that term. It includes (1) him that is weary with the overtoil of life; (2) him that is weary of the commonness and comparative meanness of labour; (3) him that is weary through the perplexities and difficulties of life; (4) him that is weary through prolonged bearing of pain; (5) him that is weary in well-doing; and (6) him that is weary of the strife with sin.

"Lost for want of a word—
A word that you might have spoken!
Who knows what eyes may be dim,
Or what hearts may be aching and broken?"

Words in season may be—

I. WORDS OF CHEER. Brightly toned. Full of hope. The words of those who can see the "bright side of the shield," and find a smile resting like soft sunlight on everything. In our "bearing" and our "doing" we feel thankful to all who can speak cheerily to us.

II. WORDS OF WARNING. Spoken by the far-sighted men, who can see the issues of our conduct, to which we are blind.

III. WORDS OF COUNSEL. Wise; prudent. The issue of large knowledge; quick observation; varied experience; established character.

IV. WORDS OF REPROOF. Brave words, that show us our faults. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

V. WORDS OF COMFORT. The human agency through which God gives us the resting of his "everlasting arms." Words are "out of season" when they are (1) unadapted; (2) untimely. They are always out of season when they find expression for pride of self rather than for care of others.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Contumely endured in God's service.* This is part of a soliloquy of Messiah, and in it he dwells upon the sufferings which would attend his effort to carry out obediently his Divine mission; and upon his confidence that God would uphold his Servant through all the suffering and shame. This passage should be compared with Ps. xxii. and ch. liii. The point more especially presented in this verse is the *insult* offered to Christ in the closing scenes of his life. This insult seems the strangest part of our Lord's life-experience; but, if he had not known it, he could not have been "in all points tempted like us." The scenes here prophesied are narrated in Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; xxvii. 26—30; Mark xiv. 65; xv. 15—20; Luke xxii. 63—65; xxiii. 11; John xviii. 22, 23; xix. 1—3. Three forms of indignity are mentioned—smiting, or scourging; plucking of hair; and spitting. Each must be estimated in the light of historical descriptions and Eastern sentiments.

I. SCOURGING. The severity and barbarity of a Roman scourging has been brought out by Dr. C. Geikie, who says, "Jesus was now seized by some of the soldiers standing near, and, after being stripped to the waist, was bound in a stooping posture, his hands

behind his back to a post, or low pillar, near the tribunal. He was then beaten till the soldiers chose to stop, with knots of rope or plaited leather thongs, armed at the ends with acorn-shaped drops of lead, or small sharp-pointed bones. In many cases, not only was the back of the person scourged cut open in all directions; even the eyes, the face, and the breast were torn and cut, and the teeth not seldom knocked out. The judge stood by, to stimulate the sinewy executioners by cries of 'Give it him!' but we may trust that Pilate, though his office required his presence, spared himself this crime. Under the fury of the countless stripes, the victims sometimes sank, amidst screams, convulsive leaps, and distortions, into a senseless heap; sometimes died on the spot; sometimes were taken away, an unrecognizable mass of bleeding flesh, to find deliverance in death, from the inflammation and fever, sickness and shame." Few New Testament readers duly appreciate the sufferings which Messiah endured in the judgment-hall. The cross so fills their vision that they fail to see how much he endured before the cross and its final strain and agony were reached.

II. PLUCKING THE HAIR. Easterns have great respect for the beard, and plucking it was as extremely insulting as it was extremely painful. Eastern sentiment on this matter may be illustrated by the treatment of David's ambassadors, one-half of whose beards were shaven off (2 Sam. x. 5). See also David's action when he would feign madness (1 Sam. xxi. 13; comp. 2 Sam. xix. 24; Ezra ix. 3).

III. SPITTING. This was the Eastern expression of contemptuous abhorrence; and so Job poetically expresses his sense of the treatment he had received, by saying, "They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face" (Job xxx. 10). Hanway, in his book of travels, says, "This instance of contempt and reproach offered to Christ was at the same time an expression of malice and a compliance with custom. The practice has descended to later generations; for in the year 1744, when a rebel prisoner was laid before Nadir Shah's general, the soldiers were ordered to spit in his face—an indignity of great antiquity in the East." And Gadsby tells us that "spitting in the face is still practised as a mark of contempt. An officer in Cairo had two Circassian concubines who died suddenly. He charged his wife with being the cause of their death, when she spat in his face. He drew his sabre and killed her. Mehemet Ali once spat in the face of one of his officers, because he used his wife badly."

The practical application of the fact that Messiah bore such insults in doing his work may be made on the following lines. 1. God's message, sent by us, may be an offence to men. 2. If it is, they will be very likely to persuade themselves that *we* are the offence. 3. And when they take up that notion, they will be sure to vent on us the feeling which they have against the message. But this is apostolic consolation: "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*God's help in time of need.* "For the Lord God will help me." This one assurance suffices, and gives the Servant of Jehovah an indomitable strength. "Against the crowd of mockers he places Adonai Jehovah." "Those whom God employs he will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having laid help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along with the Man of his right hand" (Matthew Henry). "Greater is he who is with us than all that can be against us."

"God is my strong Salvation:
What foe have I to fear?"

John Ashworth, in his 'Strange Tales,' dwells on the satisfying fulness of the short and simple prayer, "Lord, help me!" It will fit in everywhere and to everything. It sums up all our need. It appropriately meets us whatever may be our circumstances. In the text, the special need of Divine help is felt in the doing of God's *work*. If we are resolutely set, as Christ was, upon doing and finishing just that which God has given us to do, then—

I. WE MAY MEET WITH INDIFFERENCE. And this is often harder to bear than opposition. Men pass us by. We are not interesting. We are a "voice crying in the wilderness." Sometimes we are behind our age, and God has bidden us remind men of things they ought not to have lost; and then they pass us by as old-fashioned. Sometimes

we are called to be critics of the age in which we live; and then men pass us by because we annoy them by showing up their faults. And sometimes we are before our age, and prepare for the changes that are to come; and then men pass us by, with a smile at our unpractical talk, and call us "foolish dreamers." But we must witness on, whether men will or will not hear; and God will be sure to keep us cheerful.

II. WE MAY MEET WITH OPPOSITION. Messengers for God usually do. It is a bad sign when all men speak well of them. God's messages are always likely to offend self-seeking men, and, as a consequence, God's messengers have to suffer. But God's help will tide us over all times of trial. We only have to learn the holy lesson "how great things we must suffer for his sake." God's help is our unfailing support—a "rock that cannot move." The help of God stands always waiting for us *as promise*. It never actually comes to us until the need has arrived for it. Then we find it is always ready. The grace is there, for the day, for every day. "We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The Justifier's protection.* "Near is he that justifieth me." Reference is to the Servant of Jehovah, whom we identify as the Messiah. The associations of our Lord's trial and death may suggest that he was a malefactor. God allows no such impression to remain. He justifies him, by raising him from the dead and granting him full acceptance. He declares him to have been innocent and righteous. The security of those who have a standing in Christ lies in the plea made for them by their Justifier (see Rom. viii. 33, 34). (For the earlier form of appeal to God as Justifier, see Job and David: Job xxvii. 5; Ps. xxviii. 20, etc.) Compare the expressions, "It is God that justifieth;" "Raised again for our justification;" "Justified in the Spirit." "The Father justified him when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him 'the Lord our Righteousness,' who was made sin for us." It is not, however, the doctrine of justification which is first suggested by the text. Its reference is to the confidence which a wronged, slandered, persecuted good man may have, that God will stand by him, and in due time justify him, bringing forth his righteousness as the light. Our Lord and his servants may say, with misrepresented Job, "I know that" God, my *Goêl*, "my Redeemer, liveth."

I. GOD JUSTIFIES BY GIVING THE INWARD WITNESS OF HIS ACCEPTANCE. It is plain that he gave such witness to Christ in his last hours. Even in the dreadful sense of "being forsaken," our Lord could say, "*My* God, *my* God," and commit himself into the Father's hands. Before Pilate he held such confidence in God's approval that he could calmly reply to him, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me unless it were given thee from above." A divinely whispered "Fear not," from our Justifier, enables us to bear all things.

II. GOD JUSTIFIES BY THE LASTING IMPRESSION THE GOOD MAN PRODUCES. Illustrate from the exclamation of the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." A careful estimate of the inward struggles of Saul of Tarsus brings to view a deep feeling that the claims of Jesus of Nazareth possibly might be true. The good man only gains more power when his goodness is shown on a background of persecutions.

III. GOD JUSTIFIES BY THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE GOOD MAN'S WORK. The slandering and the suffering pass, but the work a man does, and the witness a man makes, abide. Men mistook the Christ. We know the results of his work, and they become the fullest justification of him.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Counsel for those who walk in the dark.* "Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Christians "walk in darkness when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed." The first reference of this passage is to the anxieties of the latter part of Hezekiah's reign, when national dangers were great, and many political parties existed, one recommending one course, and one another. It was very difficult to decide what course to take. Good men, who wanted to do right, "walked in darkness." Use the figure of going an unknown path on a dark night. We only feel safe as we hold some one's hand, and let him guide us. God is the true Guide, and darkness and light are both alike to him. There is a sense in which one must always be walking in the dark. "We are not sufficient of ourselves

even to think anything as of ourselves." "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We can never see more than one step at a time. The future is altogether unknown. If we were sure of ourselves, we can never be sure of others. There is no possibility of our knowing how they will act under given circumstances. Only in vague and uncertain ways can we ever plan, for all our plans are formed in the dark. It is God's law for us that we shall walk through life in the dark. The question is—*Must we walk alone?* That question our text answers. No; we may stay ourselves on our God. Illustrate by the artistic conception of Noel Paton concerning the guide through the death-valley, in his 'Mors Janua Vitæ' picture. God would have us cherish the spirit which says—

"I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light."

The "Name of God," in which we are to trust, is the name of a safe Guide—so the ages say, so the saints of all the ages say. He is the Great-Heart for pilgrims, whether they walk on the hill-ridges of prosperity in the light, or along the valleys of fear and trouble, where the shadows lie thick and heavy.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Disappointed self-trust.* Various interpretations of the *fire* here referred to have been given. Probably the allusion is to the ordinary domestic fire, taken as a figure for the various comforts and supports which men can find for themselves. A self-kindled fire contrasts with divinely given light. Matthew Henry says, "They place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature-comforts are as sparks, short-lived and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end." The figures of the verse may receive explanation from the Eastern fires made with grass, which, while burning, emits many a dancing spark, that, after a vain promise to enliven the surrounding gloom for a moment, suddenly sink into darkness. The wet and shivering inmates of the hovel seek for light and heat by crowding close to the blazing hearth, but after many fruitless attempts, and the consumption of their stock, they are compelled to retire to their ill-covered pallets—"they lie down in sorrow." Let the subject be *self-confidence.*

I. THE SHOW IT MAKES. A man in the power of it starts out bravely; defies the darkness; and easily overcomes first difficulties. The early efforts of self-reliant people attract attention and excite hope. We like to see the working of energy and strong will.

II. THE PLEASURE IT BRINGS. To feel power; to find that men yield to our resoluteness, and that circumstances are mastered by our energy.

III. THE BREVITY OF ITS SUCCESSES. For our strength does not endure. The strain of life steadily increases. Circumstances at last prove greater than we are. We cannot do the things that we would. Peters, who for a while can gird themselves, by-and-by find that another must gird them. Do what we may, we cannot keep the fire of self-trust steadily burning.

IV. THE MISERY WHEN SUCCESS CHANGES TO FAILURE. As it surely does when God puts his hand upon us, damps the fire, puts out the light we have made, keeps away his light, and leaves us alone, cold, smitten: to feel with such a one as Byron—

"The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Impress the folly and the danger of self-trust by the figures given in Jer. xvii. 5—8. —R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LI.

Vers. 1—8.—An Address to Faithful Israel, suggesting Topics of Comfort. The address consists of three nearly equal strophes or stanzas, each commencing with a call, *Shim'u êlai*, "Hearken unto me," or *Haqshibu êlai*, "Attend to me." The prophet appears to be the speaker, and to address himself to the more faithful portion of the people.

Ver. 1.—**Ye that follow after righteousness**; *i.e.* "ye that endeavour to lead righteous lives" (comp. ver. 7). **Ye that seek the Lord.** And do not "seek after idols," as too many of the exiles did (ch. xl. 19; xli. 7; xliv. 9—20; xlvi. 5—8, etc.). **Look unto the rock . . . the hole**; *i.e.* look back at your past history, especially at the early beginnings of it. Consider from what a slight and poor commencement—an aged man and a barren woman (ver. 2)—ye were raised up to be God's people, a numerous nation, a multitude like the sand of the sea. How came this result about? Was it not simply by the blessing of God?

Ver. 2.—**I called him alone**; or, *I called him when he was but one*; i.e. before he had any children (comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 24, "Abraham was one, and he inherited the land"). **And blessed him** (see Gen. xxiv. 1, 35). **And increased him**; *i.e.* "made him a father of many nations" (Gen. xvii. 5). If God could multiply the progeny of *one* man, much more could he make a flourishing nation out of the exiles, who, though but a "remnant" of the pre-Captivity Israel, were yet many thousands in number (see Ezra ii. 64).

Ver. 3.—**The Lord shall comfort Zion** (comp. ch. xl. 1; xlix. 3; li. 12; lii. 9, etc.). Literally, the word used is *has comforted*; i.e. has so determined the matter in his counsels that it may be considered as already accomplished. **Her waste places . . . her wilderness . . . her desert.** Though Nebuchaduezzar "left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen" (2 Kings xxv. 12; Jer. lii. 16), yet the population was not sufficient to maintain cultivation generally. Thus, much of Judæa, during the absence of the exiles, became a "wilderness" and a "desert" (see Ezek. xxxvi. 34). **Like Eden . . . like the garden of the Lord.** The Prophet Joel compares Judæa before its desolation to "the garden of Eden" (ii. 3); and Ezekiel, like Isaiah, prophesies that it shall once more become "like the garden of Eden," when the exiles have returned to it (xxxvii. 35). With the last-named writer, Eden represents all that is glorious, not in nature only, but in art (xxviii. 13; xxxi. 8, 9, 16, 18). **The voice of melody** (comp. ch. xxxv. 10, and *infra*, ver. 11). As music ceases out of the land in time of affliction (ch. xxiv. 8), so when a "time of refreshing from the Lord" arrives, there is at once singing and "melody" (comp. Rev. v. 8; xiv. 2; xv. 2).

Ver. 4.—**Hearken unto me**; rather, *attend to me*—a stronger term than "hearken"—attend, and hear of a greater blessing than the restoration of the land of Judah to cultivation and fruitfulness. God, enthroned anew in Zion, will from thence send forth his light and his truth to the nations, will make his Law known to them, and allow them to partake of his salvation. **O my nation.** Some manuscripts have "O ye nations." But the reading is undoubtedly a wrong one. **A law shall proceed from me.** The Christian "law"—the new covenant—is probably intended. This became, by the preaching of the apostles, **a light of the people**, or rather, *of the peoples*.

Ver. 5.—**My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth.** "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 8). Isaiah always speaks as if the Messianic kingdom was to supervene almost immediately on the return of the exiles to Palestine. It was not revealed to him that there would be an interval of from five hundred to six hundred years between the two events. By God's "righteousness" here we must understand his righteous plans for the redemption of his people through Christ, and for the punishment of those who resist his will and remain impenitent. The *salvation* and the *judgment* are the two parts of the "righteousness." **The isles shall wait upon me** (comp. ch. xli. 1, 5; xlii. 4, 10, 12; xlix. 1; lx. 9, etc.; and the comment on ch. xlii. 4). **On mine arm shall they trust.** God's "arm" is his executive power—that might by which he effects his purposes. The "isles" or "countries" that have been expecting the coming of a Deliverer will have faith in his power to redeem and save them. Christianity was received with more readiness by the Gentiles than by the "peculiar people" (Acts xi. 21; xiii. 42, 46; xiv. 1, 2; xvii. 4, 5; xviii. 6, etc.).

Ver. 6.—**Lift up your eyes to the heavens.** Look to that which seems to you most stable and most certain to endure—the vast firmament of the heavens, and the solid earth beneath it, of which God "bears up the pillars" (Ps. lxxv. 3). Both these, and

man too, are in their nature perishable, and will (or may) vanish away and cease to be. But God, and his power to save, and his eternal law of right, can never pass away, but must endure for evermore. Let Israel be sure that the righteous purposes of God with respect to their own deliverance from Babylon, and to the conversion of the Gentiles, stand firm, and that they will most certainly be accomplished. **The heavens shall vanish away like smoke** (comp. Ps. cii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 10—12). **And the earth shall wax old like a garment.** So also in Ps. cii. 26 and Heb. i. 11. The new heaven and new earth promised by Isaiah (lxv. 17; lxvi. 22), St. Peter (2 Pet. iii. 13), and St. John (Rev. xxi. 1) are created in the last times, because "the first heaven and the first earth have passed away." **They that dwell therein shall die in like manner.** Dr. Kay observes that the Hebrew text does not say, "in like manner," but "*as* in like manner." Man is not subject to the same law of perishableness as the external world, but to a different law. External things simply "pass away" and are no more. Man disappears from the earth, but continues to exist somewhere. He has, by God's gift, a life that is to be unceasing.

Ver. 7.—**Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness.** The highest grade of faithfulness is here addressed—not those who "seek" (ver. 1), but those who have found—who "*know* righteousness," and have the "law" of God *in their "hearts."* Such persons may still be liable to one weakness—they may "fear the reproach of men." The prophet exhorts them to put aside this fear, remembering (1) the nothingness of humanity, and (2) the eternity and imperishableness of God's judgments.

Ver. 8.—**The moth shall eat them** (comp. ch. l. 9). If men themselves never wholly pass away (see the comment on ver. 6), yet it is otherwise with their judgments. These perish absolutely, disappear, and are utterly forgotten.

Vers. 9—11.—AN APPEAL OF THE PROPHET TO GOD TO AROUSE HIMSELF, WITH A PROMISE OF ISRAEL'S RESTORATION. There has been much doubt as to the utterer of this "splendid apostrophe." Zion, the prophet, the angels, Jehovah, and God the Son pleading with God the Father, have been suggested. To us it seems simplest and best to assign the passage to the prophet.

Ver. 9.—**Awake, awake** (comp. Ps. vii. 6; xxxv. 23; xliv. 23; lxxviii. 65). When God neglects the prayers and supplications of his people, he is spoken of as "asleep," and needing to be awoke by a loud cry. The anthropomorphism is obvious, and *of course* not to be taken literally (see 1 Kings xviii. 27, *ad fin.*). **Put on strength.** Gird the strength to thee (Ps. xciii. 1) which thou hadst laid aside while thou wert asleep. **Art thou not it that hath out Rahab?** rather, *was it not thou that didst cleave Rahab in pieces?* Here, as in Ps. lxxxvii. 4 and lxxxix. 10, "Rahab" would seem to be a symbolical expression for Egypt. "Rahab" is literally "pride," or "the proud one." The event alluded to, both here and in Ps. lxxxix. 10, is the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea (see ver. 10). **And wounded the dragon.** "The dragon" is another symbol of the Egyptian power (comp. Ezek. xxix. 3, "Pharaoh, King of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers"). Originally designating God's great enemy, Satan (Gen. iii. 14; Rev. xii. 7—9; xx. 2), it is a term which comes to be applied to the adversaries of the Almighty generally.

Ver. 10.—**Art thou not it which hath dried the sea?** rather, *was it not thou that didst dry up the sea?* (comp. Exod. xiv. 21, 22). The waters of the Red Sea are called those of "the great deep," because they are a portion of the circumambient ocean, not a tideless land-locked basin, like the Mediterranean. **That hath made;** rather, *that madest.* The allusion is to the single occasion of the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites.

Ver. 11.—**The redeemed of the Lord** (see the comment on ch. xxxv. 10, where the same passage occurs with scarcely any variation). Isaiah is not averse to repetitions (see ch. v. 25; ix. 12, 17, 21; x. 4; xi. 1; lxv. 25; xlviii. 22; lvii. 21, etc.).

Vers. 12—16.—AN ADDRESS OF GOD TO HIS CAPTIVE PEOPLE. There is no very clear connection between this passage and the preceding, to which it is certainly not an answer. God comforts the captives under the oppression which they are suffering (1) by reminding them of their oppressors' weakness and short-livedness; (2) by assuring them of speedy deliverance (ver. 14); and (3) by impressing upon them his own power as shown in the past, which is a guarantee that he will protect them in the future (vers. 15, 16).

Ver. 12.—**I am he that comforteth you** (comp. ver. 3, and the comment *ad loc.*). **Who art thou?** Art thou a poor, weak, powerless, unprotected people, which might well tremble at the powerful Babylonians: or art thou not rather a people under the special protection of Jehovah, bound, therefore, to fear no one? **As grass** (comp. ch. xxxvii. 27; xl. 6—8).

Ver. 13.—**And forgettest the Lord thy Maker.** It is not so much apostasy as want of a lively and practical faith with which captive Israel is here reproached. They did not deny God—they only left him out of sight, neglected him, forgot him. **That hath stretched forth the heavens** (comp. ch. xl. 22; xlii. 5; xliv. 24; xlv. 12, etc.). **And laid the foundations of the earth** (see ch. xlviii. 13; Ps. cii. 25; Heb. i. 10). **And hast feared continually . . . because of the fury of the oppressor.** (On the sufferings of the Israelites under their Babylonian oppressors, see the comment on ch. xlii. 22, and again on ch. xlvii. 6.) By the present passage it would appear that life itself was not safe from their cruel fury, when their victims had exasperated them. **Where is the fury of the oppressor?** All their violence and rage will come to nought, when they in their turn become subject to the conquering Persians.

Ver. 14.—**The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed**; rather, *he that is bent down hasteneth to be released*; i.e. such of the exiles as were cramped and bent by fetters, or by the stocks, would speedily, on the fall of Babylon, obtain their release. They would not "die unto the pit," *i.e.* so as to belong to the pit and to be cast into it, but would live and have a sufficiency of sustenance.

Ver. 15.—**But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea**; rather, *for I, the Lord thy God, am he that divided the sea* (comp. ver. 10). The reference is once more to the great miracle wrought at the Exodus, when the Red Sea was "divided" before the host of Israelites (Exod. xiv. 21; comp. Ps. lxxiv. 13). **Whose waves roared** (see Exod. xiv. 27; xv. 10).

Ver. 16.—**And I have put my words in thy mouth.** Some commentators detach this verse altogether from the preceding passage, and regard it as a fragment intruded here out of its proper place by some unaccountable accident. From the close resemblance of the expressions used to those in ch. xlix. 2, they consider that the person addressed must be "the Servant of Jehovah," and hence conclude that the verse "originally stood in some other context" (Cheyne). It is, however, quite possible to regard Israel as still addressed; since Israel too was the recipient of God's words (see ch. lix. 21), and was protected by God's hand from destruction, and kept in existence until the happy time should come when God would create a new heaven and a new earth (ch. lxv. 17) for Israel's dwelling-place, and say unto Zion—*i.e.* to the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. xxi. 2)—**Thou art my people.** This crowning promise well terminates the comforting address wherewith Jehovah at this time saw fit to cheer and encourage his captive people.

Vers. 17—23.—AN ADDRESS OF THE PROPHET TO JERUSALEM. The comfort afforded to Israel generally is now concentrated on Jerusalem. Her condition during the long period of the Captivity is deplored, and her want of a champion to assert her cause and raise her out of the dust is lamented (vers. 17—20). After this, an assurance is given her that the miseries which she has suffered shall pass from her to her great enemy, by whom the dregs of the "cup of trembling" shall be drained, and the last drop wrung out (vers. 21—23).

Ver. 17.—**Awake, awake** (comp. ver. 9 and ch. lii. 1). Isaiah marks the breaks in his prophecy, sometimes by a repetition of terminal clauses, which have the effect of a refrain (ch. v. 25; ix. 12, 17, 21; x. 4; and xlviii. 22; lvii. 21); sometimes by a repetition of initial clauses of a striking character (ch. v. 8, 11, 20; xiii. 1; xv. 1; xvii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 1, 11; xxii. 1; xxiii. 1; xxviii. 1; xxix. 1; xxx. 1; xxxi. 1; xxxiii. 1; xlviii. 1, 12, 16; l. 4, 7, 9, etc.). Here we have thrice over "Awake, awake"—not, however, an exact repetition in the Hebrew, but a near approach to it—each summons forming the commencement of a new paragraph or subsection. **Which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury.** The cup of God's fury was poured out on Jerusalem when the city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, the temple, the royal palace, and the houses of the nobles burnt (2 Kings xxv. 9), the walls broken down (2 Kings xxv. 10), and the bulk of the inhabitants carried away captive to Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 11; comp. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 25; Jer. xlii. 18; xliv. 6; Ezek. xxii. 31, etc.). "The cup of God's fury" is an expression used by Jeremiah (xxv. 15). **The dregs of the cup**; rather, perhaps, *the goblet-cup* (Cheyne), or *the out-swollen cup*. It is the fulness of the measure of Jerusalem's punishment, not its character, which is pointed at.

Ver. 18.—**None to guide her.** From the time that Johanan, the son of Kareah, and the other "captains of the forces," quitted Judæa and fled into Egypt, taking with them Jeremiah and Baruch (Jer. xliii. 5—7), there was no one left in the country with any authority or any ability to direct affairs. The city, no doubt, suffered by this state of things, becoming more ruined and more desolate than it would have been otherwise. Had Johanan and the Jews under him remained in the land, God had promised to "build them, and not pull them down;" to "plant them, and not pluck them up" (Jer. xlii. 10). Thus Jerusalem's extreme desolation was not wholly the result of the Baby-

lonian conquest, but was partly due to the after-misconduct of the Jews left in the country.

Ver. 19.—**These two things.** What are the "*two* things," it is asked, since four are mentioned—**desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword?** The right answer seems to be that of Aben Ezra and Kimchi, that the two things are "desolation," or rather "wasting" within, produced by "famine;" and "destruction" without, produced by "the sword." **Who shall be sorry for thee?** rather, *who will mourn with thee?* Jerusalem is without friends; no man condoles with her over her misfortunes. God alone feels compassion; but even he scarce knows how to comfort. **By whom?** rather, *how?* (comp. Amos vii. 2, 5).

Ver. 20.—**Thy sons have fainted, they lie;** rather, *thy sons fainted; they lay.* The prophet describes the siege and capture of Jerusalem as past, because his standpoint is the time of the Captivity. He depicts the inhabitants of Jerusalem as "faint" through famine, and so weak that they lie prostrate about the streets. **As a wild bull in a net;** rather, *like a gazelle in a net*—panting, exhausted, incapable of the least resistance. **They are full of the fury of the Lord;** *i.e.* the fury of the Lord has been fully poured out upon them.

Ver. 21.—**Drunken, but not with wine** (comp. ch. xxix. 9; and see above, ver. 17, which shows that the appearance of drunkenness had been produced by Jerusalem drinking the cup of God's wrath).

Ver. 22.—**The Lord . . . that pleadeth the cause of his people** (comp. Jer. l. 34, which contains an allusion to this passage). As his people have a relentless adversary, who accuses them continually, and pleads against them (Rev. xii. 10), so it is needful that they should have an untiring advocate. God himself is this Advocate. **The dregs of the cup** (see the comment on ver. 17, *ad fin.*).

Ver. 23.—**I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee.** Babylon, the oppressor of Judah, shall in her turn be made to drink of the cup of which Judah had so long drunk, and shall suffer nearly the same woes which she had inflicted. Meanwhile, Judah should cease to drink of the cup, and have "a time of refreshing." **Bow down, that we may go over;** *i.e.* "submit yourselves to the uttermost, that we may put upon you the most extreme indignity." The metaphor is drawn from the actual practise of conquerors, who made captive kings prostrate themselves, and placed their feet upon their necks, or otherwise trampled upon them (see Josh. x. 24; and comp. 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. p. 7).

HOMILETICS

Ver. 7.—*The servants of God must not fear the reproach of men.* The reproach of men is a thing of small account—

I. BECAUSE MEN ARE APT TO BE MISTAKEN IN THEIR JUDGMENTS. The bulk of men have no wish even to be fair in their judgments. They praise and blame, acquit and condemn, either as their own interests—party or other—are concerned, or sometimes quite at random, according as the fancy takes them. Even such as wish to be fair very often misjudge, either (1) from a want of capacity to judge aright in a delicate case; or (2) from not possessing sufficient data upon which to form a right judgment. It is to be remembered that men's motives are hidden, and can only be guessed at by others; yet the motive is the main point in an action, and that on which its moral character almost wholly depends. If we mistake the motive, we may condemn severely what, if we had really known the motive, we should have highly praised.

II. BECAUSE MEN'S JUDGMENTS SO FREQUENTLY CHANGE. The idol of a nation to-day becomes their detestation to-morrow; or, if not to-morrow, at any rate within a few years. Nothing is more fickle than the popular voice, which will cry one day, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and, a week later, "Crucify him! crucify him!" The opinion formed of a man by his contemporaries is frequently reversed by posterity; and even posterity is not always steadfast, a later age often contradicting the decisions of an earlier. Historic characters, long condemned with almost absolute unanimity, are rehabilitated from time to time by clever writers, and are given niches in the Valhalla of the future.

III. BECAUSE MAN HIMSELF IS ALTOGETHER SO FLEETING, SO WEAK, AND SO LITTLE WORTHY OF REGARD. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (ch. ii. 22). At the best, what is human praise or blame? An opinion, founded on imperfect data, which can at most affect us during the brief term of our sojourn here. What are reproaches and revilings? The weak

ways which men have of venting their spite or their ill humour, when some one, of whom they know very little, has acted otherwise than they expected or wished. "Hard words," it is often remarked, "break no bones." Human censure is but a breath. Why should we allow it to affect us at all? It does not matter what men think of us, but what God thinks. No one was ever more reviled than the One only perfect Man whom the world has ever seen.

Ver. 11.—*No sorrow nor mourning in the final kingdom of the Redeemer.* The promise here set forth with all brevity is graciously expanded in the revelation of St. John, and is inexpressibly comforting to grieved and harassed souls. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," says the apostle, "and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 3, 4). It may be well to consider—

I. THE CAUSES OF THE CHANGE. The apostle notes two causes of the change. 1. There is no more death. The "first death" is past, and the "second death" is not for those who have attained to the glories of the Redeemer's final kingdom. They are secure of "life for evermore." 2. There is no more pain. No bodily pain, since the resurrection-body shall not be liable to any of those pains and sufferings which cause our present body to be a burden to us here below. No mental pain, since the mind shall be at rest, securely stayed upon him who has given it life, and who is its Life. To these causes we may add two more: 3. There is no more parting: no more separation of loving souls, no more loss of friends, or parents, or children, or wife, or brother, or sister; no more tearing of heartstrings through such separation; no more giving or receiving of last adieus. 4. And there is no more sin. "Old things have passed away; all things have become new." New hearts have been given to the redeemed—hearts that are "from sin set free;" hearts sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and so made clean and pure. The sense of sin is gone; shame is gone; remorse, regret, are gone; and so the worst of all the pains of which man is susceptible are fled away.

II. THE GREATNESS OF THE CHANGE. This world is well called "a vale of tears." Pain and suffering cling to us throughout the whole course of our lives from our first breath to our last. We enter life with a cry. All the bodily functions are painful, till use dulls the pain. Life is little but "labour and sorrow," disappointment and illusion. Hunger, thirst, toil, weariness, cold, heat, desire, passion, accompany us through the whole of our worldly existence, and are all of them pains. All of us experience sickness at times, and many of us have chronic ailments which never quit us, and from which we suffer constantly, more or less. There is so much misery in life that numbers quit it voluntarily, and thousands more would do the same were they not restrained by a religious motive. Can a greater change be imagined than a transfer from "the miseries of this sinful world" to the glories of the heavenly kingdom?

"There is a blessed home
Beyond this land of woe,
Where trials never come,
Nor tears of anguish flow;
Where faith is lost in sight,
And patient hope is crown'd,
And everlasting light
Its glory throws around.

"Look up, ye saints of God,
Nor fear to tread below
The path your Saviour trod
Of daily toil and woe.
Wait but a little while
In uncomplaining love,
His own most gracious smile
Shall welcome you above."

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHANGE. It is scarcely necessary to enlarge on this—it is involved in all that has been said. On the one hand, pain, grief, labour, sickness,

partings, tears, qualms of conscience, fear of coming evils, sense of sin; on the other, rest, peace, the sense of pardon, of security, of God's favour, of God's love; no more vicissitudes, no more partings, no more lapses into sin—one constant, unending life of perfect peace and restful joy, in the midst of those we love, and in the continual presence and sight of him who so loved us as to die for us!

"O Paradise, O Paradise,
'Tis weary waiting here;
We long to be where Jesus is,
To feel and see him near—
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight."

Vers. 12—16.—*A just confidence in God is a security against cowardly fears.* Men "fear continually every day" because of the emnity, or fury, or malignity, or cunning, of those who oppress them, or of those who would fain oppress them. They tremble before the wrath of men; they give little thought to the wrath of God. Half the sins that are committed spring from cowardice—a short-sighted cowardice, which consists in fearing those who can, at most, "kill the body," and not fearing him who after death can "destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matt. v. 28). A just confidence in God will secure us against such cowardice, since it will make us feel—

I. RELIANCE UPON GOD'S WILL TO SAVE US. God's mercy is "over all his works," over man especially; in a peculiar manner over such as love him and trust in him. He will not suffer them to be tried "above that they are able." He loves them, and watches over them, and sympathizes with their sufferings, and counts their wrongs, and hears their groans (Exod. ii. 23), and "knows their sorrows" (Exod. iii. 7). Oppressors are hateful to him (ch. i. 23; iii. 15; v. 7, etc.). They provoke him to send upon them "swift destruction." The greater their fury, the more they rouse against them God's indignation, and the closer their destruction draws nigh.

II. RELIANCE UPON GOD'S POWER TO SAVE US. Men are finite; God is infinite. Man is the creature of a day; God is "from everlasting to everlasting." Man fades as grass; God is "strong in power" (ch. xl. 26), unwearied, unfailing. The "fierceness of man turns to God's praise," for that fierceness he is able at any moment to "refrain" (Ps. lxxvi. 10). He who "has stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth," and created man and placed him on the earth, and alone sustains him in life, can at any time sweep him into nothingness, destroy him, and make "all his thoughts perish."

Ver. 22.—*God pleads the cause of his people.* How can God, it may be asked, be at once Judge and Advocate? Can he plead at his own tribunal; entreat himself to show mercy; deprecate his own anger? If not, before what tribunal does he plead? whose mercy does he entreat? whose anger does he deprecate? The prophet himself could, perhaps, scarcely have explained his own words; but the Holy Spirit who inspired them knew exactly in what sense they were true. The riddle has to be solved by the consideration of the distinction of Persons in the Godhead. God the Father is the Judge of man, before whose tribunal all men must one day appear. God the Son is the Advocate (1 John ii. 1), who pleads with the Father on their behalf, intercedes for them (Heb. vii. 25), deprecates the Father's wrath, implores his mercy, entreats for and obtains their pardon. Satan, on the one side, accuses (Rev. xii. 10); but on the other, the Lord Jesus Christ defends. He defends his own, and he overcomes by his own blood (Rev. xii. 11), wherewith he has washed away their sins. He "justifieth" (Rom. viii. 33), and then "who is he that condemneth?" Assuredly, no one.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Instructions to the spiritual Israel.* The people are described as "possessing righteousness," *i.e.* following a way of life in accordance with the Divine

commands; and "seeking Jehovah," *i.e.* attending to all that his mind approves and his will commands.

I. THE LESSON OF THEIR ORIGIN. They had been, as it were, hewn from a rock and dug out of a pit. The allusion is to Abraham. They had sprung from one, and him as good as dead (Heb. xi. 12). They had been as rough as unhewn materials fresh from the quarry when Jehovah took them in hand for his moulding. He had formed the nation out of its primary materials—had taken Abraham and Sarah from a distant land, and formed them into a nation for his own purpose. And then the argument is that he who had done this in the past was able to do as great things in the future—to restore the people from captivity to their own land. The words may be *applied* more generally (cf. Matt. iii. 9, "God is able to raise up of these stones children unto Abraham"). From the rudest material God can fashion masterpieces of grace. The greatest sinner may furnish the elements of character for the greatest saint. In any *true* and *humble* view of his condition the Christian will feel that the language is apposite to himself. "He was found in his natural state as a block of marble; he was moulded and formed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; he was fitted into the spiritual temple. Christians owe all the beauty and grace of their Christian deportment to him. This is an argument to prove that they are dependent on him for all that they have, and that he will keep them and accomplish all his purposes by them. He who has transformed them from rough and unsightly blocks to polished stones fitted for his spiritual temple on earth, is able to keep them still, and to fit them wholly for his temple above."

II. COMFORT FOR THE FUTURE. 1. *External blessings.* The ruined places of Zion are to be restored, the present wilderness of Judæa to be transformed into a garden of Eden—a scene of joy, thanksgiving, and music. The idea of a terrestrial paradise enters into the lore of other nations. Arab legends tell of a garden in the East, on a mount of jacinth, inaccessible to man, of rich soil and equable temperature, well watered and abounding in trees and flowers of rare colours and fragrance. "In the background of man's visions lay a paradise of holy joy, secured from profanation and inaccessible to the guilty; full of objects fitted to delight the senses and elevate the mind; a paradise that granted to its tenant rich and rare immunities, and fed with its perennial streams, the tree of life, and immortality" (Hardwick). There is no reason why we should not think of heaven under such a figure; and every happy renewal of the soul by Divine grace may be termed a transformation of the waste and desert of the heart into the garden of God. 2. *Spiritual blessings.* "Enthroned anew in Israel, Jehovah shall send forth his light and his truth among the distant nations." His righteousness is new—which means "his consistent adherence to his revealed line of action which involves deliverance to faithful or at least repentant Israel, and destruction to those who thwart his all-wise purposes." "Mine arms shall judge the peoples" includes "the darker side of Jehovah's righteousness" (Cheyne). The countries "shall wait" for Jehovah, and trust upon his "arm," *i.e.* his mighty help. Distant lands shall become interested in the true religion, and acknowledge and worship the true God. 3. *The eternity of God's salvation.* The order of the world is elsewhere described in Scripture as everlasting (Gen. viii. 21, 22; ix. 9—11; xlix. 26; Ps. cxlviii. 6). The heavens and the earth appear to be firm and fixed. Yet—against all appearance and probability, against all that specious constancy—they are doomed to vanish away. The most mighty and fixed of created things must disappear; but the promise of God is unfailing. This is one of the finest passages in all poetry. The heavens are to "glide away," disappearing like wreaths of smoke in the air (cf. ch. xxxiv. 4; Heb. i. 11, 12; Ps. cii. 26; 2 Pet. iii. 10—12). The Hebrew was wont to look upon the sky as a "firmament," a solid overarching vault. Yet here it seems thin as a soap-bubble, which the breath of a child may blow into nothingness. There are times when the soul is sick (like Hamlet), and all the magnificence of the heavens seems to pall upon it—a hint that the soul feels it partakes of a life higher than that of the natural world. There are times when the soul triumphs in the transiency of the natural world, conscious that it enjoys an immortality in common with the Eternal. "The earth shall fall to pieces like a garment, and the dwellers therein shall die like gnats; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be annulled." It is not the contempt of a self-poised soul for the material world and its dimensions and its

splendours; but the joy of a trustful soul in affiance with the Saviour-God. That this world will pass away, and that God will remain, are certain. But of what comfort is this to me, unless I am united to the Eternal? He by whose will material things perish and pass away is he by whose will the soul is *redeemed* and saved for ever. To live in faith upon God is to live the life of *intellect* and the life of *love*, neither of which can pass away; for they belong to the eternal essences. In such assurance material things may be seen evaporating, heaven turning to smoke, earth becoming as a tattered robe, "ocean's self turning dry;" while we ourselves pass to him who has been and will be the Dwelling-place and the Saviour of all successive generations.—J.

Vers. 9—11.—*The arm of Jehovah.* Either the people call on Jehovah, or he is concerned as calling on himself to awake and rouse up his might for the defence of his people as in the days of old.

I. THE ARM OF JEHOVAH AS SYMBOLIC OF HIS POWER. It is the symbol of spiritual power opposed to that of darkness, death, the under-world. He is said to have "smitten Rahab, and wounded the dragon." Commonly this has been understood of Egypt, but the reference seems to be more general. It was in ancient thought, generally, the property of a god to be the slayer of monsters, who all of them represent hellish influences. It is spiritual power opposed to worldly violence. He had dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, and made therein a way for the released to pass over. Egypt was the dark historic memory of the people. Its king might well be compared with the fiendish monster of darkness (Ezek. xxix. 3; xxxii. 2; Ps. xxxiv. 13, 14). And so the passage of the Red Sea was the standing symbol of deliverance, of redemption (see Ps. cv.). And in our own hymns and sacred allusions Egypt stands for the bondage of sin, the captivity of the mind to sense, to the devil. And the passing over the Red Sea may be fitly symbolic of salvation by grace, of regeneration or conversion. The argument is from the past to the future. The God who had overcome all obstacles in the way of their deliverance from Egypt was able to overcome all obstacles in the way of their deliverance from Babylon. He might be expected again to manifest his mercy, and save the nation from oppression. And so, in general, the argument holds good for the Church and for the individual: "Because thou hast been my Refuge, under the shadow of thy wings I will put my trust." The *principle* is ever applicable. All God's past interpositions on behalf of his people constitute an argument that he will continue to regard them.

II. THE FUTURE SEEN BY THE LIGHT OF THE PAST. 1. *The ransomed of Jehovah shall return.* The power that lies in the word "redeemed," "ransomed"! All the notions of love, *sacrifice*, *purchase*, that are connected with it! The assurance that flows from the realization of such a state! God will not desert; he cannot lose those whom he has made by so many ties his own. 2. *The joy of the return.* "The custom of singing on a journey is still common in the East. It relieves the tediousness of a journey over extended plains, and stirs the camels to greater speed. So the long tedium of the way from Babylon shall be cheered by songs expressive of gladness and praise." "We are travelling *home to God.*" We are under the guidance of a good Pastor, who goes before, who knows his sheep; of a Leader of salvation who has released his people, and will crown his work of redemption by glorification.

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry."

We are on the way to new releases and fresh redemptions from ill.—J.

Vers. 12—16.—*Expostulation against unbelief.* If the Eternal be the Pastor and the Comforter of Israel, what has Israel to fear?

I. THE NATURAL TIMIDITY OF THE HEART. We are cravens, all of us. We stand in dread of our own image; we quail before "frail man that dieth, and the son of the earth-born who is given up as grass." A frown makes us tremble; a menace unmans us. We are the slaves of custom and opinion. Anxiety is ever conjuring up dangers which exist not, and forecasting calamities which do not occur. So were the Jews ever "on the tenter-hooks of expectation. When the 'aiming' of the enemy seems to

fail, their spirits rise; when it promises to succeed, they fall." How much do we all suffer from "ills that never arrive"!

II. TIMIDITY CORRECTED BY RELIGION. Its cause is touched—forgetfulness of God. Is forgetfulness the result of want of faith, or the origin of faithlessness? Both may be true. Faith needs to be fed from memory, and memory exerts its proper activity under the instigation of faith. Old truths need constantly to be recalled, and to become new truths through the act of attention—the "giving heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." That God is Creator of heaven and earth is an elementary truth of religion. How much may be deduced from it! He who made the earth made the nations that dwell on the face of it; therefore made Israel, and every member of Israel. God creates to *preserve*. His character of Deliverer flows from that of Creator. There is, then, hope for the fettered captive. For he who is Almighty in nature is equally so in the sphere of human life. He who raises storms is able to still them, so that his friends have no cause to fear. The commitment of the truth to the Jewish people, their protection and restoration, seems to be compared to the vast work of creation. The lesson for the timid apprehensive heart is to learn that Omnipotence is engaged in its protection and defence.

"This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our Friend."

J.

Vers. 17—23.—*Encouragement for Jerusalem.* The prophet, or chorus of prophets, is supposed to salute the holy city with a cheering cry.

I. PICTURES OF DISTRESS. *The draught from the cup of Divine wrath.* "The cup of his fury"—"the goblet-cup of reeling." These are figures for the *horror* and *bewilderment* caused by a great catastrophe. It is "to drink the wine of astonishment" (Ps. lx. 3; Ezek. xxiii. 2). Then there is *utter helplessness.* No guide for Jerusalem to be found in all her sons; no strong and helping hand to grasp hers in the hour of her dire need. Desolation, death, famine, and sword—the latter without, the former within (Ezek. vii. 15)—such is the state of the city. *The afflicted mother and her sons.* It is a picture resembling that of Niobe and her doomed offspring. The sons of this mother-city swoon, and lie at the corners of the streets. "Israel the mountain people is likened to a *gazelle*, which all its swiftness and grace have not saved from the hunter's snare." All these things are signs of "the fury of Jehovah, the rebuke of God."

II. UNEXPECTED ENCOURAGEMENT. "The transition from threatening to promise is marked by "therefore" (ch. x. 24; xxvii. 9; xxx. 18). The Lord Jehovah, the God who is the Advocate of his people, speaks. This cup, which makes men reel with the madness of bewilderment, shall be taken from them, and put into the hands of their tormentors—the proud conquerors who had placed their feet upon their necks (cf. Josh. x. 24; Ps. cxxix. 3). Such sudden transitions remind us of the fact of providence, and of the coincidence of human extremity with Divine opportunity. God will not leave himself at any age without a witness in the world—which shall see that the hand of Divine power is not shortened, nor the bowels of Divine goodness straitened; but that God is as able and ready to save his Church as ever. "The difficulty of affairs has baffled and laughed at all resistances of created power, and so made the omnipotent Author of the deliverance visible and conspicuous."—J.

Ver. 2.—*Ancient memories.* "Look unto Abraham your father." It is wise to surround the young with the statues of great and brave and wise men, and to have hanging in the halls of a nation the portraits of their true leaders. So in the Hebrews we are in a chamber of inspired images of the heroes and heroines of faith.

I. THE EYE IS ALWAYS ON SOME OBJECT. We are looking always to objects that elevate or that debase us. Israel at this time was looking to military leaders, longing for some Messiah who should gather together a power sufficient to break the iron yoke of oppression. They were looking, not to the faithful Abrahams, but to the warrior Sauls. The eye thus becomes a window to the heart.

II. THEY HAD FORGOTTEN THEIR ANCIENT POWER. Abraham was a man of faith. He believed in God, and he lived a life of faith in God. When the spirit of Abraham

filled their hearts, then they acted as men who believed that "righteousness exalteth a nation." The true Hebrew power was righteousness. Their psalms glorified, not the sword, but the moral Law of God. The right hand of the Most High was with them when they were a nation that loved righteousness and hated iniquity. "*Therefore* God, thy God, hath exalted thee above thy fellows." The call to all godly men in every age is, "Look to Abraham."—W. M. S.

Ver. 12.—*God the Comforter.* "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." All depends upon *who* it is that comforts us in the great crises of life. We are so apt to lean on those that excuse our weaknesses and comfort us in our sins.

I. GOD HIMSELF IS A COMFORTER. This is his nature. There is emphasis in it. "I even *I*"—the Lord of hosts; the God of whom it is said, "There is nothing too hard for the Lord." We gain comfort when we gain confidence. It is faithlessness that makes us feeble. Let us read the revelation of what God is, and study the history of what God has done for his saints in every age, and we shall find comfort.

II. MAN AT THE BEST IS BUT MAN. Why be afraid of him? Study yourself, your failings, timorousness, and frailty, and be sure that your brother man is just like this. 1. *We are unreasonably afraid of men.* Their power is limited. Their pretension is greater than their power. Do not be deceived by appearances. 2. *We are the subjects of forgetfulness.* "Man shall be made as grass!" We cannot have a better image of the feebleness of human strength. We think too much of man, and forget the Lord our Maker. Look at the heavens. Look at the foundations of the earth. What can shake what God upholds? "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" Ask Pharaoh; and be at rest.—W. M. S.

Ver. 13.—*The nervous temperament.* "Hast feared continually every day." We are not all constituted alike. The instrumentalities by which the great soul within us does its work are diverse in quality. In a material sense we are but dust, yet the dust itself has more steel in it with some than with others. Many have iron nerves and hereditary health, which make them strangers to the trepidations of others. They never walk those caves of terrible gloom in which others often are doomed to wander, nor have they felt the sensitiveness which often turns the experiences of life into torture. We are to meditate now on the *nervous temperament*, and to study especially the relation which the gospel occupies in relation to it. There may be other anodynes of consolation, physical and mental; but my argument will be this—that the religion of Christ stands in special relationship of solace and succour to those who feel with the psalmist, "I am feeble and sore broken, because of the disquietness of my heart." We cannot help being, in one sense, what we were born. The mimosa plant cannot avoid being a mimosa plant, and nothing else. The sensitiveness of a highly wrought nervous system is born with many, and, do what they will, they must carry it with them to the grave. Often misunderstood and misrepresented, often verging on despair, they are bowed down greatly, and go mourning all the day long. Much depends, of course, on the law of association, and on relationships of persons and things. Much, too, depends on religious ideas. There is, for instance, a form of piety sincere enough in itself which feeds perpetual introspection, and is ever tremulous concerning its own state. How different this from the rest which comes from entire trust in Christ! Then, again, there are human relationships which, instead of being ministrants of consolation, strain the heart and irritate the nerves. Oh, the depression that must come, the anxiety that will do its wear and tear, which is derived from alliance with unthankful and foreboding hearts, from fellowship with those who, if they do not consciously know the science of disheartenment, are at all events *au fait* at its practice! When Moses spake with Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, he had in his thought the carping spirit of those whose criticism suggests difficulty and danger too great to be overcome. Some men always see lions in the way, and do an anticipative roaring themselves. Thus he spoke of some who said, "Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven." What an insight this gives on those whose *imagination* creates giants! Now though we may apply specially the words of our text to a nervous temperament—they simply represent a special occasion of depression in the prophet's life; they represent inward fears.

I. THE TRUE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IS LIFE IN CHRIST. Not in self. Not in society. But in Christ. We must go out of ourselves, out of our "moods" and "feelings," that we may look unto Christ and be saved! I am speaking of those who are ever nervously anxious and sensitive. First of all about their salvation, which, alas! is like a "variable quantity" with them. But I wish, also, to apply the idea to human life. Christ is a perfect Brother as well as a perfect Saviour. Redemption is his. Yes; and so is common home-life; so is the gift of daily bread. The great realm of providence is under his sceptre. 1. *Meditate well on this dual aspect of the subject.* First of all, when you are tempted to be morbid analysts of your own spiritual state, to use the scales of weight and measurement for the depth of your love and the height of your faith. There can be no escape from trepidatory alarms so long as we apply aquafortis to the gold of our affection, so long as we microscopically survey the minutiæ of our neglected duties and our multitudinous sins. We must ponder the consolatory words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And this argument applies as much to the ordinary life of every day. Do things *happen* to us, or are our times in God's hands? Our dread of fatalism, with its results of inertia and indifference, has sometimes hindered that quiet trust in God which is the secret of all true strength. Events are in his hand. You cannot make one hair black or white, or add one cubit to your stature. You will become worn and weary by retrospective fears. And what power have you over the dark, deep waves of coming tribulation, or over the advent-hours of grief and death? Be wise. Resolve with promptitude. Persevere with energy. Rise early with alacrity for the service of the day, but cast all anxious thoughts of to-morrow on your Lord. 2. *I do not say that so doing all your fears will cease.* No act of faith is so complete as to shut out all weakness of the soul. But I do say this will be your most perfect anodyne. Other things will help. The bracing air, the oxygen and ozone of the sea-coast, may *tone* your nerves, but it cannot create new ones. The gospel can do the most, but even *that* cannot reorganize the physical frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made; but its atmosphere is the best one for bracing the heart and soothing the fretted, irritated nerve.

II. THERE IS CONTINUITY OF FEAR. We none of us know how frail we are till trial comes. The blooming maiden little thought that care would so soon write itself on her forehead, and that the silvery lines would so early be discovered in her hair. Yet so it is. A mother now, she has had to endure the anxieties of home and the agonies of bereavement. There are some constitutions that can brave much; they keep hale and well, with the pulse even and the eye bright, amid difficulties that would overwhelm others. Let them thank God for the perfectness of the physical frame. But there are some that only *look* robust and bright, and when tribulation comes their strength gives way with marvellous rapidity. The physician says the vascular system is excellent, the muscles strong, the frame perfect, but the nervous system is fragility itself. 1. *Advent-days of trouble do come.* Even *sin* in its first consciousness overwhelms some with fear and trembling. A great horror overwhelms them. The invisible realm of the spirit is suddenly revealed to them, and where before they saw nothing hideous or evil, now reptiles crawl! Yes; there *is* a revelation of sin now as of old. We know what the first sight of accident or death is: how severely it shocks the senses of a child! So sin may, and does, come with an overwhelming consciousness of guilt on some minds. The old cry is heard, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" How terrible, then, if such souls fall into the hands, not of wise physicians, but of unwise irritators of the evil! The nerves will break down, and *have* broken down in thousands of cases, and mania ensues. Study the history of monasteries and convents. Study the history of *some* revivals. The mediævalists worked upon many delicate nervous systems by their hideous pictures of hell and by their fearful harangues concerning it. Nor has the modern Church escaped the danger. *At once* the anxious soul should be led to him who says, "Daughter, *be of good cheer*; thy sins be forgiven thee." 2. *There are seasons when unforeseen calamity comes.* No fleecy cloud presages the coming storm, no floating seaweed tells how near the vessel is to the rocks; but swift as the "bore" that rushes up the Hooghly from the Ganges, the water sweeps in with a swell, and engulfs the precious freights of *unanchored vessels* in its broadening wave. There are seasons when the nerves are made intensely sensitive. The heart is pierced

by the coldness and neglect of some familiar friend. The spirit droops. Ingratitude has wounded, neglect has chilled, cruelty has crushed, and enmity has tried to slay reputation and renown. "The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Who? Certainly not the anxious temperament. Surely at such times it is heart-rest to know the Brother born for adversity, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother; then is the hour to feel the warm radiance of the love of Christ. One smile from the Saviour then is worth all the honour and flattery of a fickle world. Doubt simply means misery and darkness to the anxious temperament. And in such a world as this, where we never know what a day or an hour may bring forth, surely it is wise to obey the counsel concerning God, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace."

III. THERE MAY BE MINISTRATIONS THAT ARE HUMAN AS WELL AS DIVINE. We can perform miracles of healing, not in the old sense, but wonders of restorative powers are within our reach. Is it a child that is nervous and sensitive? See to it, O parent, that you early discern the difference between that little trembling spirit and the stronger brother. Is it a life-companion? See that you do not treat this sensitiveness as a mere weakness to be cured by physical agencies alone—the best curative will be a cheerful mind within, working outwards. 1. *Settled melancholy is terrible, and it often prevails.* Try and avert it by all ministries of hope and cheer and comfort that you can command. Try and do as Wilberforce is said to have done—bring a ray of sunshine across every threshold you cross. We *talk* about courage, but we do not yet fully understand its true philosophy. It is altogether a *related* thing. If constitutionally brave—*that* is not the highest courage. It is easy for some who are born strong to be physically brave; it is easy for some to be determined and defiant; it does not spoil their rest at night to fight battles for themselves or others. But with the nervous temperament to act out all the truth that is in them is a costly affair; it tears their strength to pieces. With *them* to bear the slight of neglect, or the wound of insult, is like a crown of thorns on the heart. With *them* happiness itself is as the life of a plant which has its nerve-centres in other hearts. The best medicine for many is to be understood and appreciated. You cannot talk down or laugh down nervousness. You cannot even argue down the sensitiveness that springs from it. You cannot do all you desire to do even; but *you can do much;* and the evening of life will bring you no sweeter reward than for your Lord's sake to have fulfilled the scriptural command, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ." 2. *Christ's spirit is little understood, and sometimes little honoured.* You have but to study life to see how much *hardness* and *cruelty* there is in it. Begin at the beginning. Take school life—public school life! How are boys trained? Why, to admire the daring and defiant, to humiliate the weak, to laugh at sensibility as womanish, to deal with one another as brutes, where the strongest is lord. And it is said home-petting is cured by such means. Cured? I believe that Christ's book of record will contain martyr-lives of school-days more terrible than the martyrdoms once and for ever made at the stake. Grown-up men do not like to talk of such things; but many look back with a creeping sense of horror at their school-time. The nervous and the sensitive have had their natures repressed and their hearts crushed, who entered public schools with beautiful, child-like, Christ-like spirits. Take a nation. Even when it is *called* Christian, how often is it braggart, defiant, imperious, proud of military strength! how little conciliation to smaller nations!—*that* is thought to be *unworthy* of imperial greatness! We have to live and teach the cross, in its spirit as well as in its doctrine; in its beautiful revelation that he, the Highest and Strongest of all, suffered for us; that he was despised and rejected of men for us; that he gave *himself* for us. Remember, then, that you stand in Christian relationship to the timorous, the sensitive, and the anxious, and ever seek to manifest the spirit of him who would not break the bruised reed.

IV. THERE MUST BE A STUDY OF THE DISEASE TO UNDERSTAND THE REMEDIES. That is why I ask you to meditate on the nervous temperament. How unreal are its images! How it trembles at the idea of solitude! How it fears to-morrow! How it bows in gloom before the advent of disease or death! You cannot see the delicate network of nerves; you cannot understand the mysterious functions of the brain. We are fearfully as well as wonderfully made; then let us remember how easily nervousness is promoted by self-indulgence and sloth, by morbid books, by strange tales told in child-

hood, by companionship with those who take foreboding views of life, and by the domination of "fixed ideas" so difficult to shake off. And all cannot afford change of scene and change of clime. 1. *It is not in medicine to cure all this.* It may alleviate, but it cannot recreate. Earthly appliances are wise in their own way; but the gospel of Christ is *the* relieving power—*that* alone brings out fully the blessed revelation of the fatherhood of God. From the lips that cannot lie we hear the all-sustaining words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ is the great Physician. He can cure the very leprosy of sin, and make the Gehazis whole, so that the trembling child of guilt, whose sin has been of deepest dye, may hear the consoling words, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Christ can say to the leper, "Be thou clean." He gave purity to the penitent's heart, and peace to the publican with conscience distracted about ill-gotten gains; for "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." 2. *Christ alone can interpret life in all its fulness and meaning.* He knows how sad is hopelessness. He came not to save alone the hale, the righteous, the strong. He came also to take the lambs in his arms, and to carry them in his bosom. Blessed Christ! Would he ever make amusement out of the nervous weaknesses of some? Would he ever say, "It cannot be helped; physical law is imperious, and must hold on its way."? Would he not rather comfort and help the weak-hearted? Sometimes a sense of rectitude sustains us in trouble, for unquestionably the upright Corinthian column can bear a greater weight than the leaning one. That erect attitude of the soul which the Scriptures call "uprightness" will enable many a man to be strong. But this cannot do all. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and we have sinned against each other also. We want, above all else, a Saviour. Some suspect their own motives, and are questioners, not of their Lord's Divinity, but of their own sincerity. Yea! and some are sensitively anxious concerning the very foundations of their first repentance towards God, and their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Study, then, Christ's infinite compassion, his perfect knowledge of every human heart—yes, of *yours*. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Never rest in *yourself* alone. Wait and pray! Not for ever will you tremblingly bear the burden of nervous sensibility. Not for ever will the immortal spirit dwell in so frail a tabernacle. In God's own good time, you will be clothed upon with your house from heaven. The day will come when the poor harp will be restrung, sorrow and sighing will be done away; and there shall be no night there.—W. M. S.

Ver. 3.—"*The garden of the Lord.*" The Lord would comfort Zion, and make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness would be found therein. The expression, "garden of the Lord," signified everything that was choice, inviting, eligible, that ministered to peace and satisfaction. It may be taken as suggestive of the Church of Christ, which ought to be, to the outside and unreclaimed world, what the cultivated garden is to the surrounding wilderness. The Church—each separate Church—of Christ should be as the garden of Lord in respect of—

I. CULTURE, DIVINE AND HUMAN. The garden is marked out from other spaces by the superior culture which it receives; every square inch of it has attention from the gardener's hand. The ideal garden is carefully and regularly weeded, digged, planted, pruned, etc. The Church of Christ should show the signs of heavenly, of spiritual culture. On it the Divine Husbandman has bestowed the greatest care. He has wrought upon it, suffered for it, watched over it, tended it with wondrous condescension and inexhaustible love. Human culture has also been expended upon it: the ministry of man, the watchful love, the earnest prayer, the faithful admonition, the solemn vows of its own members, have been given to improve and perfect it: it is, or it should be, well-cultivated ground.

II. SECURITY. The garden is fenced on all sides, that no wild animal, that no intruder of any kind, may enter, to steal or to ravage. The Church of Christ should be a sphere of the greatest possible security. In it there should be no occasion to be dreading the presence of the marauder, of "the thief who comes . . . to steal or to destroy," of the enemy that undermines faith, or that wins away holy love, or that deadens sacred zeal. There we should be free to walk without apprehension, without fear of harm.

III. BEAUTY. We aim to make our gardens as beautiful as the finest taste can

make them; to exclude all that is unsightly, and so to introduce and arrange everything that, in part and in whole, it shall be attractive and inviting. From the Church of Christ should be excluded all that is distasteful to the Divine Lord—all that is irreverent, untruthful, discourteous, ungenerous, inconsiderate. Within the Church should grow and flourish all these graces of the Spirit of God which are fair and comely in the sight of God and man.

IV. FRUITFULNESS. What the fruitage of the productive garden is to the householder, that the many-sided usefulness of the active and earnest Church is to the Lord of the vineyard.

V. VARIETY. That is a poor and imperfect garden in which are only two or three kinds of flowers, and where the beds and lawns are laid out so as to suggest monotony. That is a poor and imperfect Church where only one or two orders of intelligence or moral excellence or piety are found. Our Lord does not want to see all the flowers and shrubs and trees in his garden cut and trimmed so as to be of an unvarying pattern.

VI. PEACE AND HAPPINESS. We associate with the garden the thought of tranquillity and peace. It is the abode of domestic felicity; there friendship spends its golden hours; it is the resort of happy love. The Church should be the home of peace and joy. To it we should be glad to retire from the bustle and strife of life; in its fold we should find the purest and the sweetest satisfaction which earth can yield. There have been Churches which might justly be called the arena of conflict or the wilderness of neglect. The ideal Church—that at which we should aim, and for which we should strive and sacrifice—is one that might be appropriately designated, "The garden of the Lord."—C.

Vers. 7, 8, 12, 13.—*A sure criterion of character*, etc. This address of Jehovah to the good and worthy among his people contains—

I. A SURE CRITERION OF CHARACTER. 1. It is well to be hearers of God's Word. All the Jews were that; they were all the children of privilege. This, however, was by no means sufficient to prove that they were the children of God. 2. It is better to know his Word and to understand his will. It says something for us if we can be thus addressed, "Ye that know righteousness." But there are many who clearly apprehend their duty, and who, for one reason or another, refrain from doing it. 3. The certain test of spiritual worth is that God's Law is in the heart: "In whose heart is my Law." They who can say with the psalmist, "Oh how love I thy Law! it is my meditation all the day" (Ps. cxix. 97, 111); who esteem God's precepts as more desirable than gold and more sweet than honey (Ps. xix. 10); who delight to do his will, for his Law is within their heart, the object of their affection, the source of their joy, the well-spring of their comfort, the treasury of their hope;—these are they whom God loves and honours; and theirs is the kingdom of heaven (see John xiv. 15, 16, 21, 23; Matt. vii. 21).

II. A PROBABLE INCIDENT OF A FAITHFUL LIFE. "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings." It is highly probable, indeed morally certain, that if we are thoroughly loyal to our Lord and true to our own convictions we shall incur the secret dislike and also the active opposition of men. Implicitly, if not explicitly, we shall condemn their theories and their doings, and they will turn upon us in anger or in self-defence. He who never comes into sharp collision with the sentiments and habits of wicked men must either live a life of very unusual seclusion or else have grave reason to suspect his fidelity to Christ.

III. TWO DECISIVE CONSIDERATIONS. 1. Fidelity to conviction means the preference of God to man. Men are saying, "Hearken unto *us*"—unto us, thy fellows, thy partners, thy confederates; unto us who will share thy responsibility and thy sin, and perish with thee when thou fallest. But God is saying, "Hearken unto me"—unto me, thy Creator, thy Benefactor, thy Divine Friend. A Divine Saviour is saying unto us, "Follow me," in the paths of purity, of integrity, of piety, of consecration (see vers. 12, 13). 2. Fidelity to conviction means ultimate triumph, but unfaithfulness means final ruin. The devices of iniquity will come to nought, and the guilty themselves will perish. "The moth shall eat them up like a garment." But "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "God's righteousness shall be for ever," and they who

are loving and living it shall never be confounded. Theirs is the present favour and everlasting friendship of the Eternal.—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The force in reserve.* It has been said that the battle goes to him who has the best force in reserve. The general who brings all his regiments to the front may expect to be beaten; but he who holds a strong force in reserve may look for victory. In the great spiritual struggle now proceeding, the people of God have in reserve that on which they can and will fall back with infinite advantage to their cause.

I. OUR URGENT NEED OF EFFECTUAL SUCCOUR. The battle seems to go against us. We note: 1. *The prevalence of evil*—of poverty, of misery, of vice, of crime, of unbelief, of superstition, of gross idolatry. 2. *The comparative failure of the Church to subdue it.* Looking at the entire field of activity, we are obliged to own that complete victory is a very long way off; that the millions of men and women whom the gospel has not reached, and those other millions whose spirit and whose life it has not succeeded in transforming, present a view which is very disappointing. Or looking at particular fields of Christian work, either at home or abroad, regarding the towns and villages of our own land, we do not find that the truth of God has the redeeming and elevating influence which answers to our hopes. We are not conquering the evil which surrounds and assails us; our heart sinks at the thought of the stupendous work before us, which seems to grow rather than to lessen, spite of all our struggle.

II. THE DIVINE FORCE IN RESERVE. Behind us is the arm of the Lord, and on this we lean. 1. It is a great thing that we are armed with a truth which is so fitted to do the renewing work on which we are engaged, a truth which so exquisitely meets the necessities of the human soul. 2. It is a great thing that this truth *has* triumphed gloriously in the case of individual men, families, tribes, and even nations. 3. But our last and best hope is in the presence and power of God. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge." There are two sustaining thoughts here. One is that Almighty God cannot be defeated. The "arm of the Lord" is the power of the Omnipotent; it is the overcoming energy of him who is the Source of all might and strength, and in whom reside all riches and all resources whatever. The other is that God has shown the exceeding greatness of his power many times before, and can work as glorious marvels in the future as in the past. He who smote Egypt could slay Assyria; he who made a passage across the sea could open a way from Babylon to Jerusalem. The God who has smitten the idolatries of Europe can slay the superstitions of Asia. He who has turned the sensuality and savagery of the islands of the sea into purity and peace can and will overcome the mightiest obstacles which remain, subdue the most hostile forces, and cause the "armies of Israel" to be crowned with victory. (1) Strive with all strenuousness and self-sacrifice, as if everything depended on our fidelity. (2) Look with confidence to the action of the arm of Omnipotence.—C.

Vers. 17—23.—*Spiritual stupefaction.* The passage presents one of the most pitiable of all possible spectacles—a nation reduced to utter helplessness and prostration, lying like one that is brought down by intoxication to a motionless stupidity. We learn from this picture, and from the opening summons and concluding promise—

I. THAT THE HUMAN SPIRIT AS WELL AS THE HUMAN BODY IS SUBJECT TO STUPEFACTION. It is a striking and suggestive fact that the very thing which at first excites will ultimately stupefy. This is notoriously the case with intoxicants; these first stimulate, then dull and deaden the system. It is also true, though in a less degree, of those things which are called *narcotics:* both opium and tobacco at first awaken and enlarge faculty; but this condition soon passes away, and is succeeded by one of depression, inactivity, and (in the case of the more noxious drug) stupor and insensibility. So is it with things which act hurtfully upon the soul. At first they excite, then they blunt and deaden. This applies to: 1. Continuous enjoyment of any kind. 2. Excessive responsibilities, demanding exertion beyond the power to maintain them. 3. Heavy and repeated trials. It was from this last that Israel was suffering. The nation had been required to drink of the cup of Divine retribution, and, owing to her persistency in evil, had been compelled to drain that cup. Beside the two evils specified (ver. 19), desolation or famine and the violence of the enemy, was the sense of her utter friendlessness (ver. 18); and in addition to this was her abject humiliation (ver. 23).

These calamities would account for her pitiable despondency, her attitude of despair. The sore and accumulated trials which sometimes befall individual men may not justify, but they explain, the complete brokenness and despondency of their spirit. They give themselves up as those abandoned to an evil course and a fatal doom; they are in a state of spiritual stupefaction.

II. THAT THE STRONGEST AND SHARPEST SUMMONS TO AROUSE IS THE FRIENDLIEST VOICE WE CAN THEN HEAR. "Awake, awake, stand up." These are the words of the God of Israel. And from whomsoever or from whatsoever shall come the summons to arouse ourselves from a guilty and perilous spiritual torpor, however harsh be the tone, however startling be the terms of the awakening, that voice is of the friendliest, and may be taken to be none other than the voice of God.

III. THAT FOR THE NATION OR THE SPIRIT THAT HEARKENS AND ARISES THERE MAY BE COMPLETE RECOVERY. (Vers. 22, 23.) Jehovah would turn humiliation into triumph for his people, arrogance into disaster for her enemies. As complete a reversal, though of an entirely different kind, will God grant to those who arouse themselves from spiritual torpor and walk in his ways: for them shall be *peace* instead of insensibility; *holy usefulness* instead of disgraceful helplessness; *sacred joy* instead of a miserable despair.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Lessons of the past.* This passage has been somewhat misused. The appeal is not made to the miserableness of our spiritual condition before receiving the Divine redemption. It is simply a recalling of the early history of the race, and an appeal that the goodness, care, and mercy of God to the first progenitors of the race should be recognized. The wonder involved in the origin of Israel may be treated as a ground of faith in its restoration and perpetuity. Cheyne gives the meaning thus: "Unlikely as the fulfilment of such exceeding great and precious promises may seem, it is not more unlikely than the original wonder of a great nation being descended from one man, and him as good as dead." Abraham may be understood by the "rock," and Sarah by the "pit." Look unto Abraham, and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith. The metaphors are taken from the quarry, and express the general idea of extraction or descent. Retrospection is an important, though difficult and dangerous, Christian duty. It ought to (1) deepen our humility; (2) inflame our love; (3) stimulate our obedience; and (4) perfect our dependence and trust. But it may, and often does, nourish that subtle form of spiritual pride which poisons the soul, and which is peculiarly difficult to cure. We only recall the past *healthily* when it is our set purpose to find the traces of God's gracious working in it all. Studied aright—

I. THE PAST TELLS OF OUR INSIGNIFICANCE. Compare the wonder over the insignificance of Israel in its beginnings. So of the Christian Church. It began with the one or two who responded to the call of Christ. Some of us began our Christian lives in childhood, some in ignorance, and some when self-indulgence had marred the powers we possessed. All of us can say, "Chosen not for good in me."

II. THE PAST TELLS OF GOD'S CARE AND MERCY. We have been led, guided, provided for, chastised, and taught, even as Israel was. God's first dealings seem to us a key to all his dealings.

III. THE PAST TELLS OF OUR WILFULNESSES. Israel could never look back without remembering his "way in the wilderness." Their past was full of murmurings and rebellions.

IV. THE PAST TELLS OF GOD'S REDEMPTIONS. Exactly the name for God is *our Redeemer*. And the long and varied past assures us that he will ever be to us, in all times of need, what he always has been.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God's revelation a light.* "I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people." The terms "law" and "judgment" are designed to include all forms of Divine revelation—the various ways in which the Divine will is made known to man. Revelation means *light*. It is a mistake to assume that there are things revealed which are not intended for our comprehension; they are revealed precisely with the purpose of unfolding so that we might understand them. There are hidden and secret things, but Moses carefully distinguishes them from the revealed things, saying thus:

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law" (Deut. xxix. 29). Only this much is true—revelation is not light to every age equally. Some things seem mysterious at one time that are clear enough at another. And in each fresh generation we may say—

"The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from his Word."

This, at least, we may assert, prove, and illustrate—in all essential matters relating to moral conduct and religious faith, God's revelation is *light.*

I. GOD'S REVELATION IS LIGHT THAT SHOWS UP SIN. 1. It gives us proper apprehensions of God himself, and shows sin by our contrast with him. 2. It unfolds before us the graciousness of his relations with us, and convicts of sin as it makes us feel the weakness of our response to such relations (Dan. v. 23, last clause). 3. It declares to us the laws by which both our conduct and our spirit ought to be ruled; and by the Law is the knowledge of sin. 4. It presents to us the Lord Jesus Christ as the Gift of God; and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

II. GOD'S REVELATION IS LIGHT THAT SHOWS THE WAY OUT OF SIN. 1. By removal of the penalties it has involved. 2. By restoring the broken relations it has caused. 3. By changing the spirit of the sinner—melting him to penitence, quickening him to believe. Illustrate one feature from the parable of the "prodigal son," and other features by such passages as Rom. iii. 19—26; v. 8—10.

III. GOD'S REVELATION IS LIGHT THAT SHOWS THE WAY FOR THOSE REDEEMED FROM SIN. There is the "way of holiness" in which they have to walk. There is a sanctifying, through cares and chastisements, which they have to experience. There is a personal and practical application of the Christian principles to the details of common life which has to be made. And, for all this, God's Word is a "lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Things earthly and things spiritual.* "They that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever." Some render, "Shall die like gnats;" that is, shall live their little day, and then pass away (comp. Ps. cii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 35; 2 Pet. iii. 10—13). We get one of our chief impressions of the value of a thing out of the length of time that it will last. Permanence is one of the principal notes of value. The insect that hums through the air of one summer's evening is comparatively worthless; the elephant that lives through a hundred years is valuable. The wayside weed that lives its brief months is worthless; the giant oak that outlives the storms of generations is valuable. And so our idea of extreme value, of absolutely priceless worth, is put into the figure of permanence—eternal, abiding, and continuing. The highest conceivable good is *eternal life;* the worst conceivable woe is *eternal death.* This note of value tests things earthly; they are short-lived, and comparatively worthless. It tests things spiritual; they are long-lived, good, cannot die, and they alone are truly worthy of the pursuit of those in whom God has breathed the breath of life. 1. The material heavens and material earth are the types of all *material* things. They are the "treasure on earth," which moth or rust are always corrupting, which thieves are constantly breaking through to steal. "Here we have no continuing city" (see the force of this in view of the ruins of great ancient cities which abound in the East). "The fashion of this world passeth away." The world is a moving panorama. The generations go by like the ships that sail to the West. "The place that knows us now must soon know us no more for ever." Everything on which the earthly stamp rests is in its very nature fading. There is no safe holding of what we only *get,* only become possessed of. 2. But "salvation" and "righteousness" are the types of *spiritual* things. They bear relation to the man himself, and not to his mere circumstances or surroundings. We can keep for ever only that which we *are.* Character is our "treasure in heaven, which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and which no thieves can break through and steal." But the yet higher truth—the one concerning which we need to gain ever new impressions—is that we can only hope to hold on for ever that which we are *through Divine grace;* that which we are through

the Divine redeemings and sanctifyings. God's "salvation shall be for ever; and his righteousness shall not be abolished," as the salvation is wrought in us, and the righteousness shines from us.—R. T.

Vers. 7, 12, 13.—"*Fear*," *and* "*Fear not.*" "Fear ye not the reproach of men;" "Afraid of a man that shall die;" "Forgettest the Lord thy Maker." It has been said, "Fear God, and thou shalt have none else to fear." And the apostle, glorifying the fear of God by calling it *love*, says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." The immediate connection of the passage is Israel's fear of the Babylonians. But they need not have feared if they had looked to the "Lord as their Defence, and to the God of Jacob as their Refuge"—unto the Lord who "could perform all things for them." "Let not those who embrace the gospel righteousness be afraid of those who will call them *Beelzebub*, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely. Let them not be afraid of them; let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour, and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, nor frightened into any sinful compliances, nor driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him" (Matthew Henry).

I. NATURAL FEAR OF MAN. Because the conquest of man by the spirit of self, self-will, self-pleasing, has set every man, in greater or less degree, upon getting advantage over his brother; and so we all go in suspicion and fear of one another. Illustrate from the jealousies and rivalries of society, the competitions of business, the ambitions and conflicts of nations. Governments are organizations to keep within safe limits men's fears of one another. The only natural triumph over such fear is for men to become possessed with the idea of *serving one another*, instead of taking advantage of, and getting something out of, one another. George Macdonald has a dream in one of his works ('Wingfold, Curate'), in which heaven is pictured as busy earth, just as we know it, only everybody is set upon *serving* his neighbour, and nobody ever gets the idea of making his neighbour serve him. Nobody has anything to *fear* in such a heaven or in such an earth.

II. PROPER FEAR OF GOD. That must be supreme. It must be the fear that draws us near to him in trust; that gives us the joy of obeying and following him; and that really is *filial love*. That fear is a sanctifying force to us, just as reverent fear of his father mightily helps the boy to do right. That fear is a resting, quieting influence upon us; it makes us feel safe as the boy feels in the storm, if the father whom he fears is at the helm.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Joy-song on the way to Zion.* (See ch. xxxv. 10.) There may be an allusion to the custom, so common in the East, of singing upon a journey, particularly with a view to quicken the pace of the camels. Bush writes, "We should not have passed this plain so rapidly, but for the common custom of the Arabs of urging on their camels by singing. The effect is very extraordinary; this musical excitement increases their pace at least one-fourth. First one camel-driver sings a verse, then the others answer in chorus. It reminded me somewhat of the Venetian gondoliers. I often asked the camel-drivers to sing, not only to hasten our progress, but also for the pleasure of hearing their simple melodies! Some of their best songs possess a plaintive sweetness that is almost as touching as the most exquisite European airs." And Pitts, in describing the order of the caravans, tells us, "Some of the camels have bells about their necks, and some about their legs, like those which our carriers put about their fore-horses' necks, which, together with the servants (who belong to the camels and travel on foot) singing all night, make a pleasant noise, and the journey passes away delightfully." The picture is of the return of Israel from captivity to Jerusalem. It is an ideal picture of what might have been, but the actual circumstances of the return came very far short of the pictured ideal. As an earlier homily has dealt with this verse, only a fresh line of thought need be suggested. It is that through all the Christian pilgrim-way there ought to be joy and song; the "joy of the Lord our Strength."

I. THE JOY OF BEGINNING A CHRISTIAN LIFE. This is usually an intense joy

born of the freshness of our experience, the brightness of our newly kindled hope, and our ignorance of the conflict which the Christian life must witness. It is the joy of the ransomed. Illustrate from the freed slave. It is the joy of the delivered. Illustrate by song of Israel on the Red Sea shore. People usually set out on an expedition with much song and hope.

II. JOY ON THE WAY IN CHRISTIAN LIVING. This is a calmer joy; found rather in what God's grace proves able to do for us, than in any circumstances through which we pass; for the way itself is often rough and hard—we can seldom sing about it.

III. JOY AT THE END WHEN HOME IS WON. Illustrate by Moore's 'Paradise and the Peri'—

"Joy, joy for ever! the work is done,
The gate is passed, and heaven is won."

True joy, be it remembered, is not a fitful response to circumstances, but an ever-bubbling and upspringing *soul-well*.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Man, God's agent.* "I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand." This statement was most perfectly realized in the ideal Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who could say, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Possibly the figures in the text are designed to represent the re-establishment of Jerusalem as the centre of a restored Jewish nation, and God likens this to the putting up of a fallen tent, and intimates that his faithful ones should be used as his agents, in setting up the poles, driving in the pegs, and straining the cords.

I. MAN'S POWERS FITTED FOR GOD'S SERVICE. God made him, adapted him, and endowed him, precisely with a view to service. We recognize a design and an aim in everything God has made. We set before ourselves a distinct purpose in anything we make—it is to serve us. Because man has the trust of what he calls "independence" and "free-will," he does not cease to be God's servant, God's agent; though, turning his free-will into self-will, he too often spoils his powers, and renders them unfit for God's service. Each one of us ought to find out precisely the powers with which we are endowed; and in the line of them we must look for our spheres and our work. What we *can* do, that we *must* do for God.

II. MAN'S POWERS OUGHT TO BE AT GOD'S DISPOSAL. The call should be heard by us each new morning, "Who is willing to consecrate himself this day unto the Lord?" God should have first choice of our service. It should ever be enough to us that God calls. "As the eyes of a servant . . . to the hand of the master, so our eyes should wait on God." The practical rule of life should be this—"I belong to God. My service is for him, my leisure may be for others and myself."

III. MAN'S POWERS ARE IN GOD'S USE. It is not a question that he *may* use us, he *does* use us, we are his voice, his sword, his staff. He is now working out his purposes on earth by human agencies. Nothing alters the fact; but the joy of being willing workers may be ours. And our doings are ennobled when we can see them to be God's doings by us. Man realizes his noblest individuality, the design of his being, only as thus he is willing to be mouthpiece for God, and to be covered in the shadow of God's hand, as he plants, or digs, or builds.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*God our Advocate with himself.* "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, and thy God who is the Advocate of his people." He will plead for his people when none else will plead (comp. ch. lxiii. 5). In this we find a foreshadowing of the idea of Christ as our Advocate with God, which, most deeply, most spiritually apprehended, is God pleading with God—God an Advocate with himself. This may be worked out thus—

I. JESUS PLEADS FOR US WITH GOD. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus;" "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

II. BUT JESUS IS GOD. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "The Word was God." He was God "manifest in the flesh." "The Brightness of the Father's glory, and express Image of his Person."

III. THEN THIS IS GOD PLEADING WITH GOD. It is a way of figuring for our

apprehension what seems to be the fact, that God holds argument with himself.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*Divine judgment on persecutors.* "Thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over." This is a figure for the last humiliation of an Eastern conquest. Joshua called his captains, and even his soldiers, to put their feet upon the necks of the conquered kings (Josh. x. 24). Matthew Arnold's note on this verse is as follows: "A trait of the humiliation of the conquered and the insolence of the conqueror in Eastern kingdoms. So it is related that when Sapor, King of Persia, got on horseback, the Roman Emperor Valerian had to kneel down, and make his back a step for him." Henderson, quoting from Ibn Batuta, says that "when the negroes who appeared before the black sultan at Mali, in Nigritia, fell down, they laid bare their backs, and covered their heads with dust, as tokens of the most profound submission." Further illustration may be found in the Eastern custom called the *dosch*, which is still prevalent, or only very recently extinct. Dervishes lay themselves down side by side on the ground, backs upward, legs extended, and their arms placed together beneath their foreheads. Over these the sheikh on horseback rides. The assurance made is that the enemies and persecutors of Israel, and notably Babylon, should be made to drink of the same bitter cup that they had made Israel drink so deeply. And Babylon had to taste the bitterness of captivity. Very striking facts are narrated concerning the Divine retributions which persecutors have suffered, and though some may be but imaginative creations under impressions of what *ought to be*, there are sufficient cases that are strictly historical to convince us that, in this sphere, "though hand join in hand, the wicked do not go unpunished;" and not infrequently what is known as "poetical justice" is meted out to them even in this life. If the persecutor should escape the retribution, the judgment comes upon his fame. After-generations say worse things of persecutors than of any of the ancestors. They live in the execration of the ages. Yet the persecutor can never permanently harm the Church. Its conquest is well assured, and that conquest involves the judgment, humiliation, and degradation of the persecutors, who shall have measured to them what they meted out to others; for "our God is known by the judgments which he executeth."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LII.

Vers. 1—6.—FURTHER ADDRESS OF THE PROPHET TO JERUSALEM. Zion is exhorted to rise from the dust, throw off her bonds, and assert her freedom (vers. 1, 2). God will deliver her from this third captivity for his Name's sake, which her oppressors blaspheme (vers. 3—6).

Ver. 1.—**Awake, awake; put on thy strength** (comp. ch. li. 9). God can help those only who help themselves. The "arm of the Lord" having been called upon to "put on strength" in order to help Zion, Zion is now exhorted to do her part, and put on her own strength. Nor is she to stop there; she is further to **put on her beautiful garments**—to array herself in the glorious robes which befit her as a royal and a holy city, and show herself once more a queen, instead of being content to remain grovelling as a captive (ch. li. 20, 21). **Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised.** Foreigners shall no more visit Jerusalem to injure her or exult over her misfortunes (comp. Joel iii. 17). When the influx of the Gentiles comes (ch. xlii. 6; xlix. 6, 22, etc.), it will be one of Gentiles who are "circumcised in heart and lips," and no longer "unclean" (Acts x. 15).

Ver. 2.—**Shake thyself from the dust** (compare the opposite command given to Babylon, "Come down, sit in the dust" ch. xlvii. 1). Zion was to arise, shake from her all trace of the dust in which she had been so long lying, and then calmly seat herself upon a seat of dignity. **Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck.** The Hebrew text has, "The bands of thy neck are unloosened;" *i.e.* I have caused thy chains to fall from thee—thou hast only to "rise," and thou wilt find thyself free. Captives in ancient times were often fastened together by a thong or chain passed round their necks (see Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 473). **Daughter of Zion.** The prophet passes, by an easy transition, from the city to the

nation, which continues to be the object of address in the remainder of the discourse.

Ver. 3.—**Ye have sold yourselves for nought**; rather, *for nought were ye sold.* God received nothing when he allowed his people to become the slaves of the Babylonians. He took no price for them (see ch. l. 1), and therefore is free to claim them back without payment (comp. ch. xlv. 13). He has but to say the word; and he is about to say it.

Ver. 4.—**My people went down . . . into Egypt . . . the Assyrian oppressed them.** Israel had experienced three captivities. They "went down" voluntarily into Egypt, on invitation, to sojourn, and were there cruelly and unjustly reduced to a servile condition (Exod. i. 13, 14). They (or a great part of them) were violently carried into captivity by the Assyrian kings, Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 29), Sargon (2 Kings xvii. 6), and Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 13; 'Eponym Canon,' p. 134), who, without cause, grievously "oppressed" them. Now they are suffering under a third captivity in Babylonia. What is to be the Divine action under these circumstances?

Ver. 5.—**What have I here?** rather, *what have I to do here?* i.e. what is the task before me—the work that I have to perform? There are three principal considerations by which the answer to this question has to be determined. (1) The Babylonians have obtained possession of the Israelites without purchase—for nought; (2) they use their authority harshly and brutally; and (3) they continually blaspheme the Name of Jehovah. All three are grounds for bringing the captivity to an end, and coming forward with the cry of a deliverer, "Here I am." **Make them to howl**; rather, *howl*; i.e. insult over the captives with shouts and yells of triumph. The prophet is speaking of the Babylonian oppressors, not of the native "rulers," who exercised a certain amount of authority over the captives (see Delitzsch and Cheyne). **My Name . . . is blasphemed.** Cruel taskmasters vexed the captives by insulting their God.

Ver. 6.—**Therefore.** Because of the "howling" and the "blasphemy." **My people shall know my Name**; *i.e.* "my people shall know by practical experience that I am all that my name of El or Elohim—'the Strong,' 'the Powerful'—implies." **They shall know in that day.** The "day" when God would come to their help and deliver them from their oppressors—when they would call upon him, and he would manifest himself (ch. lviii. 9), responding to their appeal as distinctly as though he said, "Here I am."

Vers. 7—12.—**A Vision of the Day of Deliverance.** The prophet sees the messenger come bounding over the mountains of Judæa, to bring the news to Jerusalem that her deliverance is come (ver. 7). The angelic watchers sing with joy (ver. 8) The prophet calls upon the waste places of Jerusalem to do the same, and dwells on the greatness of the mercy wrought (vers. 9, 10). Finally, he exhorts the exiles to avail themselves of the permission to quit Babylon, and prophesies that they will go forth in peace, without hurry, under the guidance and protection of God (vers. 11, 12).

Ver. 7.—**How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!** (comp. Nah. i. 15, which is almost a repetition of the passage). The *primary* meaning is undoubtedly that assigned to the words in the introductory paragraph; but this does not hinder there being also a secondary meaning, viz. the Messianic one of Rom. x. 15. Jerusalem's deliverance is a type of the redemption of the world by Christ. **That saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!** So long as Israel was in captivity, and Jerusalem in ruins, God's earthly sovereignty (1 Sam. xii. 12) was in abeyance. The moment that the Jews were set free and allowed to return and to rebuild their city, his sovereignty was re-established.

Ver. 8.—**Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice**; literally, *The voice of thy watchers. They have lifted up the voice; they sing* (or, *shout joyfully*, Kay) *together.* The "watchmen" are regarded by some as the prophets of the Captivity-time (Delitzsch), by others as the faithful who "waited for the redemption of Israel" (Kay); but are considered by the best critics (Cheyne, Alexander) to be "supersensible beings," or, in other words, angels, who "watch" over the fortunes of Israel, and sympathize with their weal and woe (see Dan. iv. 13, 17, 23, etc.). These "watchers" now "sing" or "shout" with joy. **They shall see eye to eye** (compare the "face to face" of Numb. xiv. 14; Deut. xxxiv. 10). The "watchers" would watch closely God's dealings with his Church, and would see them as clearly as a man sees his friend when he looks into his face. **When the Lord shall bring again Zion.** It is, perhaps, best to translate, with Houbigant and Mr. Cheyne, "When the Lord shall return to Zion." The prophet sees God as the Leader of his people, not merely by his providence bringing them back, but "returning" at their head (comp. ver. 12).

Ver. 9.—**Ye waste places of Jerusalem** (comp. ch. xliv. 26; xlix. 19; lxiv. 10, 11). The city had not been wholly destroyed. Only the temple, the royal palace, and the houses

of the nobles had been "burnt with fire" (2 Kings xxv. 9; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19). The poorer houses had been left. Even these, however, must in the space of fifty years have for the most part fallen into decay. The ruins are now called upon to join in the general chorus of rejoicing, as they rise from their ashes. **Hath comforted . . . hath redeemed.** Perfects of prophetic certitude.

Ver. 10.—**The nations . . . the ends of the earth.** It may well add to the general joy that the work wrought for Israel is not "a thing done in a corner," but one on which the eyes of the "nations" have been turned, and to which the attention of "the ends of the earth" has been called (comp. ch. xli. 5). The **holy arm** of Jehovah, **made bare** for battle, has been seen far and wide. The world has stood to gaze at the contest between Persia and Babylon.

Ver. 11.—**Go ye out from thence;** *i.e.* "from Babylon"—the standpoint of the prophet in the present chapter being Jerusalem. When the time came, earnest exhortations to depart would be found not superfluous, for there would be an indisposition on the part of some to quit their possessions, and of others to affront the perils of the way. **Touch no unclean thing.** Bring with you none of the Babylonian idols, none of the Babylonian charms, spells, and the like (see the comment on ch. xlvii. 9). **Be ye clean;** rather, *purify yourselves.* The departing captives generally are called upon to avoid polluting themselves with the unclean things of Babylon; but for those who **bear the vessels of the Lord** this negative purity is insufficient. They are formally to "purify themselves" (2 Chron. xxix. 34) before undertaking their sacred office. By "the vessels of the Lord" we must understand those which Nebuchadnezzar carried off from the temple (2 Kings xxv. 14—16; Dan. i. 2), and which, on the return of the Jews from captivity, were restored by Cyrus (Ezra i. 7—11) and Artaxerxes (Ezra viii. 25—34).

Ver. 12.—**With haste . . . by flight.** As at the going forth from Egypt (Exod. xii. 33; xvi. 5). Then they were "thrust out;" now there would be no need of hurry. They would have the free permission of their sovereign to depart at their own time, and might proceed with calm deliberateness. God would go before them, as he did on that former occasion (Exod. xiii. 21), though not now visibly; and he would also defend them from attacks by the way, being at once their Guide and **their Rereward,** or Rearguard.

Vers. 13—15.—PRELUDE TO THE "GREAT PASSIONAL." It is generally allowed by modern commentators that this passage is more closely connected with what follows it than with what precedes. Some would detach it altogether from ch. lii. and attach it to ch. liii. But this is not necessary. The passage has a completeness in itself. It is a connecting link. The exaltation of Israel, the collective "Servant of the Lord" (ch. xliv. 1, 21), brings to the prophet's mind the exaltation of the individual "Servant" (ch. xlii. 1—7; xliii. 10; xlix. 1—12), through which alone the full exaltation of Israel is possible. He is bound to complete his account of the individual "Servant" by telling of *his* exaltation, and of the road which led to it. This is done in ch. liii., in what has been called the "Great Passional." But the "Great Passional" needs a "prelude," an "introduction," if only as indicative of its greatness. And this prelude we have here, in these three verses, which briefly note (1) the fact of the exaltation; (2) the depth of the humiliation preceding it; and (3) the far-extending blessedness which shall result to the world from both.

Ver. 13.—**My Servant shall deal prudently;** rather, *shall deal wisely;* i.e. shall so act throughout his mission as to secure it the most complete success. "Wisdom is justified of her children," and of none so entirely justified as of him "in whom were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid away" (Col. ii. 3). **Exalted and extolled;** or, *high and lifted up*—the same expressions as are used of the Almighty in ch. vi. 1 and lvii. 15. Even there, however, seems to the prophet not enough; so he adds, "and exalted exceedingly" (comp. ch. liii. 10—12 and Phil. ii. 6—9).

Ver. 14.—**As many were astonied at thee.** The world was "astonied" to see, in One come to deliver it, no outward show of grandeur or magnificence, no special beauty or "comeliness" (ch. liii. 2), but a Presence unattractive to the mass of men at all times, and in the end so cruelly **marred** and disfigured as to retain scarcely any resemblance to the ordinary form and face of man. The prophet, as Delitzsch says, sits at the foot of the cross on Calvary, and sees the Redeemer as he hung upon the accursed tree, after he had been buffeted, and crowned with thorns, and smitten, and scourged, and crucified, when his face was covered with bruises and with gore, and his frame and features distorted with agony.

Ver. 15.—**So shall he sprinkle many nations.** The Septuagint has, "So shall **many nations** marvel at him;" and this

translation is followed by Gesenius and Ewald. Mr. Cheyne thinks that the present Hebrew text is corrupt, and suggests that a verb was used antithetical to the "astonied" of ver. 14, expressing "joyful surprise." It is certainly hard to see how the idea of "sprinkling," even if it can mean "purifying," comes in here. **Kings shall shut their mouths at him**; rather, *because of him.* In reverential awe of his surpassing greatness (comp. Micah vii. 16). **That which had not been told them shall they see.** They will learn the facts of Christ's humiliation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven—events that it had never entered into the heart of man to conceive, and of which, therefore, no tongue had ever spoken.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*God helps those who help themselves.* It is a law of God's providence to require of men, as conditional to his assisting them, some corresponding effort. "*Ask*, and it shall be given you; *seek*, and ye shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. vii. 7). He is always ready to give; but he will have men stretch out their hand to receive. For the careless and the apathetic, he will—perhaps we might say, he can—do nothing. Thus he calls men into his Church, but they must arise and obey the call; he offers them grace, but they must use the means of grace; he is willing to grant them eternal life, but upon this life they must "lay hold" (1 Tim. vi. 12). When he delivered his people out of Egypt, he required them to "rise up, and go forth," and make long and toilsome marches through a dreary wilderness; and only after forty years of effort did he bring them to Canaan. So, too, when he would deliver them from Babylon, those only were delivered who braced themselves for a great exertion, left all that they had, affronted peril (Ezra viii. 31), undertook the difficult and wearisome journey (ch. xliii. 19) from Chaldea to Palestine. The reason would seem to be that God, in all his dealings with man, is disciplining him and training him, eliciting the good that is in him, and causing it to acquire strength by active exercise, thus fitting him for a higher state of existence than the present, and leading him onward toward the perfection which he designed him to reach.

Ver. 11.—*The special need of purity in them that bear the vessels of the Lord.* It is the duty of all to avoid impurity, to "touch no unclean thing," to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." But a special purity is required of those who, by holding any sacred office, are brought nearer to God than others, and as it were serve continually in his presence. Hence the numerous directions in the Jewish Law with respect to the priests—their consecration, their ablutions, their vestments, their sin offerings, and the like (Lev. viii. 2—35; ix. 1—24). Hence, moreover, such injunctions as the following: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou [Aaron], nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. x. 9, 10). "They [the priests] shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the Name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God they do offer: therefore, shall they be holy" (Lev. xxi. 5, 6). "He that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord. And he shall take a wife in her virginity" (Lev. xxi. 10—13). Everything approaching to uncleanness is to be carefully eschewed by such as minister in holy things; they are to be under a law more strict than that which binds ordinary men; they are to avoid everything at which weak brethren might take exception—to shrink from even the shadow of an impure stain. Many things are harmless in the ordinary layman which are not harmless in the clergyman, who is especially bound to "walk warily," to be a pattern to the flock, to abstain from even the appearance of evil, to "**let not his good be evil spoken of**" (**Rom. xiv. 16**).

Ver. 13.—*The wisdom of Messiah's life upon earth.* Perhaps nothing shows more clearly the perfect "wisdom" of our Lord's life upon earth than the fact that, among all his detractors, not one has been able to point out any unwisdom in any part of it. Almost all men do unwise things, things which they regret to have done, things which do them harm, which injure instead of promoting the objects that they have in view. But our Lord's whole course was guided by the most perfect wisdom (ch. xi. 2). Wisely he conformed in all respects to the Jewish Law, though he was above the Law. Wisely he led, not the ascetic life, but the life of ordinary humanity. Wisely he chose his disciples among those who were poor and ignorant and powerless, so that it might be evident they did not convert the nations by their natural gifts, but by wielding a supernatural influence. Wisely he declined to be made an earthly king, so that ambition cannot be laid to his charge. Wisely he submitted himself to the powers that be, that neither revolutionist nor anarchist might be able to make a shelter of his example. Wisely he covered himself with a cloud, hid up his glory, did his great miracles comparatively in secret (John vii. 4), let the knowledge of his true Divinity steal upon men by degrees. The wisdom wherewith he executed his mission is seen in the success of that mission. How quickly did the "little flock" grow into a Church to be counted by thousands (Acts ii. 41; iv. 4), and the thousands become tens of thousands, and the tens of thousands increase into millions, until the whole Roman empire was converted, and the "kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. vi. 15)! And what but infinite wisdom could have inspired a teaching which should attract both Jew and Gentile, both civilized man and barbarian, both haughty noble and down-trodden slave; which should, moreover, suit alike the requirements of both ancient and modern times, and be as much valued in the nineteenth century after its publication as in the first? By the wisdom—"science falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20)—of Greece and Rome "the world knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21); by the wisdom, the true wisdom, of Christ the whole civilized and much of the barbarian world now knows God. The result is the effect of that "prudent dealing," or true wisdom in act and word, which Jesus Christ, the "Servant of Jehovah," showed forth during the three and thirty years of his life upon this earth.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The redemption of Jerusalem.* I. THE SUMMONS. It comes from the Divine representatives. She had been called upon to arise and to stand up, and now she is to put on her strength and her robes. "Strength returns to Zion when the arm of Jehovah is mighty within her." It is useless to counterfeit the semblance of strength which does not exist. Nor is strength merely a matter of the will; but there ever is a secret fund of strength in the hearts of those who know that God has not forsaken them. In a sense, hope comes to those who rouse themselves from dejection, and "power to him that power exerts." The highest success promised is *to* human endeavour, and is not to be enjoyed *without* human endeavour. The *beautiful garments* are to be put on in preparation for the era of moral beauty and holiness. There is a true symbolism in dress. There is a garb appropriate to mourning and woe; another attire becomes the spirit of gladness and expectation. And there is, so to speak, a dress of the soul—a habit of the mind which expresses the hope of better things even amidst darkness and disappointment. As there were robes, figuratively speaking, which became a holy and priestly city; as there were seemly robes for Aaron the priest;—even so for him who looks upon himself as a "king and priest unto God," there is a suitable bearing and character, determined by the sense of the high destiny in store. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." So high a destiny is in store for Jerusalem; no more are the unclean to enter her sacred precincts (cf. Joel iii. 17), but only the worshippers of the true God. Typically, the promise points to future times, when the Church of God shall be pure as when, in the great world-harvest, the tares shall be gathered out, and the wheat be gathered into the eternal garner. Let, then, Jerusalem shake herself from the dust—from that posture which expresses mourning and humiliation (Job ii. 13), and take a lofty and honourable place. "Ascend thy lofty seat!" (Louth). "Arise and sit erect" (Noyes). "Rise, sit upon the throne of

thy glory" (Chaldee). She is to shake the chains from her limbs, for her captivity is drawing to an end. Has she been sold? Nay; Jehovah has received naught for her. "It is not a sale, but only a temporary transfer." He can receive them back and renew his covenant with them. "*You shall be redeemed.*" There was to be a remarkable proof of the power and sovereignty of God. For usually slaves and captives are not given up without a ransom. That they may expect this to be done, Jehovah reminds them of what has been done. He who had delivered from Egypt could deliver also from Babylon. And the like applies to the sufferings under Sargon, and Sennacherib, and Tiglath-Pileser. And now what was fitting for him to do in the case of the third great captivity, that of Babylon? He has come down to see and consider. And the result is that he "must return to Jerusalem, else his gracious purposes will be frustrated. But in its present state he cannot do so; therefore Jerusalem must arise from its humiliation." In their pride and contumely, the Babylonians both oppress the people and blaspheme the Name of their God. Another reason, then, for his interposition. *Therefore*—for all these reasons—the people shall know his Name, shall experience what it is to have a God whose Name is Jehovah; as in the days of deliverance from Egypt. He is One who, in answer to the people's cry, responds, "Here am I!" Thus the leading thought remains, that Israel is Jehovah's people, and he is their God. "Enclosed by God from amidst all other nations, to be the seat of his worship, and the great conservatory of all the sacred oracles and means of salvation. The Gentiles might be called God's own, as a man calls his hall or his parlour his own, which yet others pass through and make use of; but the Jews were so as a man accounts his closet or his cabinet his own—that is, by a peculiar incommunicable destination of it to his own use." And again, "The whole work of man's redemption carries in it the marks, not only of mercy, but of mercy acting by an unaccountable sovereignty. He gives the world to know that his own will is the reason of his proceedings. If the sun is pleased to shine upon a turf, and to gild a dunghill, when perhaps he looks not into the chamber of a prince, we cannot accuse him of partiality. The short but significant saying, 'May I not do what I will with mine own?' being a full and solid answer to all such objections" (South).

II. VISIONS OF REDEMPTION. "The prophet passes into an ecstasy. What he sees with the inner eye he expresses pictorially. He has told us already of the ideal Zion ascending a high mountain, and acting as herald of the Divine Deliverer. Now he varies the picture. It is Zion to whom the herald is seen to come—bounding over the mountains" (Cheyne). The feet give a greeting before the mouth utters it (Stier). The soul of prophet and of poet delights in the mountains; they give forth in visible form the sublimity with which his soul is charged (cf. Ezek. vi. 1). The mountains speak of the eternity of God; upon them the epiphany of the Deliverer may in a sense be expected, as they silently speak of his righteousness, of a constancy which is not to be moved. How welcome the messenger who tells of the fall of a city of the oppressors (Nah. i. 15), such as Nineveh! How still more welcome he who comes to bear tidings from the spiritual world to the spirits of men (Rom. x. 15; Eph. vi. 15)! The proclaimer of peace is at hand, and "peace" is another word for "salvation." But there can be neither peace nor salvation in this distracted world, except under a strong government—the government of the King of kings. Now the tidings are that "God has resumed the crown which he had laid aside." "Thy God has become King!" Celestial watchers are heard, lifting up their voices with a ringing cry, as they from their high seat behold the return of Jehovah to Zion. They "note every advance of the kingdom of God, seeing it eye to eye, as a man looks into the face of his friend; so near are the two worlds of sight and of faith" (Cheyne). The return of Jehovah to Zion means the return of spiritual power and joy and freedom. All earthly relations melt away into the spiritual realities. The real banishment is the separation of the soul from God; the true return from exile is when the soul can say, "God exists; God is near—is for me." Bondage is in ourselves; redemption and comfort are when we realize again that there is another—a "Not-ourselves that makes for righteousness," an Eternal Love, in short, in the sense of which all limitation must be forgotten. Jehovah has bared his holy arm for action in the face of all the nations; and the whole world has seen the salvation of God. Then, in prospect of such a redemption, what should be the conduct of the faithful? They must refuse to touch the unclean thing; they must be purified and become pure. They must regard themselves as armour-bearers of

Jehovah, since he, as a man of war, is going forth to fight the battles of his people, and to establish his kingdom in the earth. The king, upon solemn occasions, had with him a troop of armour-bearers (1 Kings xiv. 28). And so must he, to whom the shields of the whole earth belong (Ps. xlvii. 10), be followed by his band of faithful warriors. And not again in hurrying fearfulness, as in the days of the exode from Egypt, but rather with the calm and solemn march of troops who are marching to assured victory are they to go forth from Babylon. The application was made by St. Paul, and ever may be made, to Christians (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). Babylon is a type of the world; the necessity of "coming out" from that Babylon is the necessity of the disciples of Jesus separating themselves from the evil that is in the world. So in Rev. xviii. 4 Babylon stands for the evil course of the present world—the spirit of pride and impurity and persecution. If, instead of armour-bearers, the rendering "bearers of the vessels of Jehovah" be preferred, then the allusion will be to the priests and Levites (Numb. i. 50; iv. 15). Upon such officials the obligation to be holy rests. Whether in war, or in the peaceful service of tabernacle or temple, the principle is the same. Men set apart to such service are bound to illustrate their office by an *apartness* of manners and of life. A select calling implies a select spirit. It has not been "finely touched" except to "fine issues." There may be an allusion in the "vessels" to Ezra i. 7, 8, or the facts there mentioned. How marked is that "boundless exhilaration" which belongs to these prophecies of restored Jerusalem! "Much good poetry is profoundly melancholy; now the life of the people is such that in literature they require joy. If ever that 'good time coming,' for which they long, was presented with energy and magnificence, it is in these chapters; it is impossible to read them without catching its glow. And they present it *truly* and *with the true conditions*. It is easy to misconceive it on a first view, easy to misconceive its apparent condition; but the more these chapters sink into the mind and are apprehended, the more manifest is the connection with universal history, the key they offer to it, the truth of the ideal they propose for it" (Matthew Arnold).—J.

Ver. 13—ch. liii. 3.—*The Servant of Jehovah: his wondrous career.* "Behold!" A new and remarkable object calls for attention. It is the "Servant of Jehovah." He has been humiliated and rejected, but he is on his way to exaltation and honour.

I. HIS FELICITOUS WISDOM. There enters into the idea of the word here used, *prosperity* and *good success*, as in Josh. i. 8; Jer. x. 21. For wisdom, the devout wisdom, the wisdom of duty in obedience to the Divine commands, alone can bring that good success. Compare what is said of the Righteous Branch in Jer. xxiii. 5; and see also for the word, 2 Kings xviii. 7; Prov. xvii. 8. Some render the words "shall be intelligent;" others, "shall be prosperous." The description applies to any who are endued with the Divine Spirit for practical ends.

II. HIS EXALTATION. There is a heaping up of verbs denoting *exaltation*—he shall be *high*, and *lifted* up, and *lofty exceedingly*. The highest pitch of honour, the loftiest possible rank, shall be his, and that in view of the universe. The right hand of God—the subjection of angels and authorities and powers, and every name that is named—are similar images (Mark xvi. 19; Eph. i. 20—22; Phil. ii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 22). If the Servant be not the Messiah, at least very similar language is used of him (Ps. lxxxix. 27). The exaltation bears a *direct relation to the previous humiliation*. The last would become first; the most despised would yet become the most honoured. Having volunteered for the lowest place on behalf of man's good, he would be exalted by the Divine hand to the highest possible. Once men were stupefied as they looked on his disfigured form, hardly bearing the semblance of a man. So did Job's friends stand aghast as they beheld him from a distance in his misery. But there shall be a magnificent contrast. Kings shall yet be dumb for admiration in his presence—owning his superior dignity (Job xxix. 9; xl. 4). They will be eye-witnesses of things which had been previously inconceivable (cf. also Micah viii. 16; Ps. cxlvii. 42; Job v. 16).

III. REVELATION IN THIS CONTRAST. The popular heart has everywhere delighted in such contrasts, between princely greatness and lowly guise or disguise. So the Greek Odysseus, on his return, is seen sitting lowly amidst the ashes of his hearth. And the Indians (Lyall, 'Asiatic Studies') relish in the highest degree such representations. We not only love surprise, but we feel that it is a Divine method to work by surprise.

"Power keeps quite another road than the turnpikes of choice and will, namely, the subterranean and invisible tunnels and channels of life. Life is a series of surprises. God delights to hide from us the past and the future. 'You will not remember,' he seems to say, 'and you will not expect.' Every man is an impossibility until he is born, everything impossible until we see a success. The ardours of piety agree at last with the coldest scepticism, that nothing is of ourselves or our works—that all is of God. There is nothing at last in success or failure, but more or less of vital force supplied from the Eternal. The results of life are uncalculated and incalculable" (Emerson).

IV. HUMAN INCREDULITY ABASHED. How few believed the prophecies concerning the Servant! How few had eyes to see "such supramundane sights, when nothing on earth seemed to suggest them"! to discern the arm of Jehovah, that mysterious Divine Power, in its secret working! They were blinded by the evidence of the senses. He was as a slight and insignificant plant—but a shoot or sucker from the root brought up out of Egypt. Without that winning grace or imposing majesty that might have been expected, he failed to captivate men's hearts. He seemed isolated, sad sick, and men fled from his presence as if he had been a leper. But the result shows how little Providence recks of our poor logic of appearances, our connections of cause and effect. Life is not so plain a business as it appears. "Presently comes a day, with its angel-whisperings, which discomfits the conclusions of nations and of years!" We boast of our common sense and experience, yet there is a Divine element ever at work to defeat our calculations and to astound us with its operations. The lesson is to be ever waiting and expecting—ever looking up for manifestations of that Divine wisdom which hides to reveal itself, that Divine power which is energizing unspent when all our resources are at an end, that Divine beauty which lurks beneath the dimmest forms and the meanest disguises.—J.

Ver. 7.—*Beautiful messengers.* "How beautiful upon the mountains," etc.! Not so with the warrior. His garments are dyed in blood; his track is over desolated cornfields and ruined vineyards. Look at the footsteps of the servants of God.

I. THE MESSENGERS. They are not self-inspired or self-commissioned. They are sent of God. From Jerusalem the apostles are to go forth; over her all-surrounding mountains they go to tell the story of the angels' song, the Messiah's ministry, and the redeeming cross. How beautiful!—to publish peace! 1. Peace between man and man. 2. Peace between God and man. 3. Peace between nation and nation. 4. Peace in a man's own soul.

II. THE MESSAGE. "Good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation." Blessed word! But how often narrowed and marred through human interpretation! 1. *We are saved from ourselves.* And this salvation is going on within us day by day, as we grow in grace. 2. *We are saved from guilt.* As we can only be by an atonement where the offering is without spot. 3. *We are saved from all that is inimical in the evil that is without us.* For the Saviour knows our enemies, is stronger than our enemies, and will subdue them under his feet. "*Thy God reigneth,*" and, mystery of mysteries, the cross is his sceptre. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The strength of the Church.* The Zion of Old Testament Scripture is the Christian Church of the New. We have here, therefore, a commanding summons to clothe ourselves, as Churches of Christ, with the strength which is especially our own: "Put on *thy* strength, O Zion."

I. IN WHAT THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH CONSISTS. Not, as we are too apt to imagine, in wealth, in territory, in buildings, in material defences of any kind: all this is the strength of the world, but not of the Church. Its strength is in: 1. *Steadfastness* in truth and holiness. The reed by the river-side, shaken with every ripple of the water, bent with every breath of the breeze, is the type of weakness; the massive granite rock, against which the waves of centuries have dashed, but which remains unmoved from base to summit, is the type of strength. Jesus Christ wants his Church to be strong, in that it stands fast (1) in the truth (Eph. iv. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 3; Phil. i. 27); (2) in spiritual freedom (Gal. v. 1); (3) in holiness. The very success of the Church has occasioned danger here. There is much less of gross iniquity in modern society

than in past times. The distinction between the people of God and the enemies of his truth is not so apparent. The spirit of worldliness does not show itself in such malignant forms. Evil, by "losing all its grossness," has lost half its hideousness, and is therefore more seductive and successful than it was. The Church needs to be peculiarly strong in holiness to repel the insidious attacks of our day on its purity. 2. *Fruitfulness.* The strength of the fruit-bearing tree is in bearing much and good fruit. Herein is God glorified in us, as a Church, that we "bear *much* fruit." What fruits does a strong Church bear? Those of pure and gentle thoughts, of kind and generous feelings, of true and helpful words, of upright and honourable deeds, of acceptable and spiritual worship. 3. *Usefulness.* The strongest object we know of is the sun: and its strength is found in radiating life-giving light and heat, century after century: it is the strength of ceaseless, unmeasurable beneficence. To this strength Christ is calling his people. They are to be clothed with and to exercise this benign and blessed power; they are to be distributing on every hand, to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the sorrowful, to guide the perplexed, to reclaim the fallen, to bring into the kingdom of God them that are afar off.

II. THE WAY TO SECURE IT. Physical strength cannot, indeed, be assumed at will; but it can be attained by a sick man arousing himself from his lethargy, sloth, and folly, and adopting the measures which minister to bodily well-being. Let the spiritually feeble: 1. *Take due spiritual nourishment.* The Bread of life, the Water of life, invigorating privileges, are within our reach. 2. *Take due spiritual exercise.* To him that hath is given, and the man who labours imperfectly at first will gain strength and skill as he puts out his power; every effort to do good is so much strength gained for future usefulness as well as so much power put forth in present activity. 3. *Seek the inspiring influences* which come from God: "They that wait on him shall renew their strength."—C.

Ver. 1.—*The beauty of the Church.* We are more apt to thank God for the bounty than for the beauty of the earth; but if one is the more necessary, the other is the higher gift of the two; if the one satisfies the cravings of the body, the other ministers to the hunger and the thirst of the soul. With what lavish hand has God supplied it! What colour, what variety, what elegance, what symmetry, what loveliness, and what grandeur on the surface of the earth, in hill and mountain, in sea and sky! And if we appreciate the beauty of his handiwork, does not he delight in the beauty of our service? does not he say to us, "Put on thy beautiful garments"? What are the beautiful garments of the Church of Christ; what is it that makes it attractive and comely in his pure sight?

I. SPIRITUALITY IN ITS WORSHIP. It is better to worship God in a beautiful structure than in a barn; in skilful, artistic song than with unregulated voice; in becoming language than in distracted exclamations. It *is* better, because (1) we ought to give to a Divine Saviour the very best we can bring, and therefore our taste and culture rather than our crudeness and our vulgarity; and because (2) we should seek to attract by excellency to the house of the Lord, and not repel by unsightliness and discord. But this is not the beauty for which Christ looks: *the* beauty of the Church's worship is in its genuineness, its spirituality, its inward and intrinsic worth (see Ps. l. 14; John iv. 23, 24; Heb. xiii. 15). The reverent thought, the hallowed feeling, the solemn vow, the consecrated spirit, the song which comes from a grateful heart, the attitude of earnest docility that longs to learn that it may hasten to obey,—these are the beautiful garments of devotion.

II. EXCELLENCY OF LIFE. A good profession is a good thing, but integrity of character and blamelessness of life is a better thing. The *uprightness* which would rather suffer than sin; the *faithfulness* that keeps the unremunerative engagement; the *purity* that repels the ugly thought as well as the filthy word and the foul action; the *truthfulness* which prefers to offend man rather than to grieve the Spirit of God; the *generosity* which loses all sight of self in the needs and cries of weakness or sorrow;—these are the beautiful garments in which the Divine Lord would see his servants clothed.

III. DEVOTEDNESS OF LABOUR. Much more, in quantity, is now done in Christ's name than heretofore. But whether the life of the Church is so much the fairer in its Master's view depends chiefly on the spirit of its service. If our work in the sanctuary,

or the Sunday school, or the committee-room, or the cottage, be perfunctory, constrained, tinged or it may be coloured with self-seeking, unspiritual, there is but little beauty in it in the sight of the Pure One. We should aim to make our whole life beautiful in the sight of our Saviour; let obedience be prompt and cheerful, the discharge of duty conscientious and thorough; let submission be ready and unrepining, liberality generous and hearty, courtesy cordial and graceful, etc. So shall we be arrayed in beautiful garments.—C.

Ver. 2.—*The dignity of the Church.* Jerusalem was to arise from the dust of humiliation, and to sit down "with dignity and composure" on a seat of honour, taking her true position among the nations of the earth. The Church of Christ is called to rise from any undignified position into which she may have fallen, and to assume one that is in keeping with her origin and her estate. But the question is, *in what the dignity of the Church consists.* It is clear that dignity has various applications, according to its subject. The dignity of a sovereign is in one thing; that of a scholar is in another thing; that, again, of a servant is something quite different. It is not found in any particular deportment or in any especial surroundings. The Church that seeks to secure its dignity by attaching to itself those external honours or trappings which worldly kingdoms demand for the maintenance of their honour completely mistakes its position. To be truly dignified is to act in a way that is worthy of our origin and in harmony with our position. The true dignity of the Church is realized by its acting in a way that becomes the offspring of Christ, and that is suited to an institution which exists to illustrate his truth and to extend his reign. It consults its dignity and commends itself to the honour of the wise when—

I. IT MAKES ITS APPEAL TO THE HUMAN JUDGMENT, and not to superstitious fears.

II. IT RELIES ON THE ATTACHMENT OF ITS FRIENDS for the necessities of its existence.

III. IT REFUSES TO COUNT IMPOSSIBLE THAT WHICH ITS MASTER CHARGES IT TO ACCOMPLISH, viz. the subjection of the whole world to his sway.

IV. IT LISTENS WITHOUT ALARM TO THE PREDICTIONS OF ITS FOES, and goes calmly and energetically on its way of holy service.—C.

Vers. 2—9.—*The liberty of the Church.* "Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

I. THE RIGHT OF THE CHURCH TO LIBERTY. The sight of the daughter of Zion in chains was very pitiable in the prophet's eye. How much more grievous the spectacle of a Christian Church in bondage, enslaved and oppressed! The Christian Church, being composed of those who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and being called into existence for the purpose of extending a spiritual kingdom amongst men, cannot possibly submit itself to the rule of the world without abdicating its functions and forfeiting its essential privileges. It has a native, Christ-given right to decide upon its own constitution, to choose its own officers, to worship God according to its own convictions, to act freely upon the world in disseminating its principles. It is oppressed and (more or less) enslaved when authority presumes to dictate, or when rank or wealth claims to direct, in these high and spiritual matters.

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF ITS FREEDOM. The Church is not free to "do what it likes" in all these matters; that is licence, not liberty. Its freedom is limited by the will, and defined by the word, of its Divine Lord. Under all circumstances, it is bound to consider what Christ would have it do. Beyond his will it may not move.

III. ITS ATTITUDE UNDER OPPRESSION. 1. A patient submission to the absolutely inevitable. In early Christian times, and under the domination of tyrannical powers since then, the Church has had to accept such share of liberty as was allowed, patiently and devoutly waiting for an extension. 2. A calm, brave assertion of its duty to its Lord; often under censure, hardship, cruel suffering. 3. A seizure of the earliest opportunity to enter upon its right. "Loose thyself," God says to his people. When the bonds can be broken, break them; when the door can be opened, unbar it; when the way is clear to holy liberty, take it without hesitation or delay.

IV. ITS EXULTATION IN THE HOUR OF RELEASE. (Vers. 7—10.) The prophet foresees the liberation of Israel, and breaks out into a strain of surpassing eloquence and joy. Probably the escape from bondage to freedom is calculated to excite the keenest

transports of delight of which the human heart is capable. So has it been in many hundreds of instances of individual release, and so it has been in cases of national and of ecclesiastical deliverance. Speech and song have been far too feeble to utter the rapture of the hour. At such a time the best forms which abounding and overwhelming joy can take are: 1. Gratitude to God, showing itself in praise. It is the Lord whose providence opens the way, whose arm strikes off the shackles (see vers. 3, 6, 10). 2. Recognition of the fact that liberty is useless, and even dangerous, unless it is well employed, and a consequent determination to spend the acquired freedom in holy service.—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Christian pilgrimage.* We may regard the departure and journey of the Israelites from Babylon to Jerusalem as pictorial of our departure from the "far country" of sin for the heavenly Zion. Thus considered, we are taught—

I. THAT ENTRANCE ON THE NEW PATH SHOULD BE AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE AS WELL AS WISDOM. It was an eminently wise thing on the part of the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. Whatever interests, pecuniary or social, they may have formed in exile, their true heritage was in the land of their fathers; the politic in their policy remained, but the wise in their wisdom left. This, however, was not the only or the main inducement. They were called to return as an *act of obedience.* The Lord their God summoned them. It was a Divine voice that said, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence." Our true interest demands that we should leave "the City of Destruction" and seek "another which is an heavenly." Only a false prudence detains; wisdom, deep and true, urges to depart. But this is not the only consideration. God our Divine Father, Jesus Christ our righteous Lord, commands us. He calls us to leave the kingdom of unrighteousness and to enter the path of holy service. To linger is to be guiltily disobedient; to set forth is to do the will of God.

II. THAT ENTRANCE ON CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE SHOULD BE AN ACT OF DELIBERATE CONVICTION. "Ye shall not go out with haste." There should, indeed, be no delay; but, on the other hand, there should be no hurry. More than once Jesus Christ checked the advances of disciples who were acting on impulse rather than conviction (Matt. viii. 18—22; Luke xiv. 28—33). Do not take the greatest step which can possibly be taken without earnest thought, deep deliberation, repeated prayer.

III. THAT CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE, ESPECIALLY THE DIRECT SERVICE OF GOD, SHOULD BE CHARACTERIZED BY PURITY. "Touch no unclean thing; . . . be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." The Israelites were not to soil their hands with any forbidden or ill-acquired treasures; and the Levites were to take peculiar care that their hands were clean, for they would bear the sacred vessels of the temple. All Christian men must see to it that their hearts are uncorrupted and their hands undefiled by the many evils which are in the world. Anything like covetousness, envy, unchastity, intemperance, vindictiveness, makes service unworthy, and Divine worship unacceptable. By watchfulness and prayer let the ministers of Christ, more especially, cleanse their hearts and their hands.

IV. THAT THE GUARDIANSHIP OF GOD MAY BE COUNTED UPON ALL THE WAY. "The Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward;" *i.e.* there shall be a complete defence from danger; though enemies should threaten you before and behind, you shall find an ample security in God. We find ourselves assailed by spiritual perils coming from opposite quarters: we are tempted by fanaticism on the one side and by indifference on the other; by pietism and secularism; by presumption and distrust; by undue asceticism and laxity; by superstition and scepticism; but if we are obedient and reverent in spirit, our God will be a shield against every foe.—C.

Vers. 13—15.—*The wisdom of suffering service.* The fact that these and the following verses refer to the Messiah is no reason why we should not find in them practical lessons for the guidance of our own life, the culture of our own character. For Christ came, not only to do for us a work which we could not possibly do ourselves, but also to be the Exemplar whom we are to follow in the paths of righteousness and peace.

I. OUR FIRST CARE SHOULD BE TO SERVE. He who is the Anointed of the Lord, the Highest among the highest, is spoken of as "my Servant." And from the beginning

to the end of his course he thought and spoke of himself as of One that "was sent," that was charged to do an appointed work. The spiritual greatness he manifested was in giving himself up to the service of mankind. "I am among you as he that serveth." We should count it not our dishonour but our honour that *we live to serve*. We act worthily of him from whom we came, and of that One who was the very Son of man, when we spend our faculties in humble, holy service. We miss the end of our being and take the lowest rank that can be taken when we fail to serve God and our kind. We commit the greatest wrong and we make the supreme mistake.

II. AS SERVANTS WE MUST BE WILLING TO SUFFER. A good soldier endures hardship and runs great risks. A good servant of God will be prepared to do the same. Jesus Christ went on to the work before him by surrendering himself to the blows and buffetings that awaited him. He endured enough sorrow to change his countenance; he went through trials enough to leave a deep mark upon his outer manhood. He did not stop to inquire how many or how grievous were the afflictions in store for him. The only thing he asked about was the Father's will and the world's necessity. If we are true servants of our Saviour and of mankind, this will be our spirit too.

III. SUFFERING SERVICE WILL BE FOLLOWED BY BLESSED EXALTATION. According to the severity of the suffering was the greatness of the exaltation with the holy Servant of Jehovah (vers. 14, 15). To the depth of his humiliation answered the height of his uplifting, to the gloom of the darkened path on earth the glory of the heavenly home. So shall it be with us: if we suffer with our Lord we shall reign with him; and *as* we suffer *so* shall we reign. The deeper we go beneath the waves of sacrificial suffering the higher shall we rise in the celestial kingdom. *Herein is heavenly wisdom.* Had Jesus Christ elected to take the crown which was offered him at the outset (see Matt. iv. 8), he might have gained some glories without the shame through which he passed. But he would have forfeited the "many crowns" he now wears and will for ever wear. But God's Servant "dealt prudently," *i.e.* chose wisely and not with superficial, short-sighted policy; and now he is "exalted and extolled and made very high." Let it be our wisdom, after him, to choose suffering service, looking for the large and the long, though it be the far, reward of reigning in glory by the side and in the service of our Saviour.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The restored castaway.* "Arise, and sit down . . . O captive daughter of Zion." "The verses are a poetical description of the liberation of a female captive from degrading slavery, and it is designed to represent the complete emancipation of the Church from tyranny and persecution." The call is peculiar as judged by Western associations, but quite natural in view of Eastern habits. The female is pictured as crouching on the ground, huddled in the dust, in the depressed and miserable attitude of the slave. She is called to "arise," shake off the dust of her degradation, put on beautiful garments, and sit down like a lady. Jerusalem, or Zion, as it is called, is regarded as a "cast-away," given over for a time, by God, into the power of the Babylonians. Now her restoring-time has come. She is to put on again the garments of beauty, which belonged to her as the priestly queen of cities. Jowett puts the point of these verses in the following sentences: "The captive daughter of Zion, brought down to the dust of suffering and oppression, is commanded to arise and shake herself from that dust; and then, with grace, and dignity, and composure, and security, to sit down; to take, as it were, again her seat and rank amid the company of the nations of the earth, which had before afflicted her and trampled her to the earth." Dealing with the truths suggested in their applications to us, we consider—

I. GOD IN THE STERN EXPERIENCES OF LIFE. We lose much by not carefully discriminating the kinds of things that are gathered up into the word "affliction." Disasters and failures—the various forms of trouble that come in our outward sphere of relations—give us, and are intended to give us, quite other ideas of God than we get from bodily pains or bereavements. To see God in a captivity, a slavery, a business ruin, is an altogether harder thing than to see God in a disease or a family anxiety. The danger of Israel while in Babylon was that it might wrongly regard God's stern dealing, and, helplessly, hopelessly grovel in the dust of despair. And still there is the grave danger of our responding by *hardness, stubbornness, self-willedness*, when God's ways with us seem stern. But the stern may be the precise expression of perfect love

finding adaptations and adjustments. A distinction may be helpfully made between God's work of *softening* and God's work of *humbling*. We may see the softening work illustrated in Job or in Hezekiah. We may see the humbling work illustrated in Manasseh, who must be dragged off into captivity, and feel the bitterness of the prison-house; or in Israel as a corrupt, self-willed nation, which must feel what it was for the Babylonian "iron to eat into its soul."

II. GOD LIMITING THE STERN EXPERIENCES OF LIFE. As a rule, such Divine dealings are not greatly prolonged. It is, indeed, in the very nature of them that they should not be long continued. They are like punishment by whipping, which is soon over and done with. Relatively to the life of a nation, seventy years of captivity is only a "little while." And in a later verse of this prophecy we find God exactly expressing how limited his stern experiences had been: "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." And the expression of the apostle most strictly applies to this class of Divine dealings: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment." If we come, then, into God's stern hands, they are our Father's hands, and love will strictly limit the stern dealings to the "needs be;" and this great confidence may quiet our souls and give peace, even while we suffer, or endure, or struggle.

III. GOD RESTORING FROM THE STERN EXPERIENCES OF LIFE. Zion is restored; Jerusalem is rebuilt; Manasseh comes back to his throne; Job's latter end is brighter than his beginning. Justice is God's strange work, mercy is his delight. Above everything else he is the Redeemer, the Restorer, finding ever more joy in restoring than we can find in being restored. It is as if he were glad with infinite gladness when he can take the cloud away, and let his smile break through again upon us. What seem to us extravagant, ecstatic pictures of the restored glory of the Jewish nation, are really intended to impress on us what a joy God finds in his redeemings. This is expressed for us in the assurance of the Lord Jesus, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And so far as we are really good, and like God, we find singular pleasure in putting things straight again, in reconciliations, in helping others to recover themselves and start afresh.

IV. MAN RESPONDING GLADLY TO THE NEW JOY OF GOD'S RESTORATIONS. To this God calls in our text. It is as if he had said, "I am glad; now be you glad." There could be restorings, accept them at once, and lovingly and thankfully. Rise up out of all those depressions and despairings of captivity. Shake the very dust of the old troubles off. Dress in festal robes. Sing joy-songs. Realize your swiftly coming honours. "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Sit down in stately, royal style, as if the promise were possession, and you entered on it when God gave his assurances. How sadly we fail in hesitating about the acceptance of what God gives! —R. T.

Ver. 3.—*A priceless redemption.* "Ye shall be redeemed without money." This truth is more fully stated in ch. lv. 1. Here we only note two senses in which God's redemption of Israel from the captivity of Babylon, and of us from the captivity of sin, may be called a *priceless* redemption.

I. BECAUSE ITS VALUE IS BEYOND ANY PRICE MAN CAN FIND. A man may hear of a "pearl of great price," and be willing to sell all else that he may have in order to get possession of it. But redemption is a pearl of such price that no man's all could suffice for its purchase. Illustrate what returning to a regenerate Jerusalem was for the captives. And what had they by which they could buy such a national restoration? What relation would it bear to the matter if they put all their wealth together? And we are not redeemed from sin with "corruptible things, such as silver and gold," so that we could recompense him who gave the silver and gold for us, by giving him our silver and gold; "but with the precious blood of Christ," the value of which no human scales can measure, and which no human wealth could buy. The price of our redemption is "beyond all measure of so much." Compare the poetical estimate of the value of "wisdom," in Job xxviii. 12—19.

II. BECAUSE IT IS GIVEN WITHOUT ASKING ANY PRICE AT ALL. We could not pay the price. We should not have it at a price, if we could pay. It cannot be bought. Illustrate how men put a fictitious price on things which they do not wish to sell; and how they refuse to name any price at all when they are determined that the thing shall

be a free gift. So God's redemption is priceless, for he does not want to sell. Nay, it is priceless, for it can only be received as a *gift*. "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." How strange that this very "pricelessness" should be our greatest stumbling-block! We have a saying that "only nothing worth can be got for nothing;" and we find ourselves applying it to God's free gift of salvation. To illustrate this very human weakness, a man bought the entire stock of a herring-vendor, and sent him round a district of poor people, to cry, "Herrings for nothing!" and give them away. He was laughed to scorn, and not one person was found willing to receive. It is hard to believe that a priceless redemption is offered to us "without money and without price."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Knowing God's Name.* By that is meant finding out for ourselves all that is involved in his Name; proving for ourselves what he can and will do, even for us. The prophet has recalled to mind the deliverance from Egypt, and is full of the revelation which was then made, to Moses, of God's Name. Elsewhere it has been shown that God's Name is twofold. 1. An incommunicable name—a bare assertion of existence, "Jehovah, I am." 2. A relational name, that sets us upon observing what God has done and does. "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." Now we gain illustration from another incident in the Mosaic history. Moses, in one of the sternest experiences of his life, asked for the infinite comforting of being shown the *Lord's glory;* and this was the Divine response, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee." Evidently the adequate impression of God's goodness is "knowing God's Name." And the special point of goodness dwelt on in our text is the goodness that restores us from the consequences of our own follies and sins.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S NAME THAT COMES BY REVELATION. This is mainly a *head* knowledge, and does not, of necessity, influence the spirit or the conduct.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S NAME THAT COMES THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS. 1. As recorded in the Word. 2. As met with in life. This is helpful, but it is *secondary* knowledge. And the response we make to it is goodness upon other people's persuasion, and is only likely to last so long as the persuasion lasts. Like the parasite, we are good just as long as we have somebody else's life to drink of.

III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S NAME THAT COMES THROUGH OUR OWN EXPERIENCES. We never really know God until we know him for ourselves, by our own soul-sight and soul-touch. This is well expressed by the saint of old, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now *mine eye seeth thee.* Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." In the text God assures his people that his restoring mercies shall be a personal revelation of himself to them; and, knowing him, they shall know the full joy of full trust.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The message glorifying the messengers.* Immediate reference is to the heralds who go on in advance of the returning exiles to proclaim to Jerusalem that "the time to favour her, yea, the set time has come." And to those who send the heralds, as well as to those who receive them, they seem beautiful for the sake of their message. And this is the only worthy reason for glorying in the ministers of Christ—we love them "for their work's sake" (see St. Paul's use of this verse in relation to the first preachers of the gospel, in Rom. x. 15). In the poetical style of the East, the watchmen are represented as standing upon their watch-tower, or post of observation, and stretching their vision to the utmost point of the horizon, as if in eager expectation of a news-bearing messenger. On a sudden the wished-for object appears in sight, on the summit of the distant mountain, speeding his rapid way to the city, while the watchmen, anticipating the tenor of his tidings, burst forth in a shout of gratulation and triumph. The imagery strikingly represents the expectant attitude and heedful vigilance of the believing part of the teachers and pastors of the nation of Israel on the eve of the Messiah's manifestation. Illustrating the precise point indicated in the heading of this homily, we note—

I. THE SNARE OF A MINISTER IS SETTING HIMSELF BEFORE HIS MESSAGE. Even an apostle felt the power of this temptation, and, having overcome it, he says, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." The snare is felt especially when there is

pride of intellect; a notion of remarkable individuality; the conceit of genius; a rhetorical delivery; or a popular, attractive power. We are sometimes obliged, with grieved hearts, to acknowledge that, in those to whom we listen, there is "more of the man than the message." The messenger may stand in front of the King. All workers for Christ need to deal watchfully with themselves, lest they be overcome of this fault, and find the people forgetting themselves in the flattery of the herald. Popular preachers are in sore need of great grace. Self-conceit takes strangely subtle forms when it enters in and dwells with God's ministers.

II. THE JOY OF A MINISTER WHEN HE CAN LOSE HIMSELF IN THE GLORY OF HIS MESSAGE. Compare Samuel Rutherford's exclamation, "God is my witness, that your salvation would be two salvations for me, and your heaven two heavens for me." Our Lord Jesus Christ ever stood back, and let his Father speak to men through him; and we shall never know the joy of our work until we also can *stand back*—right back—and let Christ speak to men through us.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The world taught through God's dealings with his people.* In every age God's elect people are set in the world's eye; God's ways with them are revelations of himself to all onlookers. The world is educated, elevated, by means of its elect nations, just as the social range, the Church sentiment, the doctrinal beliefs, and the family life are raised and toned by God's elect sons and daughters. In this sense "no man liveth unto himself;" no national experience is limited to the nation; God's salvations of some are intended to be, and are adapted to be, in varied senses, salvations for all. "The Lord makes bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations." The figure of "making bare the arm" is explained by the Eastern custom of wearing long and loose robes, and by the ancient custom of hand-to-hand conflict. "The warrior, preparing for action, throws off his mantle, tucks up the sleeve of his tunic, and leaves his outstretched arm free." The prophet is thinking of the way in which news of the crossing of the Red Sea spread abroad among the nations then in Canaan, carrying great impressions of the august and awful power of Jehovah, the God of the Jews. In a similar but smaller way, the return from Babylon was noised abroad among the nations, carrying impressions of God's faithfulness to his promise. And so with the salvation in Christ Jesus, which was but suggested and foreshadowed by all the previous deliverances; it was for the whole world, though it found its first sphere in the Jewish nation. "Beginning at Jerusalem," of it this must be thought and said—

"Salvation! let the echo fly
The spacious earth around."

This topic is suited for a missionary sermon, and familiar truths may be set under the following headings.

I. NEWS OF SALVATION IN CHRIST DESERVE TO BE KNOWN. It is the "great salvation," the "common salvation," the "only salvation;" for there is "none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved." It is a full salvation and a free salvation.

II. NEWS OF SALVATION IN CHRIST WILL SURELY BE KNOWN. Whether we are pleased to aid the spreading or not. The word is running very swiftly. Like the sunshine, its light "is going out into all the world." Illustrate the spreading of the gospel, and its ameliorating and ennobling influences.

III. WE MAY HAVE THE JOY OF MAKING THAT SALVATION KNOWN. Show in what practical ways, and plead for direct personal interest in all missionary work.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Cleanness a condition of service.* "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." The expression recalls the importance attached in the Jewish economy to the preparation of the priests and Levites for solemn tabernacle engagements. They were required to "sanctify themselves" before undertaking any ritual service, because the impression of the holiness of the work must rest on them, and be made through them upon the people. So when the captives were about to return to their own land, as monuments of Divine restorings and salvations, due impressions must be made of the holiness God demanded of all who served him, and the responsibility lay especially on the Levites of making this impression. They may be taken as types of all those

who are now engaged in Christ's service—to whom he has committed any trusts. The question is sometimes discussed, in view of the notion of apostolical succession, whether a man who is morally bad can officially communicate Divine grace. We do not venture an opinion on such a question, but we do say that, to right feeling men and women, the connection between personal wickedness and pious work is offensive and distressing. Our souls revolt from the association of the two things, and respond to the demand of the text for personal *purity* in all who attempt to do God's work in the world. Two things may be dwelt on.

I. CLEANNESS AS HARMONY WITH OUR WORK. We seek for harmony everywhere. In arranging colours of dress or fittings of house. In the relation of man's profession and his conduct; between a man's work and the spirit in which he does it. Broken harmony is unpleasing to us. Clean work calls for clean hands. Now, God's work, whatever form it takes, is holy work; and we never undertake it aright, save as due impressions of its holiness rest upon us. God himself is most holy. His gospel most holy. Immortal souls, as objects of his redeeming love, most holy. The Word that brings healing and life most holy. And, therefore, everybody who comes into relation with these Divine persons and things ought to be *toned* in harmony with them. Open how this presses on us the importance of spiritual culture.

II. CLEANNESS AS FITNESS FOR OUR WORK, AND POWER IN DOING IT. It is, in fact, our endowment. We often think of holiness as *quality*, but we need to discern that it is *power*, and our best power; the feather that wings our arrow; the nerve-force that gives energy to our blow; the mesmeric influence before which even stern, hard souls must yield. The pure do the best work in the world for God. Saintly souls are almost almighty.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Surprise at the appearance of God's Servant.* Whatever may be the immediate and historical reference of this term "servant," of this we may feel quite sure—the full reference must be to Messiah, and to the Lord Jesus Christ as Messiah. Now, it is certainly singular that no trustworthy traces of the appearance of our Lord have come down to us. Everybody may imagine for himself what were the features and expression of his Divine Master; and it is better that our free imaginations should have no limitations to the representation of any artistic genius. We remember in an exhibition observing a number of paintings of the thorn-crowned head. The faces of our Lord precisely differed according as the artist was Spanish, Italian, or English, or had made the uncertain attempt of creating a face of Jewish type. All that Scripture asserts is that, so far as face and form were concerned, there was nothing arresting about Christ; you might have passed him by as a common man. It is even suggested that, as with his servant Paul, men might have rudely said that his "bodily presence was contemptible." Dean Plumptre remarks, "These words (of ver. 14) conflict strangely with the type of pure and holy beauty with which Christian art has made us familiar as its ideal of the Son of man. It has to be noted, however, that the earlier forms of that art, prior to the time of Constantine, and, in some cases, later, represented the Christ as worn, emaciated, with hardly any touch of earthly comeliness; and that it is at least possible that the beauty may have been of expression rather than of feature or complexion."

I. WHAT MESSIAH WAS—IN FACT. In no way striking. Not aristocratic-looking, or handsome, or big. Just a man, simple, undistinguished-looking. Dekker, one of our early English poets, says—

> "The best of men that e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

II. WHAT MESSIAH WAS—CONTRARY TO EXPECTATION. Jewish hopes fashion a hero-king, a patriot like Judas Maccabæus, a restorer of David's line of kings. Instead, he was a simple Man, who lived a life; a Sufferer who bore a burden of peculiar sorrows; a Man who seemed to end his life in failure and shame.

III. WHY WAS MESSIAH THUS DIFFERENT TO ALL EXPECTATION OF HIM? Because men are so enslaved to the literal, the temporal, the earthly. There was nothing in the *Man* to attract, because God would have us feel the attractions of the *Divine Saviour*. —R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE PASSIONAL, OR THE GREAT PROPHECY OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND OF HIS LATER EXALTATION. Polycarp the Lysian calls this chapter "the golden passional of the Old Testament evangelist." Delitzsch says of it, "It is the centre of this wonderful book of consolation (ch. xl.—lxvi.), and is the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that the Old Testament prophecy, outstripping itself, has ever achieved" ('Commentary on Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 303). Mr. Urwick remarks on it, "Here we seem to enter the holy of holies of Old Testament prophecy—that sacred chamber wherein are pictured and foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow" ('The Servant of Jehovah,' p. 65).

The Messianic interpretation of the chapter was universally acknowledged by the Jews until the time of Aben Ezra (about A.D. 1150). It was also assumed as indisputable by the Christian Fathers. Almost all Christian expositors down to the commencement of the nineteenth century took the same view. It was only under the pressure of the Christian controversy that the later Jews abandoned the traditional interpretation, and applied the prophecy (1) to Jeremiah; (2) to Josiah; (3) to the people of Israel. In the present century a certain number of Christian commentators have adopted one or other of the late Jewish theories, either absolutely or with modifications. It is impossible to examine and refute their arguments here. We must be content to repeat what was urged in the introductory paragraph to ch. xlii., namely: (1) that the portraiture of "the Servant of the Lord" in this place has so strong an individuality and such marked personal features that it cannot possibly be a mere personified collective—whether Israel, or faithful Israel, or ideal Israel, or the collective body of the prophets; and (2) that it goes so infinitely beyond anything of which a mere man was ever capable, that it can only refer to the unique Man—the God-Man—Christ. It is, moreover, applied directly to Christ in Matt. viii. 17; Mark xv. 28; Luke xxii. 37; John xii. 37, 38; Acts viii. 32, 33; Rom. x. 16; and 1 Pet. ii. 24, 25. The Messianic interpretation is maintained, among moderns, by Hengstenberg, Keil, Umbreit, Œhler, Delitzsch, Kay, Cheyne, Henderson, Alexander, Urwick, and others.

Ver. 1.—**Who hath believed?** Isaiah felt that he spoke, mainly, to unbelieving ears (see above, ch. xxviii. 9—15; xxix. 10—15; xxx. 9—11; xlii. 23, etc.). The unbelief was likely to be intensified when so marvellous a prophecy was delivered as that which he was now commissioned to put forth. Still, of course, there is rhetorical exaggeration in the question, which seems to imply that no one would believe. **Our report**; literally, *that which has been heard by us*. But the word is used technically for a prophetic revelation (see ch. xxviii. 9, 19; Jer. xlix. 14). Here it would seem to refer especially to the Messianic prophecies delivered by Isaiah. **To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?** The "arm of the Lord," which has been "made bare in the eyes of all the nations" (ch. lii. 10), yet requires the eye of faith to see it. Many Jews would not see the working of God's providence in the victories of Cyrus, or in the decision to which he came to restore the Jews to their own country. Unbelief can always assign the most plainly providential arrangements to happy accident.

Ver. 2.—**For he shall grow up**; rather, *now he grew up*. The verbs are, all of them, in the past, or completed tense, until ver. 7, and are to be regarded as "perfects of prophetic certitude." As Mr. Cheyne remarks, "All has been finished before the foundations of the world in the Divine counsels." **Before him**; *i.e.* "before Jehovah"—under the fostering care of Jehovah (comp. Luke ii. 40, 52). God the Father had his eye ever fixed upon the Son with watchfulness and tenderness and love. **As a tender plant**; literally, *as a sapling*, or *as a sucker* (comp. Job viii. 16; xiv. 7; xv. 30; Ps. lxxx. 12; Ezek. xvii. 4, 22; Hos. xiv. 6). The "branch" of ch. xi. 1, 10—a different word—has nearly the same meaning. The Messiah will be a fresh sprout from the stump of a tree that has been felled; *i.e.* from the destroyed Davidic monarchy. **As a root** (so ch. xi. 10; Rev. v. 5). The "sapling" from the house of David shall become the "root" out of which his Church will grow (comp. John xv. 1—6). **Out of a dry ground.** Either out of the "dry ground" of a corrupt age and nation, or out of the arid soil of humanity. In the East it is not unusual to see a tall succulent plant growing from a soil which seems

utterly devoid of moisture. Such plants have roots that strike deep, and draw their nourishment from a hidden source. **He hath no form nor comeliness**; rather, *he had no form nor majesty.* It is scarcely the prophet's intention to describe the personal appearance of our Lord. What he means is that "the Servant" would have no splendid surroundings, no regal pomp nor splendour—nothing about him to attract men's eyes, or make them think him anything extraordinary. It is impossible to suppose that there was not in his appearance something of winning grace and quiet majesty. But it was of a kind that was not adapted to draw the gaze of the multitude. **And when we shall see him.** Some connect this clause with the preceding, and translate, "He hath no form nor comeliness, that we should regard him; no beauty, that we should desire him" (Lowth, Vitringa, Gesenius, Ewald, Knobel, Henderson, Urwick. But Stier, Delitzsch, Kay, and Mr. Cheyne prefer the construction found in the Authorized Version). **No beauty**; literally, *no sightliness*; i.e. nothing to attract the eye or arrest it. The spiritual beauties of holy and sweet expression and majestic calm could only have been spiritually discerned.

Ver. 3.—**He is despised**; rather, *was despised* (comp. ch. xlix. 7 and Ps. xxii. 6). Men's contempt was shown, partly in the little attention which they paid to his teaching, partly in their treatment of him on the night and day before the Crucifixion (Matt. xxv. 67, 68; xxvi. 29—31; Mark xiv. 65; xv. 18, 19, etc.). **Rejected of men**; rather, perhaps, *forsaken of men*—"one from whom men held themselves aloof" (Cheyne); comp. Job xix. 14. Our Lord had at no time more than a "little flock" attached to him. Of these, after a time, "many went back, and walked no more with him" (John vi. 66). Some, who believed on him, would only come to him by night (John iii. 2). All the "rulers" and great men held aloof from him (John vii. 48). At the end, even his apostles "forsook him, and fled" (Matt. xxvi. 56). **A Man of sorrows.** The word translated "sorrows" means also pains of any kind. But the beautiful rendering of our version may well stand, since there are many places where the word used certainly means "sorrow" and nothing else (see Exod. iii. 7; 2 Chron. vi. 29; Ps. xxxii. 10; xxxviii. 17; Eccles. i. 18; Jer. xxx. 15; xlv. 3; Lam. i. 12, 18, etc.). Aquila well translates, ἄνδρα ἀλγηδόνων. The "sorrows" of Jesus appear on every page of the Gospels. **Acquainted with grief**; literally, *with sickness*; but as *æger* and *ægritudo* are applied in Latin both to the mind and to the body, so *khōli*, the word here used, would seem to be in Hebrew (see Jer. vi. 7; x. 19). The translation of the Authorized Version may therefore be retained. **We hid as it were our faces from him**; literally, *and there was as it were the hiding of the face from him.* Some suppose the hiding of God's face to be intended; but the context, which describes the treatment of the Servant by his fellow-men, makes the meaning given in our version far preferable. Men turned their faces from him when they met him, would not see him, would not recognize him (comp. Job xix. 13—17; xxx. 10). **Despised.** A repetition very characteristic of Isaiah (see ch. i. 7; iii. 12; iv. 3; vi. 11; xiv. 25; xv. 8; xvii. 12, 13, etc.).

Ver. 4.—**Surely he hath borne our griefs**; or, *surely they were our griefs which he bore.* The pronouns are emphatic. Having set forth at length the fact of the Servant's humiliation (vers. 2, 3), the prophet hastens to declare the reason of it. Twelve times over within the space of nine verses he asserts, with the most emphatic reiteration, that all the Servant's sufferings were vicarious, borne for man, to save him from the consequences of his sins, to enable him to escape punishment. The doctrine thus taught in the Old Testament is set forth with equal distinctness in the New (Matt. xx. 28; John xi. 50—52; Rom. iii. 25; v. 6—8; viii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 18—21; viii. 9; Gal. iii. 13; Eph. i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 24, etc.), and forms the hope, the trust, and the consolation of Christians. **And carried our sorrows.** The application which St. Matthew makes of this passage to our Lord's miracles of healing (viii. 17) is certainly not the primary sense of the words, but may be regarded as a secondary application of them. Christ's sufferings were the remedy for all the ills that flesh is heir to. **Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God.** They who saw Christ suffer, instead of understanding that he was bearing the sins of others in a mediatorial capacity, imagined that he was suffering at God's hands for his own sins. Hence they scoffed at him and reviled him, even in his greatest agonies (Matt. xxvii. 39—44). To one only, and him not one of God's people, was it given to see the contrary, and to declare aloud, at the moment of the death, "Certainly this was a righteous Man" (Luke xxiii. 47).

Ver. 5.—**But he was wounded for our transgressions.** This verse contains four asseverations of the great truth that all Christ's sufferings were for us, and constituted the atonement for our sins. The form is varied, but the truth is one. Christ was "wounded" or "pierced" (1) by the thorns; (2) by the nails; and (3) by the spear of the soldier. The wounds inflicted by the nails caused his death. He was **bruised**; or, *crushed* (comp. ch. iii. 15; xix. 10; lvii. 15,

Ps. lxxii. 4). "No stronger expression could be found in Hebrew to denote severity of suffering—suffering unto death" (Urwick). **The chastisement of our peace** was upon him; *i.e.* "the chastisement which brought us peace," which put a stop to the enmity between fallen man and an offended God—which made them once more *at one* (comp. Eph. ii. 15—17, "Having *abolished in his flesh the enmity*, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so *making peace;* and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, *having slain the enmity thereby:* and came and preached *peace* to you which were afar off;" Col. i. 20, "Having *made peace* through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself"). **With his stripes we are healed**; rather, *we were healed* (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 24, "By whose stripes ye were healed"). Besides the blows inflicted on him with the hand (Matt. xxvi. 27) and with the reed (Matt. xxvii. 30), our Lord was judicially scourged (Matt. xxvii. 26). Such scourging would leave the "stripe-marks" which are here spoken of.

Ver. 6.—**All we like sheep have gone astray.** "All we" means either the whole nation of Israel, which "went astray" in the wilderness of sin (Ps. cvii. 4; cxix. 176; Ezek. xxxiv. 6), or else the whole race of mankind, which had wandered from the right path, and needed atonement and redemption even more than Israel itself. **We have turned every one to his own way.** Collectively and individually, the whole world had sinned. There was "none that did good" absolutely—"no, not one" (Ps. xiv. 3). All had quitted "the way of the Lord" (ch. xl. 3) to walk in their "own ways" (ch. lxvi. 3). **The Lord hath laid on him**; literally, *the Lord caused to light upon him.* God the Father, as the primary Disposer of all things, lays upon the Son the burden, which the Son voluntarily accepts. He comes into the world to do the Father's will. He prays to the Father, "Let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but *as thou wilt*" (Matt. xxvi. 39). So St. John says that the Father "sent the Son to be the Propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). And St. Paul tells us that God (the Father) "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). It does not lessen the Son's exceeding mercy and loving-kindness in accepting the burden, that it was laid upon him by the Father. **The iniquity of us all** (compare the initial "All we"). The redemption is as universal as the sin, at any rate potentially. Christ on the cross made "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world."

Ver. 7.—**He was oppressed.** As Israel under the Egyptian taskmasters (Exod. iii. 7). The cruel ill usage in the high priest's house, and before Herod is, perhaps, specially pointed at. **He was afflicted**; rather, *he abased himself* (comp. ch. xxxi. 4 and Exod. x. 3). The position of the emphatic pronoun (*hu'*) between the first participle and the second detaches the second clause from the first and conjoins it with the third. Otherwise the rendering of the Authorized Version might stand. Translate, *He was oppressed, but he abased himself and opened not his mouth.* The silence of Jesus before his judges (Matt. xxvi. 22, 23; xxvii. 14), when he could so easily have vindicated himself from every charge, was a self-abasement. It *seemed* like an admission of guilt. **He opened not his mouth** (comp. Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14; xxxix. 2, 9). The contrast of the Servant's silence and passivity with men's ordinary vehemence of self-assertion under ill usage is most striking. Who was ever silent but he under such extremity of provocation? (For a contrast, see the account of the Jewish martyrdoms in 2 Macc. vii.) **He is brought as a lamb**; rather, *as the lamb.* The Paschal lamb is, perhaps, intended, or, at any rate, the lamb of sacrifice. The prophet has often seen the dumb, innocent lamb led in silence to the altar, to be slain there, and thinks of that touching sight. It was probably the use of this imagery here which caused the Baptist to term our Lord "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). **As a sheep before her shearers.** A second image, a reflex of the first, somewhat weaker, as so often in Isaiah (ch. i. 22, 30; v. 18, 24; viii. 14; x. 24, 27, 34; xi. 8; xiii. 14; xxiv. 13; xxv. 7, etc.).

Ver. 8.—**He was taken from prison and from judgment**; rather, *by oppression and a judgment was he taken away;* i.e. (as Dr. Kay says) "by a violence which cloaked itself under the formalities of a legal process" The Septuagint Version, which is quoted by Philip the deacon in the Acts (ch. viii. 33), must have been derived from quite a different text. It preserves, however, the right rendering of the verb, "was he taken away," *i.e.* removed from the earth. **Who shall declare his generation?** literally, *his generation who considereth?* The meaning is obscure. Dr. Kay understands by "his generation," his lifetime or his life, comparing ch. xxxviii. 12, "Mine *age* is departed," where the same word is used and accompanied by a pronominal suffix. Mr. Urwick suggests that it includes (1) his origin; (2) his earthly life; and (3) his everlasting reign in heaven. Others (Delitzsch, Gesenius, Cheyne) take "his generation" to mean "the men of his generation," and join the clause with what follows: "As

for those of his generation, which of them considered that he was cut off," etc.? He was cut off; *i.e.* taken away before his time, cut down like a flower (comp. Job xiv. 2; Lam. iii. 54; Ezek. xxxvii. 11). **The land of the living.** The present world, the earth (see ch. xxxviii. 11; and comp. Job xxviii. 13; Ps. xxvii. 13; lii. 5; cxvi. 9; cxlii. 2; Jer. xi. 19). **For the transgression of my people was he stricken.** The sentiment is the same as in ver. 5, but with the difference that there it was suffering only, here it is death itself, which the Servant endures for man. "My people" may be either "God's people" or "the prophet's people," according as the speaker is regarded as Isaiah or Jehovah. Jehovah certainly becomes the Speaker in vers. 11, 12.

Ver. 9.—**And he made his grave with the wicked**; rather, *they assigned him his grave with the wicked.* The verb is used impersonally. Those who condemned Christ to be crucified with two malefactors on the common execution-ground—"the place of a skull"—meant his grave to be "with the wicked," with whom it would naturally have been but for the interference of Joseph of Arimathæa. Crucified persons were buried with their crosses near the scene of their crucifixion by the Romans. **And with the rich in his death**; or, *and (he was) with a rich one after his death.* In the preceding clause, the word translated "the wicked" is plural, but in the present, the word translated "the rich" is singular. The expression translated "in his death" means "when he was dead," "after death" (comp. 1 Kings xiii. 31; Ps. vi. 5). The words have a singularly exact fulfilment in the interment of our Lord (Matt. xxvii. 57—60). **Because.** The preposition used may mean either "because" or "although." The ambiguity is, perhaps, intentional. **He had done no violence**; or, *no wrong* (see Gen. xvi. 5; 1 Chron. xii. 17; Job xix. 7; Ps. xxxv. 11 (margin); Prov. xxvi. 6). The LXX. give ἀνομία, while St. Peter renders the word used by ἁμαρτία (1 Pet. ii. 22). The sinlessness of Christ is asserted by himself (John viii. 46), and forms the main argument in the Epistle to the Hebrews for the superiority of the new covenant over the old (Heb. vii. 26—28; ix. 14). It is also witnessed to by St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 22), by St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 21), and by St. John (1 John iii. 5). As no other man was ever without sin, it follows that the Servant of the present chapter *must* be Jesus.

Ver. 10.—**Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him** (see the comment on ver. 6, *ad fin.*). The sufferings of Christ, proceeding from the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23), and being permitted by him, were in some sort his doing. It "pleased him," moreover, that they should be undergone, for he saw with satisfaction the Son's self-sacrifice, and he witnessed with joy man's redemption and deliverance effected thereby. **He hath put him to grief**; rather, *he dealt grievously*—a sort of *hendiadys.* "He bruised him with a grievous bruising." **When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.** It is proposed (Ewald, Cheyne), by the alteration of a letter, to make the passage run thus: "When *he* shall make his soul an offering," etc., and argued that "he who offers the Servant's life as a sacrifice must be the Servant himself, *and not* Jehovah" (Cheyne). No doubt the Servant did offer his own life (see Matt. xx. 28, "He gave his soul a ransom for many"); but that fact does not preclude the possibility of the Father having also offered it. "Believest thou not," said our Lord to Philip, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John xiv. 10). This *perienchoresis*, as the ancient theologians called it, makes it possible to predicate of the Father almost all the actions which can be predicated of the Son—all, in fact, excepting those which belong to the Son's humanity, or which involve obedience and subordination. As the Father had "laid on Christ the iniquity of us all" (ver. 6), as he had "bruised him and put him to grief," so he might be said to have "made his soul an offering for sin." All was settled in the Divine counsels from all eternity, and when the ideal became the actual, God the Father wrought with God the Son to effectuate it. "Offerings for sin," or "guilt offerings," were distinct from "sin offerings." The object of the former was "satisfaction," of the latter "expiation." The Servant of Jehovah was, however, to be both. "As in ver. 5 the Divine Servant is represented as a Sin Offering, his death being an expiation, so here he is described as a Guilt Offering, his death being a satisfaction" (Urwick, 'The Servant of Jehovah,' p. 151). **He shall see his seed.** The "seed" of a teacher of religion are his disciples. St. Paul speaks of Onesimus as one whom he had "begotten in his bonds" (Philem. 10). He calls himself by implication the "father" of his Corinthian converts (1 Cor. iv. 15). Both he and St. John address their disciples as "little children" (Gal. iv. 19; 1 John ii. 1, 18, 25; iii. 7, 18; iv. 4; v. 21). It had long previously been promised that "*a seed* should serve" Messiah (Ps. xxii. 30). Our Lord himself occasionally called his disciples his "children" (Mark x. 24; John xxi. 4). He has always "seen his seed" in his true followers. **He shall prolong his days. A seeming contra-**

diction to the statement (ver. 8) that he should be "cut off" out of the land of the living; and the more surprising because his death is made the condition of this long life: "*When* thou shalt make his soul an offering [or, 'sacrifice'] for sin," then "he shall prolong his days." But the resurrection of Christ, and his entrance upon an immortal life (Rom. vi. 9), after offering himself as a Sacrifice upon the cross, exactly meets the difficulty and solves the riddle (comp. Rev. i. 18). **The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.** "In his hand" means "by his instrumentality." The "pleasure of the Lord" is God's ultimate aim and end with respect to his universe. This would "prosper"—*i.e.* be advanced, wrought out, rendered effectual—by the instrumentality of Christ. "Taking the verse as a whole, it sets forth (1) the origin, (2) the nature, and (3) the result of the Saviour's sufferings. Taking the last clause by itself, we have (1) the Divine complacency in the purpose of human salvation; and (2) the successful issue of that purpose as administered by the Messiah" (Urwick, 'The Servant of Jehovah,' p. 153).

Ver. 11.—**He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied**; rather, *because of the travail of his soul he shall see, and be satisfied* (comp. Phil. ii. 7—11, "He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"). No cross—no crown. First suffering, then glory. *Because* Christ suffered, and was bruised, and put to grief, and made a sacrifice for sin; *because* of all this "travail of his soul," —*therefore* it was given him to see the happy results of his sufferings—the formation of that Church which will live with him for ever in heaven (Rev. vii. 4—17), and therewith to be "satisfied." **By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many**; *i.e.* "by his knowledge of the Divine counsels and purpose, which he will impart to his disciples, shall my righteous Servant justify many" (literally, *the many*), or, in other words, "turn them from sin to righteousness" (comp. Dan. xii. 3). Nothing is so effectual in turning men to righteousness as teaching them the true knowledge of God—his nature, his purposes with regard to them, his feelings towards them. Christ, from his own knowledge, gave men this knowledge, and so did all that could be done to draw them to his Father. And his efforts were not without result. The fruit of his teaching has been the justification of many—ay, of "*the* many," as both Isaiah and St. Paul (Rom. v. 19) testify. **For he shall bear their iniquities**; rather, *and their iniquities he himself shall bear.* The initial *vau* of the clause is not "causal," but merely connective. There are two main things which Christ does for his people—he makes them righteous by infusing into them of his own righteousness; and he bears the burden of their iniquities, taking them upon himself, and by his perpetual intercession obtaining God's forgiveness of them. As Delitzsch says, "His continued taking of our trespasses upon himself is merely the constant presence and presentation of his atonement, which has been offered once for all. The dead yet living One, because of his one self-sacrifice, is an eternal Priest, who now lives to distribute the blessings which he has acquired" ('Commentary on Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 338).

Ver. 12.—**Therefore** (see the comment on ver. 11, *sub init.*). **Will I divide him a portion with the great**; *i.e.* "I will place him among the great conquering ones of the earth"—an accommodation to human modes of thought analogous to the frequent comparison of Christ's kingdom with the kingdoms of the earth (Dan. ii. 44; vii. 9—14, etc.). The apostle goes deeper into the true nature of things when he says, "Therefore also hath God highly exalted him, *and given him a Name which is above every name*" (Phil. ii. 9). **He shall divide the spoil with the strong.** A repetition of the thought in the preceding clause (comp. Prov. xvi. 19). **Because he hath poured out his soul unto death.** Christ not only died for man, but, as it were, "poured out his soul" with his own hand to the last drop. The expression emphasizes the duration and the voluntariness of Messiah's sufferings. **And he was numbered with the transgressors**; rather, *and he was reckoned with transgressors* (see Luke xxii. 37, Μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη, where our Lord applies the words to himself). Christ was condemned as a "blasphemer" (Matt. xxvi. 65), crucified with malefactors (Luke xxiii. 32), called "that deceiver" (Matt. xxvii. 63), and regarded generally by the Jews as accursed (Deut. xxi. 23). **And he bare the sin of many**; rather, *and himself bare the sin of many* (compare the last clauses of vers. 6 and 11; and see also Heb. ix. 27). **And made intercession for the transgressors.** The future is used, with *vau* conversive, instead of the preterite, to mark that the act, though begun in the past, is inchoate only, and not completed. The

"intercession for transgressors" was begun upon the cross with the compassionate words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). But it has continued ever since, and will continue until the last day (see Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—11.—"*The sufferings of Jesus.*" It is the great object of Isaiah, in this chapter, to declare to his countrymen (1) that the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah; (2) that his sufferings would be vicarious; and (3) that they would have a propitiatory or atoning character.

I. THE MESSIAH A SUFFERING MESSIAH. Hitherto Isaiah had looked upon the promised Redeemer on the side of his glories and his triumphs. His names were to be "Immanuel," or "God with us" (ch. vii. 14), "Wonderful," "Counsellor," "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father," "The Prince of Peace" (ch. ix. 6). "Of the increase of his government and peace there was to be no end, upon the throne of David, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (ch. ix. 7). "The Spirit of the Lord was to be upon him . . . and with righteousness was he to judge the poor, and to reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, and to smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips to slay the wicked" (ch. xi. 2—4). He was to "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (ch. xlii. 1); he was not to "fail nor be discouraged" (ch. xlii. 4); he was to be "upheld ever by God's hand" (ch. xlii. 6); "the isles were to wait for his Law" (ch. xlii. 4). But now the prophet has to speak in another strain. Psalms probably written before his time (as Ps. ii., xxii., xxxi., xl., lxix., etc.) had partially drawn aside the veil, and given indications that the career of the Deliverer would not be all glory or all triumph. But it was difficult to determine how far they were historical, how far prophetic. It was a part of Isaiah's mission to reveal, in language that could scarcely be mistaken, the darker aspect of Messiah's coming, the "contradiction of sinners" which he would encounter, and its consequences. Messiah was to be "despised," "forsaken" (ver. 3), "pierced," "crushed," made sore with "stripes" (ver. 5), "oppressed" (ver. 7), "cut off" before his time, "stricken" (ver. 8), "dealt with grievously" (ver. 10). He was to be condemned by an iniquitous "judgment" (ver. 8), to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (ver. 7), to be "assigned his grave with the wicked" (ver. 9), and "reckoned with transgressors" (ver. 12). His earthly life was to be such as would be best summed up in the brief phrase, "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (ver. 3).

II. THE SUFFERINGS OF MESSIAH VICARIOUS. Men make a difficulty about vicarious suffering; but half the suffering in the world is of this nature. Who that watches by a sick-bed, and supports and props the sufferer, and stays unmoved in a cramped position not to disturb the sick one's snatch of slumber, but suffers to assuage or remove another's pain? Who that, hungry himself, passes on to another the food that he might eat himself, but does the same? What mother but bears a thousand discomforts to shield her child from them? What soldier but tries to take himself the blow which he sees must otherwise prostrate his chief? How are the young, who rush into ruinous extravagance which would cripple them for life, saved but by a father or a guardian taking on him the grievous trouble of paying the debts incurred? What do not refined ladies undergo to rescue and recover those among their sisters who have fallen? Men's and women's kindness of heart is continually leading them to undergo vicarious suffering; nor is there often any other way by which the sufferings of our fellow-creatures can be removed. If I take the load that is galling another's back and put it on my own, I do it with the full knowledge that my back will soon ache. If I transfer my wraps to a sick fellow-traveller on a wintry day, I am quite aware that the cold will clutch me instead of him. The vicarious character of Messiah's sufferings is the direct subject of seven distinct assertions: (1) "He hath borne our griefs;" (2) "He hath carried our sorrows;" (3) "He was wounded for our transgressions;" (4) "He was bruised for our iniquities;" (5) "The chastisement of our peace was upon him;" (6) "With his stripes we are healed" (vers. 4, 5); (7) "For the transgression of my

people was he stricken" (ver. 8). It is indirectly implied in four others: (1) "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" (2) "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin;" (3) "He shall bear their iniquities;" (4) "He bare the sins of many" (vers. 6, 10—12).

III. THE SUFFERINGS OF MESSIAH PROPITIATORY. The idea of propitiation is implied in the three passages where Messiah is said to have borne the sins of men. No otherwise can one man bear the sin of another than by doing something which propitiates him whom the sin has offended. But it is further distinctly asserted in ver. 10, when it is said that the soul of the Servant should be "made an offering for sin." As the whole notion of offering for sin was grounded on the idea of expiation, so it was now made plain that the real expiation, the real atonement, the real propitiation, to which the entire ritual system of the Israelitish nation pointed, was the offering up of that "righteous Servant" of the Lord, who, "having done no wrong," having been guilty of no "guile," nevertheless was made sin for man, and became a willing and meritorious Sacrifice. "It is *impossible* for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin" (Heb. x. 4). It is impossible for sinful man to redeem his fellow-man (Ps. xlix. 7, 8). Only One who was without sin, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26), could make atonement for others' sins; only One who was perfectly pure himself could purify them; only One who needed none to intercede for him could intercede for his brethren. It is strange how men dislike, and kick against, and endeavour to explain away, the doctrine of vicarious suffering and substitution, and of atonement made for man by the blood of Christ. Yet why should this be? "The doctrine," as Mr. Urwick says, "is in perfect keeping with all that the Jewish ceremonial embodied, and with the teaching alike of the Redeemer himself (Matt. xx. 28; John x. 11; Luke xxii. 20) and his apostles, St. Paul (Rom. iii. 24—26), St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 24, 25), and St. John (1 John ii. 2). It satisfies the Divine holiness, and the demands of the sinner's own conscience. It fully recognizes the reality of sin and its exceeding sinfulness, whereas all other attempted explanations tend to make light of sin, or at least to represent it more or less as a matter of human weakness, which a good-natured God will readily pass over and forgive without a ransom. It presents the way of salvation as simple and straightforward; all can understand it; whereas other attempted explanations of the efficacy of Christ's redemptive work are cloudy, indefinite, mystified, abstruse, and difficult of apprehension even by the learned" ('The Servant of Jehovah,' pp. 129, 130).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 4—6.—*The suffering Servant of Jehovah.* I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SUFFERING. It depicts, by simple force of language, its *extreme intensity*—not a suffering springing from internal weakness of nature, and so withering and dying like a lamp for want of oil, but "like a torch in its full flame bent and ruffled, and at length blown out by the breath of a north wind." It was a *diffused* suffering, according to the expression of the psalmist, "like water in his bowels, or oil in his bones." "In his person we may see grief in its height and supremacy, triumphant, crowned and arrayed in purple, grief reigning and doing the utmost that it was able." In proportion to the fineness of the nature is the sensitiveness, and in proportion to the sensitiveness, the capacity for suffering. In these words, "stricken, pierced, afflicted, crushed, beaten with stripes," we have a cumulation of strong touches in the picture. Add to this, "smitten of God." The allusion is said to be to leprosy, regarded as a punishment for grievous sin (Numb. xii. 9, 10; 2 Kings xv. 5; Ps. li. 7). "The measure of every passion is the operation of the agent. We must not measure the Divine strokes by the proportion of those blows which are inflicted by the greatest and most exasperated mortal. Every blow inflicted by the fiercest tyrant can reach no further than the body, and the body is but the dwelling-place, not any part, of the soul. None can reach the conscience but he who made it. God is able, merely by letting a few drops of his wrath fall upon the guilty conscience, so to scald with a lively sense of sin, that the man shall live a continual terror to himself. His own breast shall echo peals of

vengeance to him every hour. Suffering must needs be grievous when infinite justice passes sentence, and infinite power does execution" (South). An "unparalleled greatness" of suffering is, then, here indicated.

II. THE VICARIOUS NATURE OF THE SUFFERING. He *bore* our sicknesses; "the first of twelve distinct assertions in this one chapter of the *vicarious character* of the sufferings of the Servant." They are "because of our rebellions" and of "our iniquities." The punishment which is the means of "our peace" and welfare fell upon him; we have been healed through his stripes. The iniquity of all has been made to light upon him. "As the avenger of blood pursues the murderer, so punishment by an inner necessity overtakes the sinner (Ps. xl. 12; Numb. xxxii. 23; cf. Deut. xxvii. 15). And inasmuch as the Servant, by Jehovah's will, has made himself the Substitute of the Jewish nation, it follows that the punishment of the latter must fall upon him." After all that has been written for ages upon this difficult subject of vicarious suffering or punishment, there remain difficulties not to be surmounted by our reason. How can *punishment* be transferred? How can the suffering due to the sinner be imposed upon an innocent person? How can any honest mind admit such a confusion of relation, even were it offered, as a means of escape from penalty? The answers to these questions are given in poetic metaphors, and analogies which do not reach to the heart of the matter, and forensic quibbles which are not lovely in connection with spiritual matters. For all that, there is something the *heart* of all men fixes upon as lovely, Divine, adorable, in the idea of a man laying down his life for his brethren, a patriot for his country. Much of this deep feeling enters into the old legends, often of a woman—an Alkéstis, a Makaria, an Hésioné; often of a man—a son of Mésa, King of Moab, a Menoikeus, a Curtius. If we begin to criticize, we lose the sense and spirit of these sweet stories. So with the great tradition of the Servant of Jehovah, and with the still greater tradition by which our lives and hearts have been formed.

III. APPLICATION. Every Christian thinks of Christ when he reads these beautiful words. Who but he can inspire us with the willingness to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts"? "Nature, indeed, cannot, will not, prompt it; but Christianity, which rises many strains above nature, must and will. The best sacrifice to a crucified Saviour is a crucified lust, a bleeding heart, and a dying corruption. Let the ambitious man lay his pride in the dust, the covetous man deposit his treasures in the banks of charity and liberality, and let the voluptuous epicure renounce his cups and his whores, —and this will be a present to Heaven better than a whole hecatomb; nor could the fruit of his body fall so grateful a sacrifice upon God's altar as the sin of his soul" (South).—J.

Vers. 7—12.—*Patience and the Divine purpose.* In the picture of the Servant of Jehovah we have an exemplification of the force of quiet endurance which prevails over violence, even to victory.

I. AN EXAMPLE OF SUBMISSION TO WRONG. The slave-driver (Exod. iii. 7; Job iii. 18), or the exactor of a tax or a debt (Deut. xv. 2, 3; 2 Kings xxiii. 35), is the image of oppression in its urgency and its contumely. And the *silence* of the suffering One eloquently speaks of his resignation (Ps. xxxviii. 14; xxxix. 9). The gentle uncomplaining lamb may well set him forth "with power at his disposal, yet as meek as if he had no power; with consciousness of impending fate, yet calm as if ignorant of it" (cf. Jer. xi. 19; 1 Pet. ii. 23). The idea of the Lamb of God in the New Testament rests in part upon this passage. "The two or three who can win it may be called victors in life's conflict; to them belongs the *regnum et diadema tutum.*" His was the lot represented by our great poet as tempting in its extreme anguish to thoughts of suicide. But from another source the Servant obtains his *quietus.* He was not supported by the thought that the meaning of his sufferings was understood and laid to heart by his contemporaries. They did not see that for the rebellion of the people he was stricken. And even after death insult pursued his memory (cf. Jer. xxvi. 23). They buried his body, not amidst the remains of his departed friends, but with the wicked and the criminal, the proud deniers of God, or with the rich and haughty Gentiles. This was the last mark of an ignominy (ch. xiv. 19), and it was all undeserved. How mighty the contrast of appearances and results! The despised of men is in reality the eternally honoured of God.

II. THE DIVINE PURPOSE AND DECREE. There was no cruel accident or misunderstanding in all this; it was the result of Divine deliberate will—the pleasure of Jehovah. The Servant was to lay down his life as a guilt offering. He was to fulfil and crown the idea of all sacrifice in his own Person. Restitution was to be made for injured rights of property. Israel had become de-consecrated. Her life had been forfeited, and satisfaction must be rendered. And this is provided in the self-dedication of the Servant. And the result will be that he will become the Head of a spiritual posterity (cf. Ps. xxii. 30). His piety will be rewarded by length of days. Both these are figures of highest blessing among the Hebrews (Gen. xii. 2; Deut. vi. 2; Ps. xci. 16; cxxvii. 5; cxxviii. 6; Prov. iii. 2; xvii. 6). He will be promoted to a scene of high spiritual employment (ch. lii. 13), the "pleasure of Jehovah" prospering under his conduct. His former spiritual agony and toil of spirit, his *travail* (Ps. xc. 10; Job iii. 10; Jer. xx. 18; Eccles. ii. 11—20; iv. 4—6 for the *word*), will be abundantly compensated by the joy of contemplation of the progressing work of salvation, as the husbandman is satisfied with the sight of the harvest, for which he has "sown in tears." On the foundation of his sacrifice and his teaching many will be redeemed from sin and become a righteous and a holy people. And so, without bloodshed and the din of battle, he will become a glorious Conqueror, and the spiritual kingdom of the Eternal will be among the world-subduing powers. All this *because* he humbled himself, *because* he was devoted, *because* he loved.

III. LESSONS. How mighty the power of *patience!* The hero of God is not clothed in purple, nor fed on sweets; "daily his own heart he eats." His hope sets not with the setting of suns; his faith is earlier in its rising than the stars. Amidst all his seeming weakness he cannot be crushed; and the blows of his adversaries miss their aim. The spiritual element is immortal, indefeasible, finally victorious.

> "They say, through patience, chalk
> Becomes a ruby stone;
> Ah, yes! but by the true heart's blood
> The chalk is crimson grown."

Who was originally meant by the servant of Jehovah may remain obscure. We at least cannot but apply the representation to the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Finisher of faith, who endured the cross for the joy set before him. And also to every true servant of the Eternal, who feels that he was brought into the world to witness for the truth and devote himself in the cause of love.

> "This is he who, felled by foes,
> Sprang harmless up, refreshed by blows;
> He to captivity was sold,
> But him no prison-bars would hold;
> Though they sealed him in a rock,
> Mountain-chains he can unlock;
> Thrown to lions for their meat,
> The crouching lion kissed his feet;
> Bound to the stake, no flames appalled,
> But arched o'er him an honouring vault.
> This is he men miscall fate,
> Threading dark ways, arriving late,
> But e'er coming in time to crown
> The truth, and hurl wrong-doers down."

J.

Ver. 2.—*The depraved eye.* "No beauty that we should desire him." In this prophetic picture of the Christ the question arises, "Who hath believed our report?" What wonderful attestation history gives to this!—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Whether the words, "he hath no form nor comeliness," apply to the physical features of Christ, we cannot say; for the Jews had no "art." They interpreted the words, "Thou shalt not make to thyself . . . the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath," not as an injunction against "idols"

alone, but against all statuary and all art. So, though we have the likenesses of the emperors on the Roman coins, and the Greek statues of Socrates and their wise men, we have no likeness of Christ or his apostles. But we do know the meaning of this, "There is no beauty that we should desire him."

I. THE EYE ADMIRES ONLY WHAT THE HEART LOVES. The beauty that eye desired was quite different. It was superficial and carnal, not inward and spiritual.

II. THE WORLD DOES NOT ALTER ITS TASTE. The classic virtues of paganism—pride, self-reliance, honour—are more prized by men of the world than patience, gentleness, pity, forbearance, and charity. Christ is not beautiful to the proud, nor to the selfish, nor to the ambitious and the vain. Only the pure in heart admire and love him!—W. M. S.

Ver. 3.—*The rejected Saviour.* "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He! Who? The incarnate Lord, who has grown up in childhood as a "tender plant;" who is the one "living root," while all others are the dry soil of a decrepit and degenerate humanity.

I. THIS REVEALS TO US WHAT THE HEBREW CHURCH WAS. Christ was the "touch-stone" of that Church. Its conduct to him made manifest to what a condition they had come. Think of the contrast. Pharisaism was triumphant—Christ was despised. The outward, the formal, the ritual, was preferred before the holy, the inward, and the spiritual. Christ was "rejected." They had the first opportunity of welcoming the "Lord from heaven." "To the Jew first." How learned men may be in tradition! how well acquainted with the 'Mishna' and the 'Gemara,' and yet know all of ancient revelation except its meaning! The great gates of prophecy open wide to let the true King through; and then treat him as a Pretender, and crown him with thorns.

II. THIS REVEALS TO US WHAT CHRIST WAS ON THE HUMAN SIDE. "A Man of sorrows." Think of his exquisite moral sensitiveness in a world of sin. Think of his tender human sympathies in a world of sorrow. "Acquainted with grief." Not in one special form, but in all its spheres, that he might be a Brother born for adversity. Acquainted with it. So that he had daily fellowship with it; not passing through its transient experiences, but familiar with it as the companion of his life.—W. M. S.

Ver. 5.—*The Divine atonement.* "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." We shall never understand the atonement. From Anselm's day to our own there have been ever-changing *theories* of it. But the *fact* remains; and, mysterious as it is, we learn that there was a Godward aspect of it, as well as a manward aspect. But into "the cup which my Father hath given me to drink" no man, no angel, can look.

I. THIS IS THE REVELATION OF DIVINE SACRIFICE. "He gave himself." But he was more than wounded by the treatment of his character, and by the contempt of his claims, and by the forsakings of his own disciples. It is not enough to say that the pride of the Jew and the scorn of the Greek and the power of the Roman crucified him. He was "delivered up for our offences." So here "the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

II. THIS IS THE SUBJECT OF ETERNAL SONG. Heaven rings with the grateful acclaim, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . . to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And the presence of the redeemed there at all is distinctly stated to rest upon the sacrifice of Christ. Because "they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, *therefore* are they before the throne of God." This, at all events, has been the Catholic teaching of Christendom in all ages; and fill the hymnology of the Church in all its various branches. Roman and Anglican, Lutheran and Puritan, have united in a common adoration of the cross and passion, thus antedating the praises of eternity.—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*The attractive and the unattractive in Jesus Christ.* The whole passage is exceedingly remarkable in that it ascribes to one man qualities and surroundings which are so opposed to one another that they seem to be positively inconsistent with each other. And the difficulty has been to find a reconciliation. But all perplexity

disappears when they are referred to Jesus Christ; for in him were combined features of character and changes of circumstance which could not be united in any other child of man. We have here a very strong statement as to the unattractive and unpromising appearance of the Servant of Jehovah, and this has to agree and does agree with the power and the dignity which are afterwards predicted of him (vers. 10, 12), and with the attractive power he has exercised in all ages of the world. We look at both.

I. THE UNATTRACTIVE IN JESUS CHRIST. He grew up as a tender twig or as a sprout that struggles for life in a dry ground; he lacked the beauty that draws attention, the comeliness which wins regard, in that: 1. He came of a fallen family. 2. He was a native of a despised and detested nation, probably the most hated and contemned of all nations. 3. He was brought up in a disreputable village, and the reproach of its dishonour fell on him. 4. He was untrained in the learning which is held in the highest regard among men. 5. He made no pretence to be a deliverer of the kind popularly desired; he dispensed with military arms, officers, honours; he made no attempt to effect a political revolution; he disregarded and even shunned mere popular favour. 6. He taught truth which was above the appreciation and against the prejudices of his hearers; his thought was too profound for their understanding, his aims were too broad and liberal for their liking. His truth still cuts across the prejudices, passions, and lowest interests of men; and his purpose is to establish a kingdom which is far too spiritual to meet the sympathies of the selfish and the worldly. Nevertheless, he accomplished his purpose. That little shoot has become a strong tree, the strongest and fairest that has ever grown, the leaves of which are for the healing of all the nations. That One in whom was no beauty that men should desire him is proving to be "altogether lovely."

II. THE ATTRACTIVE IN JESUS CHRIST. What is there in him that draws the eyes and wins the hearts of men? 1. Elements of attraction *in his character*. His patient dignity in moments of trial and provocation; his gentleness toward the young and the feeble; his interest in the unworthy and unbefriended; his magnanimity toward his enemies, his stainless purity of heart and life; his compassion for the suffering and the sorrowful, etc. 2. Elements of attraction *in his gospel*. He offers forgiveness of sin to those burdened with a sense of guilt; rest of heart to those who are spiritually weary; holy and fruitful activity to the earnest and energetic; an unfailing friendship to the troubled and the lonely; a heavenly home to the tired travellers along the path of life.—C.

Ver. 3.—*The Man of sorrows.* We feel that there is but One of our race to whom this title properly belongs; One who may wear it as a crown upon his brow, inasmuch as his sorrows do him higher honour than the most conspicuous success ever conferred on human spirit. It *does* belong to him, not in virtue of the fact that his outward career involved more cruel hardships than those ever borne before; but in virtue of the fact that his spirit was such as to make his endurance more grievous than that ever experienced by man. It was Jesus Christ's *capacity of sorrow* that made all the difference. Capacity to endure rises with the greatness of the spiritual nature; the larger the nature, the greater the possibility and likelihood of suffering. When, therefore, we remember that Jesus Christ, *as a perfect Man*, had the fullest and keenest possible sensibility of nature, and when we remember that *the Divine* was so associated in him with the human as immeasurably to deepen and enlarge every faculty of his soul, we shall see that his capacity of sorrow was almost boundless.

I. THE SOURCES OF HIS SORROW. These were, among others: 1. The failure on the part of his own best friends to understand and appreciate him. "They who knew him best could hardly be said to *know* him;" they entered only a very little way into his purpose, and could not sympathize with him in his deeper disappointments; "he trod the wine-press alone." But for his Father's presence he often was absolutely alone (John xvi. 32). 2. The frailty and even the treachery of his disciples. Those who followed him and called him Master had but little care for his truth or love for himself. In a moment of simple perplexity of mind they fell away from him, and abandoned his cause (John vi. 66). One of his disciples grieved his spirit by distinct denial, and another pierced his heart by utter and open treachery. 3. The malignity of his

enemies. There are men who do not care that their brethren whose confidence they have tried to win are cherishing toward them the bitterest hatred; not such was he of the tender heart and loving spirit. 4. The rejection of the people. He *was* rejected of men. Several men and women, in most places whither he went, may have flocked to hear him; and the common people heard him gladly, we know. But he had to acknowledge to himself that his principles made no way, that his truth was not apprehended and loved, that citizens did not enrol themselves in his spiritual kingdom. 5. The near presence of human suffering and sorrow. By partaking of our humanity as he did, Jesus came into the closest contact with the pains, the privations, the deformities, the diseases, and the sorrows of mankind. And by the power of an intense and living sympathy he made these his own (Matt. viii. 17; John xi. 33, 35). He bore them on his own heart; they weighed upon his spirit as a heavy burden. 6. A deep sense of human sin, culminating in a sacrifice for it. If the near presence of sorrow grieved and troubled him, how much more that of human sin in all its forms! With our lesser purity, we cannot tell how painful to his heart was the sight of all the selfishness, hypocrisy, greed, worldliness, malignity, corruption which he beheld, most of it affecting the language and the bearing of devotion. Yet with all these sources of sorrow, there were not wanting—

II. SPRINGS OF SACRED JOY IN THE HEART AND LIFE OF OUR LORD. 1. Unbroken communion with the heavenly Father. 2. The sincere attachment of many who, though they were imperfect disciples, yet trusted and loved him as their Teacher and Friend. 3. The gratitude of many whom he healed, and the deeper gratitude of many whom he saved. 4. The consciousness of faithful fulfilment of his great mission. 5. A calm, profound assurance of victory through death and shame (John xii. 24, 32). In the heart of the Man of sorrows were deep springs of joy, such as they who wounded him and triumphed over him knew not of. In our case, as in his, there may be the light of a blessed peace and even of heavenly joy in a soul that moves under darkest skies through a clouded life.—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The Divine account of the sufferings of Christ.* In these words, which remain ever fresh and sacred, though they are so familiar to our hearts, we have—

I. A SAD AND STRIKING PICTURE. It is the picture of the Servant of the Lord, wounded, bruised, chastened, stricken. We cannot fail to see in it the sufferings of the holy Saviour. We see him: 1. *Wounded in body;* not only a-hungered and athirst, not only weary with long-continued labours and without the promise of the soft pillow of rest when the day was done, but suffering, beyond this, the laying on him the hard, rough hand of a brutal soldiery, the cruel smiting and scourging, the piercing of hand and foot with the remorseless nail, the pains and pangs of crucifixion. But beyond this, immeasurably more serious and more severe than this, we see him: 2. *Wounded in spirit;* bruised in soul by the shortcoming, the inconstancy, even the treachery of his own friends, by the superficiality and frailty of the outer band of his disciples, by the intense and inappeasable malignity of his enemies, by the sight of sickness and sorrow, by the pressure and burden of human sin; all this weight of evil crushing his holy and tender spirit.

II. A NATURAL BUT A FALSE CONCLUSION. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," *i.e. on account of his own sins.* It was natural that men should think thus; there are facts which go to support though they do not justify it. 1. It is true that sin and suffering are very closely and causally connected. All sinners are, as such, sufferers. 2. It is true that, as a rule, great sinners are great sufferers. It was not accidental that Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod the Great, Philip II. of Spain, and other men, who, like them, committed enormities of wrong-doing, endured terrible pains of body and fearful remorse of spirit. But it does not follow that a very great sufferer is a very great sinner. For it is also true (1) that some of the purest and saintliest of mankind have been visited with severest bodily pains, or have passed through most trying troubles, or been called to endure heaviest afflictions. (2) And that the great Teacher warned us against pushing this doctrine to a perversion of the truth (Luke xiii. 3). (3) And we know that it was wholly inapplicable to the Lord himself. He who suffered more than any other of the children of men was that one Son of man who

"did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found;" he was the innocent, the pure, the just, the righteous One.

III. THE DIVINE ACCOUNT OF IT. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions," etc. But is it credible or is it even possible that the innocent One would or could suffer for us the guilty ones? Why not? Being such a One as he is—the pitiful, compassionate, magnanimous One, it is exactly what we might expect he would do. 1. *Involuntarily*, we are continually bearing one another's griefs. One sins and another suffers, beneath every sky and from generation to generation. 2. *Voluntarily* we suffer in one another's stead. The father willingly suffers and strives that his son may not endure all the threatened consequences of his guilty folly; the mother eagerly endures greatest privations that her daughter may be spared the dishonour which is her due; the friend gladly shares, *halves* the trouble, the anxiety, the loss, into which his old companion has fallen. Just as men are magnanimous and noble-minded, so do they carry the sorrows of their fellows, so are they willingly wounded and bruised for the transgressions of their kindred and their friends. And if we, being evil, will do this, how much more our Father who is in heaven! if we, whose thoughts and ways are so comparatively low, how much more he whose thoughts and whose ways are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth! It is just the very thing we should look for from the heavenly Father.

IV. THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION. That we should, by a living faith in the Divine Redeemer, avail ourselves of the work he wrought when he suffered for us. Otherwise we shall not know *the peace* and rest of heart which he came to secure us.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Departure and distance from God.* These words, though very pictorial and poetical, indicate with great clearness the cardinal truths of religion and even of Christianity, and they express for us the thought and feeling common to all devout spirits. We see in them—

I. THE HOME WHENCE WE HAVE DEPARTED. It is not stated, but it is clearly implied, that the fold or home whence we have gone astray is. 1. That *of God*, our Creator, our Father, our Divine Friend; it is that where he dwells, where he rules, where he sheds the sunshine of his presence and favour. 2. It is that *of righteousness*; of gratitude, of love, of reverence, of obedience, of submission. 3. It is that *of peace*; of spiritual order, rest, joy.

II. THE DIFFERENT PATHS WE HAVE PURSUED. "We have turned every one to his own way." Sinful error takes many directions. Sometimes it wanders into *unbelief* and denial; sometimes into *rebelliousness* of spirit, disdainful rejection of Divine claim; at other times into a *sinful indulgence*, in one or other of its various forms; or again into a *guilty negligence* and unconcern, or a criminal procrastination of sacred duty; or yet again into a hollow and worthless *formalism*, which has the show of piety without the substance of it. But in these various paths of sin there is one thing which is common to all, viz. the setting up of the human will against the will of God. Every one of us has gone *his own way*. We have "followed the devices and desires of our own hearts." We have determinately set our own inclination against the will of God. And herein we have—

III. THE GUILT WHICH WE HAVE ALL INCURRED. "*All* we . . . have gone astray." Some men have wandered farther away from God than others; some have gone in an opposite direction to that of others; but all men have guiltily preferred their own way to the home and the fold of God. All have forsaken and disregarded and grieved him. And thus all have sinned; *all*, without exception; not only those who have fallen into gross and most shameful enormities, but they also who have kept to the proprieties of outward behaviour, and have observed the decencies and requirements of the religious life;—*all* have withheld from God what is his due, and reserved to themselves what was not theirs to keep.

IV. THE PROVISION GOD HAS MADE FOR OUR RETURN. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This does not signify that Jesus Christ bore the penalty due to all human sin—a part of that penalty it was absolutely impossible that the Innocent One should bear. It means that the redemptive work he wrought, and wrought by his submission to sorrow and death, avails for every child of man who

will accept it; it means that in Christ is forgiveness of sin, acceptance with God, entrance into life eternal to every one who humbly but heartily receives him as Saviour and Lord.—C.

Ver. 7.—*The submissive spirit.* Those who have a bigh appreciation of the more minute scriptural correspondences will naturally find a reference here to the fact recorded in Matt. xxvii. 14. But we prefer to dwell on the submissiveness rather than the silence of our Lord, on the inward spirit rather than the outward incident.

I. THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF OUR SAVIOUR'S SPIRIT. The unspoken word of repining or reproach was of real value, because, in him, it indicated the unquestioning spirit, the unresentful heart. 1. *The spirit of acquiescence.* There is a silent, sullen acceptance of fate which is removed from the spirit of obedient acquiescence as far as evil is distant from good. Our Lord's was the obedient spirit, that which cheerfully and heartily consented to the ordination of God. With willing hand he raised the bitter draught to his lips, and in the spirit of filial readiness he uttered those strengthening words, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" And in his attitude toward man there was not only the unresisting hand, but also: 2. *The unresentful heart.* He did indeed declaim against the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees in uncompromising language (Matt. xxiii.), but we detect no note of personal vindictiveness; he is affected and inspired throughout by pure indignation. When he is illegally and shamefully smitten there is no touch of unholy resentment in his reply, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John xviii. 23). And who, in this connection, can fail to remember the magnanimous prayer, breathed in the midst of the most excruciating pain, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"?

II. THE SUBMISSION WHICH CHRIST ASKS OF US. He demands of us: 1. Absolute trust in the wisdom and goodness of God: not only the thankful acceptance of what is pleasant and prosperous, and the unhesitating acceptance of what is mysterious and insoluble by our human understanding, but also the willing acceptance of what is painful, grievous, distressing to the heart—the cherishing in our soul of an absolute assurance that, however dark and troublous be the hour that is passing over us, God is leading us by the right way to the heavenly city. 2. A magnanimous attitude toward our fellow-men. (1) The absence of a vindictive spirit, and of resentful action: "Love your enemies;" "Resist not evil," etc. Proceedings taken against a violation of human law in the spirit of justice are not inconsistent with the unrevengeful spirit of Christ. (2) The exercise of the broadest charity; in our judgment of men, giving credit for the pure rather than the impure, the worthy rather than the unworthy, the public rather than the personal motive. (3) The practice of peacemaking; interposing on all occasions that offer in the interest of peace. (4) The readiness to forgive. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye *from your hearts* forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. xviii. 35).—C.

Vers. 8—10.—*The shortness but sufficiency of human life.* "Who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living." "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." Here is a paradox in connection with our Master which finds a close correspondence in another connected with ourselves.

I. THE BREVITY AND PERPETUITY OF OUR LORD'S CAREER. It was indeed true, as the prophet foresaw, that "he was cut off," etc.; his days were few; his ministry was brief—counted by months rather than by years. There did not seem to be time enough in that short span, in a course so quickly run and so suddenly concluded, to accomplish anything great and far-reaching. But how wide has his influence proved! how long has his Name been known and his power been felt! How has he "prolonged his days" in the *institutions* he has founded which are existing now, in the *truth* he announced which is triumphing to-day over all other theories, in the *spirit* he communicated which is breathing still in the laws, the literature, the habits, the language of mankind! Who shall declare his generation? Does he not "see his seed" in the countless children of his grace who flock to his standard, who bless his Name, who call him Lord and Saviour and Friend! He who was so soon cut off from the land of the living is proving himself to be the One who hath immortality as no other son of man has had or ever will have.

II. THE SHORTNESS BUT THE SUFFICIENCY OF OUR MORTAL LIFE. 1. Our life below is *very brief*. Scripture abundantly asserts it; observation is continually confirming it; experience is painfully proving it. It is not only brief, so far as the actual number of our years is concerned when compared with some animal life or with angelic existence, or when contrasted with God's eternity; but it is brief so far as our own consciousness is concerned. Its conclusion seems to come with great rapidity and unexpectedness. In the curiosity of childhood, the eagerness of youth, the ambition and activity of early manhood, the cares and anxieties of prime and of declining days, our life hurries on and passes away, and, before we are looking for it, there comes the last summons and the day of departure. 2. But, short as it is, *it is sufficient*. It is long enough for us to store our minds with heavenly wisdom; to become reconciled to God and to take our stand with the wise and holy; to grow into the likeness of our Divine Exemplar; to bear witness to the truth of Christ; to *exert an influence which will never die*. Our truest and best "seed" are not found in the children and grandchildren who are born to us, but in the spiritual results we have accomplished. We die and disappear, and the stone on which our name is carved is overthrown, and no man will speak of us again; but we, too, "shall prolong our days" in the holy and beautiful characters men will be forming and the useful lives they will be living, because of the witness we are bearing here and the work we are doing now.—C.

Ver. 12.—*The false accusation*. "He was numbered with the transgressors." The fact that he who was the Author of all law and the Judge of all moral agents was himself classed with transgressors is most suggestive; it calls our attention to the truth—

I. THAT A RIGHTEOUS MAN, *though he is righteous*, MAY BE CHARGED WITH WRONG. If Jesus Christ, *the* Righteous One, was accused of sin, how much more may we, who are only comparatively and imperfectly righteous, be so charged!

II. THAT A RIGHTEOUS MAN MAY, *in virtue of his righteousness*, BE ACCUSED OF WRONG. Jesus Christ was charged with blasphemy *because* he said what he said and acted as he did in pursuance of his great and beneficent mission; he was accused of fellowship with sin because he was bent on carrying his gospel of grace to the very worst of mankind (Luke xv. 2). In the same way, a good man may lay himself open to the charge of transgression in virtue of his very excellency; a *devout* man, because of his devotion, to the charge of pietism or hypocrisy; a *zealous* man, because of his ardour, to the charge of fanaticism; a *courageous* man, to the charge of rashness; a *trustful* man, to the accusation of presumption, etc.

III. THAT THE FALSELY ACCUSED HAVE THREE GREAT CONSOLATIONS. 1. The approval of their own conscience. 2. The knowledge that they take rank with their great Leader, who was himself numbered with the transgressors, and with all the best of the good in every age and land (Matt. v. 11, 12). 3. The assurance that they have the commendation and the sympathy of their Divine Lord. Enemies may accuse us; brethren may fail us; notwithstanding, "the Lord stands with us, and strengthens us" (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17).—C.

Ver. 1.—*Strange reception of Divine messages*. Cheyne translates, "Who believed that which we heard? and the arm of Jehovah, unto whom did it become manifest?" Immediate reference is to the attitude of the people towards Isaiah's assurances of God's restoring mercies, and towards his call to prepare themselves for returning to their own land. Further and fuller reference is to the failure of Messiah to win the general acceptance of the people, to whom he brought the glad tidings of God's "so great love." Divine messages are never widely welcomed. Only the *few* are ever found open-hearted, willing to heed when he is pleased to speak. Effort may be made to recognize the reasons for so strange a fact. They lie in men's moral dispositions, and hindering circumstances or prejudices. The mention of two or three hindrances may suggest a complete analysis of men's motives.

I. SOME MEN ARE SCEPTICAL. Their sphere is the strictly *natural*, and they find instant objection to every claim belonging to the *supernatural*. They are born doubters, and too often foster and culture their infirmity, as if it were a dignity or a gift. The special mistake such men make is to demand too much evidence—evidence of unsuitable character, and evidence such as they may be pleased to think would satisfy them. They

want natural evidence for supernatural truths or facts, and wonder that no sign can be given them, and fancy themselves justified in refusing to believe. There is one very easy thing, that even a child can accomplish; it is this—*find excuses when we do not want to obey.*

II. SOME MEN ARE MASTERFUL. They like to have life in their own control, and cannot do with God's interfering by messages and commandments. Such men are sure to resist God's messengers and ministers. The response to pastors, who point out to such men the will of God concerning their daily life, is still what it has ever been—"Talk on your abstract things, but *leave my life alone.*" God's messages always, in one form or another, humble the pride of self: and this few men can bear, so they resist the messenger.

III. SOME MEN ARE EASYFUL. God calls to some *doing*, some *duty*. It may be putting away sin; it may he rendering some witness; it may be going the long journey back to Jerusalem, and helping to build the old wastes and raise the former desolations. And men prefer the comforts of Babylon, even if they are in slavery and know the defiling contacts of idolatry. Only meek, open, willing, and obedient souls "believe that which they hear, and see the arm of the Lord made manifest to them." The best things are ever kept for meek souls.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Man's disposition to reject his best blessings.* Philip the evangelist, from this, and the connected passage, preached unto the eunuch *Jesus*. This is sufficient reason for our associating it with Messiah. The chapter concerns the human life, the sorrowful experience, the shameful death, and the eternal triumph of the Son of God. The story of the Christ can be gathered up and expressed in a sentence, "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The personification of heathen pride and fear, Herod sought to slay him as a babe. Representatives of the wealth and learning and religion of their age, scribes and Sadducees and Pharisees rejected him, that they might cleave to their traditions. The common people, moved sometimes by the goodness of his words and the graciousness of his deeds, heard him gladly, cast their garments in his way, and waved palm branches with hosannahs; but at another time they hurried him away to cast him headlong from an overhanging cliff, and shouted, "Crucify him!" Even the few who seemed to see his glory, on whom some beams of his Divine splendour rested, even they forsook him in the hour of his need, and fled, or sold him for mere silver, or denied him with oaths and curses. He passed on to Calvary amid rabble-shouts, "His blood be on us and on our children!" and there he hung, despised in the shame of the cross; despised as they passed him by, wagging their heads. Rejected as they cried, "We have no king but Cæsar!" and chose instead of him a murderer and thief. Now, the world has never known anything so passing strange as that despising and rejecting of God's greatest and best gift to men. To realize the strangeness of this fact, consider—

I. THE PERSON AND THE CREDENTIALS OF THE REJECTED ONE. The world has had many impostors, men with a genius for making claims which there were no facts to support. In the spheres of medicine, education, politics, and religion, there have been many who were found out at last, and rejected of men as untrue and unworthy. No man ever claimed such a position and such rights as Jesus did; but no man ever gave such abundant and satisfactory proof of his claims. He was a Divine Messenger, the appointed Agent for securing the reconciliation of man with God; he was even God himself, manifest in the flesh. But these claims were duly supported. Christ came at a time and in a manner which fitted precisely into the fore-given prophecies, which the people believed. There was perfect accordance between the claims he made and the life he lived, the spirit he manifested and the work he did. His character was so attractive as to win respect, yet so perfect as to excite wonder. He had the power over nature in its various moods, over disease in its various forms, and over death in its various stages, which can be associated only with the Divine Being. And yet he is "despised and rejected of men." Divine, with Divine blessings to bestow; putting forth Divine power, doing a Divine work, and bringing down to men the Divine glory; yet, nevertheless, despised and rejected. Those times have passed away, but the credentials of Christ have only multiplied with the advancing ages. The moral miracles of conversion are far stronger proofs of Divine power than any physical miracles can

be; and yet it is still true of many, "He is despised and rejected;" "They hide their faces from him."

II. THE FITNESS OF CHRIST TO MEET THE DEEPEST HUMAN NEEDS. The needs of man as man; and the needs of man as fallen, sinful man. There are two things we can think of as left in our nature, relics of the old Eden-glory—the wish to know God, and the desire to find what is good. Wherever there is the conception of God there is the inquiry, "Who is he? What is he? Where is he?" The gods many of heathen lands are attempted answers to man's cry after God. Christ met this want, and he alone has met it. In his Person he brings God down to the sphere of our human scenes, human thoughts, human language. He offers his earth-life to men and says to them, "Behold your God!" You see men pursuing all kinds of ends; they are seeking the supply of the great want of their nature, they are trying to find what is good. But the pure, the true, the self-denying, was never so set before men as in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. Virtue then clothed herself in human garb. It is only half a truth to say, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," for he was the positive embodiment of all truth and grace and goodness. And, further than this, Christ also met the conditions and needs of man as fallen and sinful. The "Fall" has left on man a sense of separation from God. We have not, now, a consciousness of near relations and happy fellowship with God; Christ came to restore it to us, by taking away the hindrances outside us and in us. When Jesus came to our world, the needs of fallen sinful man were being felt more pressingly than ever before; the world was anxiously looking for a Revealer and Redeemer. Jew and Gentile united in the out-looking: Jews from the helplessness of a ceremonial out of which the life and meaning had gone; Gentiles from the dissatisfaction of multiplying senseless idols. And yet, though Christ brought the supply of the deepest need men knew, the fact remains, "he was despised and rejected of men." Humanity is usually keen in its endeavour to secure its own interests, but *here* it strangely, sadly fails. It it be asked *why* it fails here, we can only say, because Christ brings the humbling conviction of sin, and the pride of men resists. We are all willing to have our needs met and supplied; but we resist the idea that, as guilty, helpless sinners before God, we must ask for mercy, free, sovereign mercy.—R. T.

Vers. 4, 5.—*Man's thoughts of God's Sufferer.* The prophet sets before us an unusual Sufferer, and bids us think what can be the explanation of such sufferings. 1. It might be punishment for sin; as was David's bitter trial in the matter of Absalom. 2. It might be discipline of character; as was the suffering of Job. Neither of these will suffice for the case that Isaiah presents. 3. It might be vicarious, a burden-bearing for others. This only will suffice to explain the unusual woes of Messiah. Treating the subject more fully, we note—

I. MAN'S EXPLANATIONS OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." 1. Take the case of a man who was told of our Lord's sufferings and death, but had no knowledge of his personal innocence. Such a man would know that God has established a direct connection between sin and suffering. Suffering is the universal and necessary consequence of sin. The association is plain in regard to our bodily nature. Disregard of the rules of health, exposure to changing seasons, or indulgence in unwholesome food, are certainly followed by bodily suffering and peril. Adam sinned, and at once suffering came, in the upwelling of passion, the hiding of God's favour, and the loss of Eden. Cain sinned, and suffering came, as remorse and disgrace. David sinned, and his "bones waxed old through his roaring." Such a man, then, would have good grounds for suspecting sin wherever he found suffering, and for arguing that there must be unusual sin if there is unusual suffering. Job's friends argued thus; and, so far as surface-truth is concerned, they argued fairly enough. We cannot wonder if the man should say that Christ's sufferings must be explained on the ground that *Christ has sinned*, and is bearing the natural and necessary consequences of his transgressions. To the casual observer there was nothing so extraordinary about Christ's sufferings as to make his an exceptional case, requiring an exceptional explanation. He was condemned after trial by Pilate; he was only treated in accordance with the custom of the age; he made high pretensions, he called himself "King of the Jews," and so, when he was condemned, the Roman soldiers taunted him, and Jewish fanatics insulted him. And such a man would have a further

right to say that God's hand of judgment was in his sufferings. Human laws, if they are to gain the respect of men, must be regarded as applications and adaptations of God's law. When a man is convicted and punished by human law, we ought to feel that he is punished by God. Then, as Christ was delivered up to death by Pilate, the administrator of law, a man may fairly infer that Christ was "smitten *of God*." Thus Jewish bigots seem to have thought of the Nazarene malefactor. As they looked on that crucified group, why should they think differently of the central Sufferer? Why may they not say of all the three what the one robber said to the other, "We indeed suffer the due reward of our deeds"? 2. Take the case of a man who has some knowledge of Christ's life, and some impression of his personal innocence. Such a man would regard Christ as strangely "afflicted;" his sufferings were calamities. The more he knew of the "blessed life" Jesus had lived, the more would he feel that such an early and such a humiliating death was inconceivably sad—something to be mourned over, as was that death of Ulric Zwingle, when in the fulness of his power and influence. Calamity, that is, suffering of which the sufferer's sin is not the immediate cause, is no uncommon thing in this world. The tower of Siloam fell, and buried beneath its ruins some of the people; but our Lord reminds us that those who perished were not sinners above all that dwelt at Jerusalem. The fall was, to them, a "visitation of God." In this way the man might fairly look upon the innocent Jesus, and say he fell a victim to the cruelty of his enemies. He attacked national vices, he aroused national hatred; he, like Socrates, fell through the wicked schemes of vile men. If the man knew that he was the Son of God, co-equal with the Father, then that life of humiliation and death of shame must take place among the mysteries that baffle human intelligence. It is the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations—a mystery which God must unfold, or it never can be unfolded.

II. GOD'S EXPLANATION OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. 1. God maintains man's view that the sufferings were *his appointment*. The special connection between Christ and God, in the work of human redemption, may be argued on these lines. (1) Christ claimed to be a commissioned Agent (John iv. 34; vi. 38; viii. 42). (2) God himself bore witness to Christ as his Son and Messenger, expressing his relation to and interest in the work which Christ came to do (see testimonies at our Lord's baptism and transfiguration). (3) The witness of both the previous and the subsequent revelation is in favour of the connection (see Ps. xl. 7; 1 John iv. 14). 2. The sufferings of Christ bore no relation to his own personal guilt (see 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 John iii. 5). 3. God distinctly affirms that Christ suffered as a Substitute, in place of guilty men, and that on him the burden and penalty of *our* transgressions rested. This is God's answer to the supremely important question, "How can man be just with God?" (see Rom. iv. 25; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Heb. ix. 28).—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Where shall iniquity be laid?* Some chapters and verses of the Bible are so sacred to us that we almost fear to open and examine them; and yet those are the very portions that best reward a loving and reverent examination. This chapter is the gem of Isaiah's writings. This verse is the conclusion to which the prophet comes, as he here views the long sad story of the Saviour's sufferings. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We consider—

I. MAN'S INIQUITY. The word means "unequalness;" man is never quite the same, never quite steady, he does not keep the straight line, and this indicates a wrong state of mind and heart. Man's iniquity is: (1) Affirmed in Scripture. "All flesh has corrupted his way;" "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" (see Rom. iii.). (2) Universally acknowledged, both by individuals and nations in moments of alarm (see Nineveh, when alarmed by the preaching of Jonah). St. Paul, in Rom. i., apart from the special Divine revelation, convicts men of iniquity in view of the great, universal, natural laws of their own being and of human society. Personally, we are not prepared to deny this fact of human iniquity; though, to so many of us, it is only an intellectual conception without any moral power in it. We resort to various devices in order to keep off personal applications and convictions. (1) We charge the evil on the race. (2) We try to think of it as a mere disease or calamity. (3) We procrastinate over the consideration of it. It would be altogether wiser to face it, and try to realize it and deal with it. (1) Observe that suggestive figure of the text, "sheep gone astray."

It brings to mind ignorance, wilfulness, helplessness, foolishness, as characteristics of the unrenewed man. (2) Estimate the aggravations of human iniquity. If God were severe or unreasonable, bravery might half excuse rebellion; but our God is righteousness and love. (3) Sin finds such manifold and dreadful forms in which to express itself (see list in Gal. v. 19—24). (4) Human iniquity has one dreadful root. It is wilful self-love and self-pleasing. "God is not in all their thoughts;" "Turned to his own way;" "The God in whom thy breath is . . . thou hast not glorified." Face, then, the fact of your own iniquity before God. Be true to yourself about it. Ask—On whom can it be laid?

II. MAN BEARING HIS OWN INIQUITY. For a man may seriously and thoughtfully say—Why cannot I bear my own iniquities, the burden of their penalty, and the work of securing deliverance from their power? Fairly consider, then, such things as these. 1. Iniquity grows, involving ever-increasing physical and spiritual penalties. 2. Iniquity sets going a train of evils by which even your best treasures may be consumed. Do what you will, can you stop them? 3. Iniquity, in its effects, is now seen only in part, and day by day; in the eternity we shall have to see it at once, and as a whole. Illustrate by the vision of a life of sin that comes to the drowning. Unless utterly blinded by pride and self-worship, no man would ever dare to say, "I can bear my own burdens." "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet is thine iniquity marked before me, saith the Lord."

III. GOD BEARING MAN'S INIQUITY FOR HIM. The person who bore was God's Christ, and so it was really God bearing. This expression should be viewed in the light of the figure used in the text—the figure of the shepherd laying on the under-shepherd the duty of fetching the wandering sheep back, and setting it, free of evil, self-willed propensities, in the fold again. That work was the "burden" which he was called to bear. So God laid on Christ the work of delivering men from their iniquity, from its consequences, and from itself. "Himself bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows." He took on him man's deliverance from sin, and spent his time in illustrative healings of men's bodily infirmities, and gave his life in the endeavour to save men from their sins. Illustrate by showing how the burden of the slave-woe was laid on Wilberforce; and that of the prison-woe was laid on Howard and Fry. Any man who is actively concerned for a degraded class really bears their sins. In giving Christ, God proposed the saving of men from their sins, and therefore his Son was named the significant name of Jesus. God laid the sin on Christ, as if he had said, "I charge you now with this supremely difficult, but most blessed work, of saving, everlastingly saving, sinful, wilful, ruined men." Plead, in conclusion, with each one thus: Do you feel your iniquity? Is it your burden? Are you asking—What can be done with it? where can it be laid? Then see, the living Christ is charged of God with that very burden; it has been laid upon him: it is laid upon him; he can be the living, delivering, saving Friend even to you.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The triumph of silence.* "Opened not his mouth." A careful study of the fivefold examinations of our Lord, before Annas, before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, before Herod, and before Pilate again, will bring very impressively to view the remarkable *silences* of our Lord. Sometimes he spoke, never more than brief sentences. But sometimes no word could be drawn from him, and the silence was either convincing or aggravating. It was, however, always the sign that our Lord had supreme command of himself, never for one brief moment, amid all those terrible scenes, losing his self-control. We notice two things.

I. WHEN A MAN'S WORK IS TO ENDURE, THERE IS NO NEED FOR SPEECH. The enduring *is* the speech; and it can seldom be helped by any spoken words. Suffering for God has its own voice, and does not want any utterance by the lips. Illustrate from sufferers in our spheres who "possess their souls in patience." "They also serve who only stand and wait." Show that our Lord's active work was now done; he was called to bear, endure, suffer.

II. WHEN A MAN MAY NOT SPEAK, HIS WORK IS DONE BY SILENCE. He shows to men an example of self-control, in the triumph he has won, which enables him to keep silence; and there are reproaches and convictions and humiliations in simple silence, that pierce to the dividing asunder of our souls as no spoken words can do. Sometimes

we find absolutely unendurable the silence of those whose silence we feel to be reproof. Illustrate Christ's power on Peter, on Herod, and on Pilate. There are many occasions, even in our lives, when we may "say nothing," and so best serve God.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*A soul-offering.* This prepares us to see that the real sacrifice for sin, which our Redeemer offered, was the full surrender of his *will*, his *self*, to God, which found expression, for us to apprehend it, in his bodily sufferings on the cross (see Heb. ix. 14).

I. SIN IS A SOUL-THING. It is not an act; it is a man acting.

II. PENALTY IS A SOUL-THING. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

III. SALVATION IS A SOUL-THING. Christ bore the soul-penalty; Christ brought life for dead souls. The infinite depth of Christ's suffering lay hidden—in behind—in the Redeemer's soul, finding only once what seemed a suitable utterance in human language, and that a cry of immeasurable distress, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Satisfied for sore travail.* When the sufferings of our Lord are spoken of in Scripture, they are usually connected with his exaltation and glory. "When they testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God;" "Ought not Messias to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" "For the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour!" "A witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." But the idea of this text is not so much the glory which our Lord himself shall reach through his work, as the benefits and blessings which, through him, shall come to men. Both may be included in the treatment of this theme.

I. OUR LORD'S SATISFACTION IN THE PERSONAL RESULTS OF HIS WORK. He has, through it, the "Name which is above every name;" and the power which he can use for larger blessings, "giving repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

II. OUR LORD'S SATISFACTION IN THE RESULTS OF HIS WORK IN ITS RELATION TO GOD. To see the lost, prodigal sons and daughters of God turning yearning eyes homewards, and saying "Abba, Father!" must be satisfaction indeed to him who came that, in his sonship, he might honour the Father.

III. OUR LORD'S SATISFACTION IN THE DIRECT RESULTS OF HIS WORK FOR MEN. He came to *save*. He rejoices in every saved one: every "brand plucked from the burning."

IV. OUR LORD'S SATISFACTION IN THE INDIRECT RESULTS OF HIS WORK FOR MAN. To save a man from sin is to raise and ennoble a life, to give new tone to a family, to purify all the relationships of society, and to redeem a nation, and to save the world. Illustrate from what Christianity has done and is doing. But Christianity is an abstraction. The real blessing of humanity is the thousandfold varied influence of the men and women whom Christ has saved from wrath and sin. He has present satisfaction in a heaven full of white-robed saints, in a Church striving to keep its white garments unspotted from the world; and in the expectation of the time when the "creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."—R. T.

SECTION IV. A RENEWAL OF PROMISES TO ISRAEL, COMBINED WITH EXHORTATION (CH. LIV.—LVI. 8).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LIV

Vers. 1—10.—A PROMISE TO ISRAEL OF GREAT INCREASE, AND OF GOD'S PERSISTENT PROTECTION. There is no close connection between this chapter and the last, or even between this section and the preceding. Vers. 1—5 take up the thought of ch. xlix. 19—21, and expand it. Israel is assured of a great enlargement of her numbers, and bidden to rejoice thereat. She is then further comforted with a

promise that she shall never be forsaken (vers. 6—10).

Ver. 1.—**Sing, O barren.** Israel in captivity is addressed as "barren," because, in the time of suffering, her numbers rather diminished than increased. Still, she is bidden to "sing" on account of the prospect that is opening upon her. She that is now **desolate** and solitary will soon have **more children** than she formerly had, when she was a **married wife**, enjoying the fellowship of Jehovah, her Husband (ver. 5). The "children" spoken of are in part those who gathered themselves together in Jerusalem and the adjacent territory after the issue of the decree of Cyrus (1 Chron. ix. 2—34; Ezra ii. 1—65; viii. 1—20; Neh. vii. 6—72; xi. 3—36), but mainly such as flocked in from the Gentiles, both before and after Christ's coming (see ver. 3).

Ver. 2.—**Enlarge the place of thy tent** (comp. ch. xxxiii. 20 and Jer. x. 20). The memory of the old nomadic life caused the "tent" to be the symbol and representative of the dwelling-place (comp. 1 Kings xii. 16). Israel will have so many more children that her "tent" will need enlarging. **The curtains**; *i.e.* the tent-cloth (comp. Exod. xxvi. and xxxvi., where the word used occurs repeatedly). **Thy cords . . . thy stakes** (comp. Exod. xxxv. 18; xxxix. 40, etc.). The ropes and tent-pegs, which kept the tent-cloth in place, are intended. The enlargement of the tent would make longer ropes and larger pegs necessary.

Ver. 3.—**For thou shalt break forth**; or, *thou shalt increase* (see Gen. xxx. 30, 43; Exod. i. 12). An overflow, like that of the bursting out of water, is pointed at. **On the right hand and on the left**; *i.e.* "on all sides" (comp. Gen. xxviii. 14). **Thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles.** The Christian Church is viewed as a continuation of the Jewish Church; and the conversion of nation after nation to the gospel is regarded as the extension of Jewish dominion over fresh lands. The cities of these lands—desolate hitherto, *i.e.* without godly inhabitants—will under these circumstances come to be **inhabited**; *i.e.* will be peopled by faithful men.

Ver. 4.—**Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth**; rather, *of thy maidenhood*; i.e. of the time when thou wert a maiden, before by the covenant of Sinai Jehovah became thy Husband (ver. 5). The "shame" of this period was the Egyptian bondage. Israel's later condition would be such that the very recollection of this bondage would fade away and cease. **The reproach of thy widowhood.** Israel became a "widow" when Jehovah withdrew his presence from her, when the Shechinah disappeared from the temple, and the temple itself was destroyed, and Jerusalem was a desolation, and the people captives in a far land. The special "reproach of her widowhood" was the Babylonian captivity, with the sins that had brought it about. This too would be forgotten in the good time to come, amid the glories of the Messianic kingdom.

Ver. 5.—**For thy Maker** is thine **Husband**; rather, *for thy Husband is thy Maker.* The verse is exegetical of the terms, "married wife" in ver. 1, and "widowhood" in ver. 4. "I," says the prophet, "have called thee married and widowed, thereby yoking thee to a husband, *for* thou hast a Husband, namely, thy Maker." (The Hebrew has both words in the plural, to accord with the following *Elohim.*) This relationship of God to his Church is often asserted by the prophets (Jer. iii. 14; xxxi. 32; Hos. ii. 19; Cant. i. 4, etc.), and lies at the root of the oft-recurring metaphor by which idolatry is called "lewdness," "adultery," or "playing the whore." **Thy Redeemer the Holy One**; rather, *thy Redeemer is the Holy One.* (On the title itself, see the comment on ch. i. 4.) **The God of the whole earth** (comp. Ps. xxiv. 1; xlvii. 2, 7; lxxxiii. 18, etc.). Materially, he was always this. Now, from this time, he will be "God of the whole earth" morally; not God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (see Rom. iii. 29).

Ver. 6.—**For the Lord hath called thee**; *i.e.* recalled thee to himself—summoned thee to return, and once more resume the office of a wife. **As a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit**; *i.e.* as one whom her husband has cast off, and whose spirit is grieved by the repudiation. No doubt a large number of the captives had the same spirit of penitence as Daniel (Dan. ix. 5—19). **A wife of youth.** One wooed and won in youth, therefore more dearly loved, more regretfully repudiated, more joyfully restored when seen to be penitent. **When thou wast refused**; rather, *when she has been cast off.* Jehovah takes back Israel into the old relationship, as a man takes back "the wife of his youth," when she has been for a long time "cast off."

Vers. 7, 8.—**For a small moment have I forsaken thee.** The sixty or seventy years of the Captivity were but as a moment of time compared with the long ages during which God had tenderly watched over and protected his Church, and, still more, compared with the eternity during which he was now about to show himself her constant Guardian and Protector. There had been a **little wrath**; or rather, *one burst of wrath*; and then Mercy had resumed her sway. The **face hid for a moment** had been allowed once more to shine upon the afflicted people; and the momentary indignation would be followed by, and swallowed up in, ever-

lasting kindness (compare above, ch. xxvi. 20 and Ps. xxx. 5, "His anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning").

Ver. 9.—**This is as the waters of Noah unto me.** The existing calamity—Israel submerged in the flood of Babylonian captivity—is as it were a repetition of the calamity of the Deluge in God's eyes. Its object is to purify his Church, as the object of the Flood was to purify the world. A righteous household survived in the one case; a righteous remnant would go forth in the other. And as God bound himself in Noah's time not to repeat the calamity of the Deluge, so now he binds himself not again to submerge his Church in a captivity like the Babylonian. It has been said that the promise was not kept, since the Jewish Church was, in A.D. 70, carried captive by the Romans. But the prophet views the Jewish Church as continued in the Christian, into which all its better and more spiritual members passed at the first preaching of the gospel; and the promise here made is thus parallel to that of our Lord, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). Much as the Christian Church has suffered from the world, it has never been in like cases with the Jewish Church in Babylon, and, as God is faithful, never will be reduced to such extremity. **As I have sworn**; *i.e.* "pledged myself." It does not appear from Gen. viii. 20—22 or ix. 8—17 that God actually bound himself by oath. **So have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.** That is to say, not to the same extent, not so as to visit her with the same punishment.

Ver. 10.—**The mountains shall depart . . . but my kindness shall not depart** (comp. Matt. xxiv. 35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"). Everything material may fail, depart, perish; but God's promises remain firm and secure for ever. **The covenant of my peace**; or, *my covenant of peace*—any promise which God makes to his creatures for their advantage (comp. Numb. xxv. 12; Ezek. xxxiv. 25; xxxvii. 26; Mal. ii. 5). Here there is a special allusion to the promise just made and confirmed by oath (ver. 9).

Vers. 11—17.—THE GLORY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM, AND THE HAPPINESS OF ITS INHABITANTS. Hitherto Israel has been addressed; now the direct object of address is Jerusalem. The eye of the prophet passes, however, with a glance, from the actual present to the far-distant future, and sees the Zion of God in her heavenly setting, all bedecked with precious stones, as she was seen by the exile of Patmos more than seven centuries later (Rev. xxi. 16—21). After briefly describing the heavenly city, he passes to her inhabitants, and promises them peace, protection, and righteousness.

Ver. 11.—**O thou afflicted** (comp. ch. xlix. 14—17). Jerusalem is seen as she was during the Captivity—"afflicted" by God's hand, vexed with all his storms, and **not yet comforted** (comp. ch. lxiv. 10, 11). Then a fresh vision obliterates the mournful sight. **I will lay thy stones with fair colours**; literally, *I will lay thy stones in antimony*; i.e. I will give them a setting and adornment like that which beautiful women were in the habit of giving to their eyes when they wished to attract admiration (see 2 Kings ix. 30). *Pûk*, or antimony, was used to stain both the upper and the under eyelid, in order to increase the apparent lustre of the eye, and so impart to it greater beauty. The passage is not to be understood as implying that coloured marbles were ever really set in antimony. **And lay thy foundations with sapphires**; or, *make thy foundations of sapphires*. In Revelation the *first* foundation is "jasper," the *second* "sapphire" (Rev. xxi. 19). Sapphire was the foundation on which the throne of God appeared to be set, when it was seen by Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders (Exod. xxiv. 10). The throne itself had the appearance of sapphire, as seen by Ezekiel (i. 26; x. 1). Sapphire is the hue of heaven.

Ver. 12.—**I will make thy windows of agates.** Most moderns translate, "I will make thy battlements," or "thy pinnacles of rubies." The exact meaning is very doubtful. **Thy gates of carbuncles.** In the Revelation of St. John the gates are each of them composed of one pearl (Rev. xxi. 21)—the pearl betokening purity, the carbuncle the glow of devotional feeling. We must not expect consistency in descriptions which are entirely allegorical. **All thy borders of pleasant stones**; or, *all thy boundaries*. An enclosing wall seems to be meant (comp. Rev. xxi. 17).

Ver. 13.—**All thy children** shall be **taught of the Lord** (comp. ch. xliv. 3; Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; Ezek. xi. 19; Joel ii. 28; Acts ii. 17, 18, etc.). Christians are all of them "taught of God" (John vi. 45; 1 Thess. iv. 9). The "anointing," which they have from the Holy Ghost, "teaches them, and is truth, and is no lie" (1 John ii. 27), and causes them to "know all things" (1 John ii. 20). **And great shall be the peace of thy children.** Messiah was to be "the Prince of Peace" (ch. ix. 6). His birth heralded the coming of "peace on earth" (Luke ii. 14). So far forth as men are true Christians, does peace

reign in the conscience and show itself in the life. Externally there may be persecution, tumult, wars, fightings; but internally, in each heart, there will be a "peace that passes all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7). God "keeps in perfect peace" those "whose minds are stayed on him" (ch. xxvi. 3).

Ver. 14.—**In righteousness shalt thou be established**; rather, *through righteousness*. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (ch. xlviii. 22); and conversely, where righteousness abounds, peace prevails, and the nation "is established." **Thou shalt be far from oppression**; rather, *be thou far from anxiety* (Delitzsch). **Thou shalt not fear**; rather, *thou needest not fear*. There is no danger—nothing to be afraid of. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain" (ch. xi. 9). So long as thou art "established through righteousness," there shall no harm happen unto thee.

Ver. 15.—**Behold, they shall surely gather together**, etc.; rather, *behold, should they gather themselves together;* i.e. should enemies collect and threaten thee with harm, be assured that the attack is **not by me**—not my doing—and that, therefore, it will come to nought. **All those who gather together against thee shall fall**—*i.e.* stumble and be overthrown—through striking against thee. The rendering of the Authorized Version, "for thy sake," is quite indefensible.

Ver. 16.—**Behold, I have created**, etc. The Church is encouraged to fear no danger by being reminded that all power to do hurt is from God. Whether it be **the smith** that forges a weapon, or **the waster** that destroys and lays waste whole countries, or any other worker of woe to man, all are equally brought into being, and sustained in life, by God. None can do a hurt that God does not allow. **The smith that bloweth the coals.** In ancient times the smith worked his metal into shape by the help of a blow-pipe, which he blew himself (see Rosellini, 'Monumenti Civili,' pl. 51, fig 4, and pl. 52, fig. 4). **For his work**; or, *for its work;* i.e. destruction. **The waster**; *i.e.* the conquering king, such as Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus.

Ver. 17.—**No weapon . . . every tongue.** Whether weapons are used against Israel, or whether she is attacked, as in Sennacherib's time, by "the tongue that speaketh proud things" (ch. xxxvi. 4—20; xxxvii. 10—13), the result will be the same. She will triumph over her enemies, and condemn them or put them to shame. Her security is her righteousness, which she derives from Jehovah (comp. ch. xlv. 24, 25).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The relation of the Church to God that of a wife to her husband.* The analogy set forth by the prophet in the first six verses of this chapter is one to which equal prominence is given in the Old Testament and the New. It forms the basis of one entire book of the Old Scriptures—the Canticles, or Song of Solomon. It pervades the whole teaching of the prophets, which declares apostasy from God to be "adultery" (ch. lvii. 3—5; Jer. iii. 9; v. 7; xiii. 27; xxiii. 10—14; Ezek. xvi. 32—36; xxiii. 37; Hos. iii. 1; iv. 12—14, etc.). It is asserted repeatedly with the utmost plainness (ver. 5; Jer. iii. 14; xxxi. 32; Hos. ii. 16—20). In the New Testament, it is hinted at in the Gospels (Matt. xxv. 1—10), taught plainly in the Epistles (2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 23—32), and made part of the imagery of the Revelation of St. John (xxi. 2, 9; xxii. 17). The only difference is that, in the Old Testament, the "husband" is, vaguely, Jehovah or God; in the New he is, definitely, the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ. The relationship involves, on the part of God: 1. Love. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also *loved* the Church" (Eph. v. 25). 2. Tender guardianship and care. "The Lord nourisheth and cherisheth the Church" (Eph. v. 29). 3. Exertion of a purifying and elevating influence. Christ "loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25—27). 4. Everlasting kindness—kindness that "shall not depart," or be withdrawn, for ever (ch. liv. 8, 10). On the part of the Church there are involved corresponding duties; as: 1. Love (1 John iv. 16—21). 2. Reverence (Eph. v. 33). 3. Subjection. "As the Church is subject unto Christ, *so* let the wives be to their own husbands *in everything*" (Eph. v. 24). 4. Never-ending fidelity. The desire of the Church should be towards her Lord, as his is towards her (Cant. vii. 10), incessantly.

Ver. 17.—*Man's righteousness is of God.* Whatever there is in man of goodness,

virtue, sound or right feeling, high aspiration, spiritual strength, comes to him from the Almighty, from whence descends "every good gift and every perfect gift" (Jas. i. 17). Original righteousness was from God (Gen. i. 27, 31). When man fell, and "corrupted his way," recovery was impossible, unless God both devised a method by which it should be possible, and also superintended the working of his own method, and at each step made it effectual. The righteousness of the servants of God is a double righteousness, imputed and infused; but both come equally from the perfectly "righteous Servant" (ch. liii. 11), who alone "justifies many."

I. IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OF GOD. Imputed righteousness is the righteousness of God; for it is the righteousness of Christ, who is God. Christ is made to us "wisdom, *and righteousness*, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). The righteousness which is properly his, and which is a perfect righteousness, is, through our mystic union with him, imputed to us, as if it were ours, and so becomes ours, and justifies us. It is also "of God," since it is imputed to us by God. God the Father condescends to look upon us as so bound up in his Son that he passes on to us the merits of his Son, and, as it were, makes them ours.

II. INFUSED RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OF GOD. Infused righteousness is the work of the Holy Spirit, who "sanctifies us, and all the elect people of God." It admits of infinite degrees, and in this life is always imperfect. The true Christian is always making progress in it, adding grace to grace, going on from strength to strength, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. But every step is made by God's help. Without him man can do nothing. Every virtue that we have is also a grace—a grace from the Divine point of view, a virtue from the human; with struggle and effort acquired by man, yet given to him by God. Imputed righteousness is that which justifies us; infused righteousness is that which sanctifies us. The one is a gift *to* us; the other is a gift *in* us. But both alike are the gift of God (see Rom. iii. 21—26; v. 15—19; 1 Cor. iv. 7; xv. 10; Gal. v. 22, 23; Eph. v. 9, etc.).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—17.—*The future of the Church.* "The person addressed is the ideal Zion, who is practically identical with the ideal or spiritual Israel."

I. HER FRUITFULNESS. Nothing to an Israelitish mind can suggest more forcibly the idea of desolation and sorrow in a nation or spiritual community than the childless woman. *Historically*, the *restored exiles* may be referred to; physically and to some extent spiritually Israelites, but, while on a foreign soil, and unbaptized with the Spirit, their union was not complete. In a *wider spiritual application*, the Church of God, in the Old Testament, confined within the narrow limits of the Jewish nation, and still more so in respect to the very small number of true believers, and which seemed sometimes deserted of God her Husband (Lowth). (For the relation of the Church to God under the figure of marriage, cf. ch. lxii. 5; Rev. xxi. 2—9; xxii. 17; Ezek. xvi.) The conversion of the Gentiles is the accession of a vast progeny to the spiritual Israel—a vast extension of the Church of God (ch. xlix. 20—22).

II. HER ENLARGEMENT. The figure of a tent is employed. The canopy or coverings of the tent are to be widened, its cords lengthened, and the tent-pins made strong. The *wandering* is to be exchanged for the *permanent* habitation. (For the image, cf. Jer. x. 20.) The boundaries of the Church are to be enlarged to accommodate the vast accession from the pagan world. On all hands she is to break forth, even as it had been promised to Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 14), to take possession of the nations, and inhabit desolate cities. The period of reproach, figured by maidenhood or widowhood, is to come to an end.

III. HER INTIMATE RELATION TO GOD. 1. He is Maker and *Goêl*, Mediator and Redeemer, of her family rights. (For the Christian application, see Eph. ii. 19, "Fellow-citizens of the saints, and members of the family of God.") As the nearest kinsman is bound to interpose for the defence of members of his family, so the Almighty is bound to avenge and succour his chosen. In his Name, Jehovah of hosts, is found a further guarantee of his saving mercy for the future. It means that he is God of the whole earth, that his glory fills the creation. (For the application to the Christian Church,

see Rom. iii. 29, "God of the Gentiles also.") 2. The relation of *marriage* in its Divine application points to an *indissoluble* and *eternal union*. The Church may appear in times of distress as "an outcast and downcast woman," divorced from her God. But "even many an earthly husband cannot bear to see the misery of his divorced wife, and therefore at length recalls her: how much more, then, Jehovah!" In a "gush of wrath" it was that his face was hidden from her. In everlasting kindness he will have mercy; the sea being contrasted with the momentary outburst, or "gush" of displeasure. Never shall this dispensation of wrath be repeated, no more than that of Noah's floods. Mountains are symbolic of the unchangeableness of the Eternal (cf. Ps. xxxvi. 6; lxv. 6). They seem to be the solid pillars and foundations of the earth. They may totter; but the loving-kindness of God must be like himself, eternal. The covenant of peace, which has been ratified between him and his people, will abide amidst all vicissitudes of nature and of history. The love of the Eternal is, then, the first and last secret of all things. At the basis of the universe lies law, and law itself is the expression of love. Law wears to us often a stern face; it is the expression of wrath. But a holy wrath is itself the expression of a loving heart. He who has made the world cannot hate it. He who is the Author of the soul is its affianced Spouse and self-constituted Protector. Language and imagination labour in vain with so immense a conception as that of the Divine love. It must follow from this that the Church, as a spiritual and mystical community, must be safe through all the change of time.

IV. THE FUTURE GLORY OF THE CHURCH. She appears under the figure of a city, the new Jerusalem. Her brilliant stones will be set in a beautifying cement. Her battlements will be of rubies, her gates of carbuncles, her outer walls of precious stones. Yet this will only be the outward manifestation of an inward and spiritual glory. The people will be disciples of Jehovah (cf. Numb. xi. 29; Joel ii. 28, 29), that is, in effect, prophets, filled with utterance as with inspiration. Her constitution will rest upon a sound, because a moral basis—on righteousness, on fidelity to her covenant with God. Not being built, like the cities of the heathen, of fraud and rapine, oppression and destruction will be far from her thoughts. She will enjoy security. Should any foe presume to molest her, he will stumble—he will be like a blind traveller who falls headlong over an obstacle. For all the agencies which work either a people's weal or woe are in the hands of the Eternal. He is the Creator of the smith, and so mediately of the destroying weapon he forges. So the great Oriental kings are his tools. But no weapon turned against Israel shall succeed in its aim; and every abusing tongue shall be pronounced guilty in the day of judgment. Such is the spiritual inheritance of the servants of Jehovah, such their justification at his hands. "It is not gold and the triumph of battle. It is not the laurel won in fields of blood. The inheritance is the protection of God in all times of trouble; his friendship in all periods of activity; complete victory in all the contests with error and false systems of religion; and prevention when foes rise up in any form and seek to destroy the Church, and to blot out its existence and its name." "God defend the right!" has been an ancient prayer in times of anxiety and conflict. He does defend the right and the righteous at all times, the prophet declares.—J.

Ver. 10.—*Perennial kindness.* "My kindness shall not depart from thee." Much kindness does. It is fervid, but fickle, and is too often conditioned by mood and temper and circumstance. Moreover, it may depart through lack of power and opportunity.

I. THE SAVIOUR'S KINDNESS IS TRUE KINDNESS. He knows what kindness *is*. We too often mistake favour and indulgence for kindness. God is often kindest when he is most severe.

II. THE SAVIOUR'S KINDNESS IS MANIFESTED KINDNESS. It costs him something. Much kindness evaporates in sentiment and speech. It does not impinge on the ease and the comfort of our friends. Jesus Christ said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!" and, "although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." His kindness was tested: 1. By the treatment he received. 2. By the nature that suffered. So deep in feeling; so infinite in its capacity for enduring sorrow. 3. By the sacrifice he offered. 4. By the permanence of his work, as "Head over all things to the Church." Then let the faint-hearted rest on the promise, "It shall not depart."—W. M. S.

Ver. 10.—*The eternal constancy: a meditation on change.* "My kindness shall not depart from thee." How much does depart in this world! There are departed sorrows, departed joys, departed friends; and in one sense, concerning life and joy and duty, the world is full of graves. But we have an unchanging Lord, Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "*My* kindness!" Is there not a comfort in the very emphasis? For much kindness does depart. Fervent, but evanescent, it has its little day, and then vanishes away. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." The nobility of our nature fails before the strains of littleness in character of others and distance of place and time. The eternal constancy is beautiful. Mark the connection of thought. The mountains may depart, Galilee's lake may embosom the surrounding hills, but the great Father's love is immutable and eternal. To take to heart these words would be to dispel our darkest fears. A faith strong enough to grasp this will light up every forest, and overcome every foe. There *are* strange mysteries of suffering in this world. Sorrow has many synonyms in human speech answering to the many phases of human experience. There are agonies of endurance, breaches of trust, sighings of solitude, sadnesses of disappointment, wailings of bereavement. To-day there are disciples terrified in the storm, Rachels mourning for their departed, Peters dropping scalding tears over denials of the Lord. Can it be wondered at that in such a world, amid such human trials and such spiritual experiences, kindness—the Divine kindness—should be so precious a thing? Let us recall the multitude of God's mercies; let us remember his hand in the glacier-passes of temptation, and the nights of tribulation. The strings of our human harps must sweep forth the music of love. There has been no change in Christ.

I. THE SURPRISE. *Think of what we are!* Fickle, irresolute, ungrateful, unfaithful. Our God is a God of insight. He searcheth the heart. He sees not only conduct, but character. No disguise can cloak from him. And what secrets there are in these hearts of ours! There are mirrors there which flash back, even to ourselves, the hidden things of darkness. Yet he loves us still! The previous chapter says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." Yet it is the stray lambs the Saviour seeks, and the poor prodigal wanderer the Father loves! The strongest ties we know of are in our human relationships; they are images of the Divine love. Only an artificial theology has made the rectoral character of God override the paternal. Think you that on some wild Christmas, amid home's most festive scenes, with the children and the children's children about him, that father, whose hair is whiter than the winter snow, *can* forget the prodigal? With the ruddy fire-glow around him, and the yule logs piled high, his mind wanders over the bleak and barren moorland of the outside world; and one faint knock at the portal, one weary step, one quivering lip, brings more music to his heart than the tabret and the dance. He knows all about the squandered wealth, the profligate life, the reckless pilgrimage of vanity. But his kindness cannot depart from him, for he is a father still. I claim for God the very amplest application of that analogy. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, . . . we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." "In Christ's stead!" What words! Many evil things the Church has done—Roman, Anglican, and Puritan—would look strange enough if Christ's gentle image had been thought upon, and men had inscribed above it, "We are Christ's!" God gave such tension and tenderness to the human heart to make our fatherhood a parable of his own! "If we knew all!" Thus even we who *love* him, who have been reconciled to him, say sometimes in our darker moods. Does God know all? *Then* could he be kind to us still. *We* have served other gods. We have been faithless stewards. We have been at heart callous and cold. Yet to us comes this message of the eternal constancy: "My kindness shall not depart from thee."

II. THE CONTRAST. *Think of what human nature is.* We make retrospect concerning ourselves. We do not depreciate humanity when we say that kindness is an uncertain thing. We do not charge it upon others to the exclusion of ourselves. We are all unstable as water. We find how difficult it is to be unselfish. And no kindness can be perpetual without that. There are occasions when kindness is lacking in us; when a feeble witticism has wounded a friend; when a cruel sarcasm has bruised a brother's sensibilities; when a personal enjoyment has inflicted deprivation on others. Kindness is easy when its manifestations are costless. Nay, it cannot be dignified with the name; for it ministers to our own pride and satisfaction. But we cannot conceal

the fact that *courtesy*, *compassion*, and *care* do fail, and, in one word, "love" is absent. I am not speaking of the false kindness of the deceiver, or the tender mercies of the gay, or the heartless mannerism which feigns affection. This is devils' work, and fills the sinner's night of death with spectres worse than the genius of Dante ever described or Doré ever designed. I am speaking of the common fact of instability in human feeling, inconstancy in human love. Explainable, indeed, sometimes by the detection of selfishness, superficiality, or unworthiness, as we think, in others, but manifest, in some measure, in us all. Now, the Divine Saviour is the ideal of all unselfishness. He gave himself. He humbled himself. He became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross—for us. While we were yet enemies, he died for us. And this was no solitary embodiment of his nature. It was a revelation of what his eternal nature is. Take, then, a review of yourself; take a review of society—and forget not all the revelations you have had of blessed contrast in God, whose kindness has not departed from you.

III. THE REVIEW. *Think of what the past time says.* Life has been full of mercy to us all. Homes have been revisited, friends have been restored, love has been consummated, new homes have been set up, accident has been averted, health has been restored, deliverance has been vouchsafed, affliction has been sanctified, and religious faith has in some cases been renewed and restored. Most wonderful of all is this. We have lived through seasons in which subtle temptations have had their enchanter's wand broken, and difficulties in our Christian faith have been removed. True, indeed, it is that to some these words would mean nothing—would, perhaps, raise a smile of condescending pity for those of us who still believe in a God at all. Some there are who wonder at the worship which rises above "the stream of tendency," or the laws of evolution, to the Fountain of Life and Power which fills the universe with life and joy; and to others the words would sound like the bitter *irony* of fate. Kindness! when the fig tree has withered, and there is slender produce in the vine? for some have not yet learned that Providence has higher ends than to weave purple robes and to grow costly fruits. What blessedness there is to most of us in the continuous belief in a personal God and Father—in a hand that rules, a voice that speaks, and a heart that loves! Truly it *sufficeth* us to show us the Father; for, try as men may, they can never create an impersonal religion. Greece raised her altars to Pity and Fame, and the abstract virtues; but the testimony of history was the total neglect of them all. The human heart can worship a Divine heart only—must seek after a God, even if he be "the Unknown God." Certainly, also, we cannot worship, adore, praise, and glorify any embodied idea of humanity—the positivists cannot make a beautiful image of *that*. *No;* its shame, its vice, its corruption, its evil, remain; the statue may have gold in it, but it has iron and clay as well. The Lord revealed in the Bible is our God and Father to-day! "My soul thirsteth for God, the living God;" "Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing;" "Great is the Lord, and of great power, and his understanding is infinite." We *retain* our prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." We retain our pathway of approach. "Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life." We retain our altar of love, the one Mediator between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back, then, and taking a review of life preserved and life sustained, of friends given or restored, of love cemented and consecrated, of faith purified and elevated, must not our seal be set afresh to the truth of the words, "My kindness shall not depart from thee"?

IV. THE PROSPECT. *Think what the future will bring.* The coming days. These are the most constant theme of our meditation. We project ourselves into life's to-morrow. We never live wholly for the present time. We are all artists in this wise, colouring our picture by means of our faith or our experience. We are sometimes morbid, and doubt whether good times will come to us again, forgetful of the past seasons of trouble which gave place in time to the brighter morrow. Alas! we too often say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?" Kindness departed! That is our earthly and our spiritual dread. But the bow in the cloud is God's silent prophecy. And there is a bow in every cloud, if we will but gaze upon the heaven of mercy above us. To-morrow is coming, but on its wings mercy and love will also come. God will still show forth his loving-kindness in the morning. The throne of God is not to be covered with the crape of a departed majesty. We believe in "the *Eternal*." "From everlasting to everlasting thou art

God." God is the Good! His sceptre is no iron mace of authority, but he is the Father of our spirits, and the God of our salvation. What will to-morrow bring? The seed-time and the harvest. The summer sky and the song of the reaper. The release of the ice-bound fountain and the beauty and fragrance of a thousand fields. To-morrow there is to be more and more departure of ignorance and wrong, of desolation and darkness. The light is to shine *more* and *more* unto the perfect day; for Christ *must* reign. Every season of life will have its kindness. If father and mother forsake us in childhood, the Lord will take us up. If widowhood comes, Christ will be the Husband of the widow. Frosty, but kindly, as Shakespeare says, will old age be itself, when the evening comes, and *death* too will be kind when it comes, taking down the tabernacle with a quiet hand, and gently hushing us into the calm sleep of the child whose morning is heaven. Let us get rid, then, of the habit of dark foreboding, for thereby we deprive ourselves of the music of to-day. We all sometimes think of Divine mercy as though its *meridian* had passed, and as though God's grace was setting over the plains of life. We have an ever-living Saviour, an indwelling Spirit, the blessing of spiritual sonship, the foretaste of the sweet vineyards of Canaan, and a fountain ever open for sin and uncleanness. Let us seek to make God's kindness in its constancy the image of *our own*. Love is the law of heaven; the angels are all ministering spirits. When poor Hagar, with haggard eyes and dishevelled hair, was in the wilderness, it was an angel-hand which led her to the well. When Gideon was threshing his wheat, his face pictures forth the great sorrow of his people, and we hear him saying, "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" And an angel's voice then reassures him with the promise, "*Surely I will be with thee.*" When the ship is driven helplessly through the storm, an angel-voice says to the apostle, "Fear not, Paul!" Yes; there is a sympathy and a constant kindness in the angelic ministry. And we are to be ministering spirits too. A part of our nature, constituted as it is to live in others, would be shorn of its blessedness if we could not also be ministers of kindness. Onward, then, my brethren, with these words on your banner. The light which falls on the letters of gold will attract the eyes of others, as you show them what a religious faith can do in renewing the life of the world. Faith in God our Saviour will change the countenance, strengthen even the physical nerves, and make us better companions and brighter friends. Like a talisman, these words will keep you from the dread which has darkened man's earthly life in every age. You will bear them aloft on your banner, not as rejoicing in a God who loves and cares for you alone; but you will say to the world, "Let our people be your people, and our God your God." Yield your hearts to him. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." You will fear no evil, for the Lord is with you! There will be manna in the wilderness; the Jordan itself will be dry; the warder will throw wide the open gates at your home-going, and the Saviour will give you the welcome rest. These words are those of the faithful and true. "My kindness shall not depart from thee."—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*Enlargement and consolidation.* "Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." Applying these words to the Church of Christ in its attitude of holy expectation, and its sacred duty under all circumstances, but particularly in the time of growth, we learn of it—

I. THAT IT SHOULD CONSTANTLY BE ANTICIPATING ENLARGEMENT. The challenge comes from its Lord, "Spare not, lengthen thy cords;" *i.e.* take the attitude and the action of those who are looking for increase, for the incoming of those who are outside. The Church of Christ is well warranted in doing this; for it has: 1. Ample scope in a vast unredeemed world beyond its borders; souls that are capable of brotherhood, of sonship, of heirship. 2. All the materials it wants for successful enterprise, in authority to work and win, in truth perfectly fitted to the deepest wants of the human heart, in the potency of Christian love and zeal. 3. Divine promise that its labour shall not be in vain.

II. THAT IT SHOULD CONTINUALLY BE ENGAGED IN CONSOLIDATION. As a multitude of armed men do not make an army, so a number of people with Christian words on their lips and Christian ordinances in their practice do not make a Christian Church after Christ's ideal. The accession of numbers is not everything; it may prove to be

very little; before now, in certain cases, it has proved to be "less than nothing and vanity." The Church must "strengthen its stakes" as well as "lengthen its cords." It must not spare its strength in providing for permanence and stability as well as increase. It must aim at, and must pray and labour for: 1. The intelligent acceptance of the truth of Christ in its integrity. 2. Spirituality in worship. 3. Consistency of conduct and consequent illustration of a large part of Christ's will in its daily life. 4. Order and discipline in its regular action.—C.

Vers. 6—10.—*Superabounding goodness.* The prevailing thought here is the prevalence of God's goodness over his severity. For a *small moment* he had forsaken, but with *great mercies* he would comfort his people. Against the "little wrath" in which his face was hidden there was to be set the "everlasting kindness" with which he would redeem them. The largely preponderant, completely outweighing, superabounding goodness of the Lord is manifest on every side. We see it—

I. IN THE NATURAL WORLD. There is a great deal of misery beneath the sky. How could it be otherwise when there is so much of cruelty and sin? But if we look long at all that happens as the direct result of God's handiwork, we shall find that "mercy triumphs over wrath," good over ill. There is a large and blessed preponderance of light over darkness, of pleasure over pain, of joy over sorrow, of hope over despair, of confidence over distrust, of fertility over barrenness, of plenty over poverty, of society over solitude, of life over death. But for the disturbing and destructive element of sin, this would obviously be the case in a very much larger degree than it is now.

II. IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. The Church of God has been represented at different times by different communities. At one time by the suffering community in Egypt; at another, by the Church in the wilderness; at another, by the distracted society under the judges; at another, by the triumphant nation under David and Solomon; at another, by Israel in exile; at another, by the returned and rejoicing people of God who had come home from captivity. It is now represented by the Churches of Christ scattered over many lands, and forming apparently many distinct religious bodies. Sometimes God has lifted upon his people the light of his countenance, and they have rejoiced in his manifested favour; at other times he has withdrawn his face, and made his people to feel the weight of his chastening hand. But upon the whole it has been found, and in the end it will be found, that his manifestations of mercy and grace have triumphed greatly over those of wrath and penalty. There were times in the history of the Jewish Church when its light nearly went out in the surrounding darkness, but it did not expire; by the Divine hand it was guarded and fed, and has now become, under other conditions, a glorious sun, giving light and heat to all the nations. Mountains and hills, in the shape of kingdoms and powers, have departed and been removed; but God's kindness to his Church will not depart, nor will his faithfulness fail. With everlasting kindness will God be merciful to the Church which bears the name, and teaches the truth, and extends the kingdom, of his Son.

III. IN THE CAREER OF HIS FAITHFUL SERVANTS. There is no uniform course which the life of piety is found to take; it takes almost every variety of ways. Sometimes it lies much in the sunshine and but little in the shadow; and sometimes it is shaded nearly the whole way through. And how many kinds of shadow fall on the good man's path! It is the apparent withdrawal of God's favour from his soul; or it is the false charge which takes away his fair fame; or it is overwhelming loss involving others as well as himself in struggle or even in penury; or it is early separation from those most dearly beloved. There is "the hiding of God's face;" the hour comes when nothing but the Master's words will utter the feelings of the heart, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But all this is *temporary;* nay, everything being counted, it is but *momentary.* God has in reserve infinite resources which, afterwards if not now, yonder if not here, will make up a thousandfold for all that he sends of trial and suffering. Let the faithful soul build on the immovable rock of God's integrity. Mountains may melt and hills may flee away, the foundations of the solid earth may be broken up, but God's kindness cannot depart, because his Word *cannot* fail; that is the one absolutely and eternally impossible thing.—C.

Ver. 13.—*The prize of life, and its pursuit.* "All thy children shall be taught

of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." We gather from this text—

I. THE TRUE PRIZE OF LIFE. What is that thing which is most worth having, most worth the thought of our minds, the strenuous striving of our soul, the labour of our hands? Nations, communities, individual men, have given different replies. One has said ease, another wealth, another pleasure, another power, another glory. The inspired Hebrew said *peace*. The blessing he invoked on those he loved, and that which he lauded in speech and song, was peace. And he was right. Peace is the indispensable, the immeasurably precious thing. 1. It is a *profound* blessing. It goes down to the depth of our compound nature; it is the excellent result of complete rightness—rightness of heart with God, rightness of life with man. 2. It is a *lasting* thing. Other prizes may be snatched away by untoward circumstances, or their worth dims and lessens with the passing years, or even (with some of them) with the fleeting days. But this abides; prosperity does not injure it, adversity does not remove it, age does not diminish its excellency. 3. It is the *condition of holy usefulness*. We can serve our race in higher and greater things without the other prizes of life, but not without this. Not until our hearts have found rest in God's truth and in himself can we be and say and do that which will guide the feet of our fellow-men into and along the paths of righteousness and wisdom.

II. THE ONE WAY OF WINNING IT. The children of Zion would have great peace, inasmuch as they would be "taught of the Lord." Nothing else will give to the human heart the peace which it craves. 1. Comfortable circumstances will not ensure it. These circumstances cannot be generally commanded, and, if they could, there would still be a craving of the soul which no comforts or successes of any earthly kind would satisfy. 2. Philosophy is not equal to the task. Stoicism tried its hand, and with some of its disciples there was the appearance of success; but it has no power to minister to the necessities of the multitudes of mankind, to the ordinary human heart, to men and women as we meet and know them every day. To the common, questioning, thirsting human heart it is a fountain without water, a name without the power behind it. 3. A Divine Saviour alone can supply the need. He only who brings everlasting truth to our mind, the sympathy and love of an unfailing friendship to the heart, spiritual excellence to the soul, meaning and worth to human life, a hope bright with immortal glory to the closing hour,—he only is entitled to say, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest." "My peace I give unto you." *Great* peace—peace that passeth understanding, and that outliveth mortal life, have they who learn of him and take his yoke upon them.—C.

Ver. 17.—*The heritage of faithful service.* From the beginning to the end of the Scriptures the service of God is represented as the only wise course for men to take. All paths of disobedience are spoken of as ways of folly as well as of sin. It is godliness that has the promise of all things, here and hereafter. The heritage of the holy is very variously defined, the most remarkable definition being that given by our Lord in reply to Peter (*vide* Mark x. 28—31). In the text we have it presented to us as a *continual victory*. No weapon formed against the righteous shall prosper, and every accusation shall be silenced. God will justify them. The faithful service of Christ is marked by victory over—

I. SUCCESS IN OUTWARD LIFE. Few weapons are so powerful as this in the hand of the enemy. Many are they who, in their folly, have allowed their prosperity to destroy them (Prov. i. 32). The sense of power, the enjoyment of popularity, the command of comforts, the continuance of success in the chosen vocation,—these things prove too much for many souls. Under their influence men swerve from the straight line of simplicity of life, humility of spirit, purity of heart, integrity of character.

II. ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES. These are often found to be victorious over men, triumphing over their faith in God, their gratitude, and their submission; leading down to sullenness and moroseness of spirit; in some cases conducting to unbelief and impiety.

III. PRIVATION OF PRIVILEGE. When it is a man's fortune to be separated from the community and to lead a life of comparative loneliness, he is cast much on his own resources. He misses the encouragement and inspiration which come from social worship

and collective piety. Without the aid and influence of these, he is in danger of fainting and falling in his Christian course.

IV. EXPOSURE TO CORRUPT COMPANIONSHIP. This is often a matter of necessity and not of choice. The best may have to submit to it, and the peril of spiritual injury from it is very great.

V. THE FORCE OF A SURROUNDING SCEPTICISM. A force which either vigorously assaults the main fortress of the faith or sedulously and stealthily undermines the walls —a great and growing peril.

It is promised to the servants of the Lord that they shall triumph over these various enemies. "*No* weapon that is formed," etc. But while (1) God's promise may well cheer his servants, helping them to pursue their troubled path, and to do their difficult or dangerous work with alacrity and hope; it is well that (2) his conditions should be remembered. There is no absolute, unconditional guarantee; the careless, the disobedient, the negligent servant will be, nay, he *is*, defeated by the enemy; he yields and falls. But let a man be a faithful servant, studious of Christ's will and daily seeking his Holy Spirit's aid, and he will find that his Divine Lord will "always cause him to triumph;" he will know "the exceeding greatness of his power" to uphold and to perfect. Meantime, to those who are observers, (3) God's sustaining grace will prove the sign and seal of his Divine favour. "This is their righteousness [justification] of me."—C.

Ver. 2.—*Divine enlargements.* The figure employed is taken from tent-life, and it is used in a similar way by Jeremiah. "My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains" (Jer. x. 20). "The Orientals have two kinds of tents—the one larger, and the other smaller; but both constructed much in the same way. They are sustained by poles, more or fewer in number, according to the size of the tent, but the tallest is always in the midst, while the others suspend the covering round the sides. This covering is made of a stuff woven from wool and camel's hair; it hangs down like a curtain over the side poles, and is fastened by cords to wooden pegs, which are firmly driven into the ground. Other cords, fastened at one end to the top of the poles, and at the other to pegs or stakes, keep the tent steady, and secure it against the violence of storms. As the family increases, it is proportionally enlarged, and requires the cords to be longer and the stakes to be stronger in proportion." One cause of depression, at the time of the return, was that so few of the Israelites responded to the Divine call, and it seemed hopeless work to attempt to revive the old glories of Jerusalem with such a feeble company. The divinely comforting assurances of the text are designed to revive hope and renew confidence. "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation." And the promise was fulfilled. Those that first came out of Babylon were but forty-two thousand (Ezra ii. 64), about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet, above five hundred years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the Paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas there might be twenty) made the nation to be nearly three millions. Further reference may be found to the enlargement of the Christian Church after Pentecost, and especially after the martyrdom of Stephen, and the scattering of the disciples which followed upon that sad event. The general topic suggested for consideration is the duty of cheerfully following on, when God opens before us wider and larger spheres of influence and usefulness, and the following points may be illustrated.

I. IT IS WRONG TO FORCE OURSELVES INTO ENLARGEMENTS BEFORE GOD CALLS.

II. IT IS WRONG TO HOLD BACK WHEN GOD DOES CALL.

III. LARGER SPHERES, AND WIDER INFLUENCE, ARE GOD'S SIGNS OF ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL OF THE WORK WHICH WE HAVE DONE.

IV. THOSE WHO ENTER ON ENLARGED SPHERES NEED TO BE THEMSELVES ENLARGED. —R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The husband-figure for God.* "For thy Maker is thine Husband" (comp.

Hos. ii. 16), "And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me, Ishi [my Husband], and shalt call me no more, Baali [my Lord]"). The figure Isaiah uses is that of the *Goël*, or next of kin, and this very suggestive and beautiful illustration may be taken from the story of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was a "next of kin," and on him rested the formal duty of recovering Ruth's property, if the nearest kinsman failed to do his duty. But all formal relations were swallowed up in the tender love that knit Boaz and Ruth together as husband and wife.

I. THE CLAIMS OF GOD EXPRESSED IN THIS HUSBAND-FIGURE. The points to illustrate and enforce are two. 1. Claims come out of the *love* which brings us into such a relationship. Love-claims are altogether the most searching and the most sacred. The wife is bound with cords of love. In view of this relation we lose all sternness from the commands and requirements of God; love glorifies them. 2. Claims come out of the honour which such a relationship brings us. We must "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called."

II. THE PROVIDINGS OF GOD ASSURED BY THE HUSBAND-FIGURE. The wife is in the care of her husband, and because of his care she is free from care. He provides for the supply of all need. Apply the figure to the anxieties of the Church in exile, when required to set out on the long journey to Palestine, and enter upon unknown scenes, that would surely be full of toil and worry and danger. Infinite comfort came from the assurance that they were not as lone and friendless women, in view of the perplexities and anxieties of life. They had one who would shield them and keep them. "Their Maker was their Husband." The two figures for God, Father and Husband, still are for us full of gracious assurances. Helpless children have a Father; lonely women have a Husband—"the Lord of hosts is his Name."

III. THE PERSUADINGS OF GOD MADE THROUGH THE HUSBAND-FIGURE. The relation is a constant impulse to active duty. In the text it is a persuasion to energy in undertaking the journey, and impulse to the work of rebuilding the ruined city. It was persuasion to a bright and joyous acceptance of the Divine will, and a full belief in the largeness of the Divine restorations. Eastern sentiments concerning the protection and honour of having a husband put a keenness and fulness into this figure which we can hardly reach. What is evident to us is that God will put himself into any relation which may call out from us *perfect trust in him*.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*God-worshippers outside Judaism.* "The God of the whole earth shall he be called." To our fathers the world seemed but small; to us it is great, and its bounds are ever enlarging. In olden times the few travellers came back with marvellous stories of griffins and dragons and mermaids, at which ignorant crowds gaped, but at which we can afford to smile. Now almost every part of the earth is searched again and again, and distant lands have become almost as familiar to us as our own. Men still chafe, indeed, because the vast northern seas will not yield the last mysteries which they conceal, though even the secret of the North Pole seems to be almost reached. How greatly our thoughts about God's world differ from the thoughts of our fathers! How greatly the thoughts of our own manhood and age differ from the thoughts of our youth! We find it difficult to realize to ourselves some of the opinions of our forefathers, and to fit them into the Word of God, as we read it. This especially refers to their opinions about humanity as a whole, and about the destiny of the race. England, "encompassed by the inviolate sea," is in danger of being as exclusive as was Palestine, hemmed in by the mountains, the desert, and the sea; and unless we watch ourselves, and resist the evil tendency, there may grow up in us a pride as unlovely as that which marked the privileged Jew, and made him brand all other nations as heathen, who were wholly excluded from Jehovah's love and care. The later Jewish prophets plead earnestly against that proud exclusiveness that led the people to think themselves the favoured of the Lord, and so to despise others. Prophets taught the people to look abroad, and see that God is working, both by his mercies and by his judgments, in all those nations around them which they called "heathen." The prophets, in effect, speak thus: "It is quite true that you are set in the midst of the world to be a witness and a blessing to surrounding nations; but it is equally true that those nations are set about you to be example and impulse and warning to you. God is dealing with them for their sakes and for yours, just as truly as he is dealing with you for your sake and for theirs."

That there might be no ground whatever for the exclusive appropriation of God by the Jews, God says, "Blessed be Egypt *my people*, and Assyria the *work of my hands*, and Israel mine inheritance." The nature of God's relation to the entire race is the foundation of religious truth. All our religious ideas are toned by the view we take of this relation. Men but feebly grasp the notion of one only God, supreme in and over all things. They can much more readily grasp the conception of many gods, each one supreme in his own limited department. When God gives a particular revelation to one nation, that nation is tempted to say, "God is specially *our* God. He belongs to us, and to nobody else." So St. Paul's appeal needs to be heard again and again, "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles?" No doubt we shall all agree that there is but one Creator, and that he who made all provides for all. He is interested in all humanity; "his tender mercies are over all his works." But what a singular distinction has grown up in our minds! We have come to think that this one God is interested in the physical well-being of the million heathen, graciously watching over life, and health, and food, and pleasures, and relationships, but not really concerned for their moral and spiritual well-being. We do not find ourselves unutterably distressed, as we should be, with the thought, which is in many of our minds, that the million heathen brothers are outside the pale of God's revelation, and eternally lost. But surely, if God made men moral beings; if there is, in the wildest savage, the sense of right and wrong;—then God bears saving relations to the moral life of man everywhere. He must see and reward the man everywhere who offers him worship, as he apprehends him who struggles for the good as he knows it. He must see and punish the man everywhere who yields to the evil which he knows to be evil. So St. Paul thought, breaking free from the exclusive bondages of his Judaism. And so St. Paul teaches us to think. We must not venture to sweep all the vast mass of humanity, outside Christianity, into some terrible under-world of woe. There is but one God for them and for us. Everywhere he is Light, and he is Love—Light and Love in his response to every poor heathen soul as truly as to us Christians. No matter what may be the name by which the heathen seeker may call the great Spirit—be it Tangaroa, or Morimo, or Tsikuap, or Varuna, or Brahma—he seeks the One, the Living, the Source of all. And he may gain the answering smile of the one God's acceptance. St. Paul is very plain and very firm in his statement: "When the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." We may wisely try to break down this tendency to limit the operations of God's grace just to ourselves. Mission work is breaking it down, by wakening our sympathy with seeking souls. The study of comparative religions is breaking it down, by showing us, hidden deep in heathen religions, penitence, confession, humility, love, faith, consecration, prayer, hope, virtue, and submission. Everywhere we find yearning hearts, the sense of sin, the prayer for pardon, the dependence of faith, the cry after God, who is "God of the whole earth."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Lessons from Noah's times.* In the ancient time God was wroth with mankind, when he "looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." Then in Divine judgment he swept the earth clean with a flood of great waters. But in wrath he remembered mercy: a restoring-day came, and in that day God was pleased to enter into covenant with the race, and make solemn pledge and promise that never again should "all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, nor should there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." Isaiah saw a parallel to this in the Divine dealings with the idolatrous kingdom of Israel. It had become so utterly corrupt that ordinary forms of chastisement would not suffice; overwhelming judgments were demanded. The Divine wrath found expression in the destruction of the nation, and the bitterness of the Babylonish captivity. But mercy limited judgment; a restoring-time came, and brought with it new covenant assurances and promises: "My loving-kindness from thee shall not remove, neither shall the covenant of my peace totter, saith he that hath compassion on thee, Jehovah." In this we are to see exhibited in history—earlier and later—the methods of Divine dealing which may apply also to us.

I. OUR SINS MAY AROUSE THE DIVINE INDIGNATION. Scripture impresses on us that in God is always responsive *feeling* towards sin. In this we may find foreshadowings of the fatherly relations of God toward us. He must never be thought of as merely concerned with wrong-doing because of its disturbing Divine order, as a king or a judge would be. Sin always bears a *personal* relation to God. It is disobedience, it is insult, it is unfaithfulness. He *feels* it as fathers feel the wrong-doing of their children.

II. DIVINE WRATH MAY STILL FIND EXTREME JUDGMENTS. Such as are represented in the Flood or in the Captivity. Such as are suggested by the stern necessity fathers sometimes know; they must shut the home-door against hardened prodigal sons. In the spiritual life there are times when God must "cover himself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through."

III. DIVINE MERCY ALWAYS WAITS TO PUT LIMIT ON THE JUDGMENT. That "mercy" makes the worst judgments to be but corrections. And that "mercy" watches for the moment when the correcting work is done, and restorings can be granted.

IV. WHEN GOD RESTORES HE DOES IT WITH SUCH ABUNDANT COMFORTING AND ASSURANCE AS DISPELS ALL THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE JUDGMENT-TIME. Illustrate from the tender language of the context. See also the warmth of parental feeling when the prodigal son came back home.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Divine favour reaching to the children.* "And all thy children shall be disciples of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This is probably the passage quoted by our Lord, as recorded in John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." The point on which Isaiah dwells is that the Divine favour shall not be limited to the generation that was actually restored; it would abide from generation to generation, and the guarantee for this would be found in the Divine care and training of the children in preparation for their responsibilities and privileges when their turn of manhood came. It is not precisely known in what ways the religious education of the children of the returned exiles was arranged, but the system of regular synagogue instruction was developed soon after. It is full of suggestion, for those who work among children now, that God should find the hope of stability for the restored nation in *discipling its children.* And that work is, in part, the work of *the home;* and, in part, the work of the Church.

I. THE DIVINE FAVOUR REACHES THE CHILDREN THROUGH GOOD HOMES. Through good-charactered parents and wisely ordered family life. Good character has its foundation in *faith in God;* its superstructure is all *virtue,* including reverence, obedience, uprightness, patience, and holy persistency in that which is good. Character is the supreme power, but it finds its best expressions through the family rule. Parents must, by due punishments and rewards, repress the evil and encourage the good. No Divine favour resting on our lives should kindle greater thankfulness than that shown in providing for us pious fathers and mothers, and gracious home influence.

II. THE DIVINE FAVOUR REACHES THE CHILDREN THROUGH THE CHURCH. The conditions of modern civilized life put the religious education of thousands of children altogether into the hands of Christ's Church. Multitudes of parents cannot, or will not, train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But in all such cases the Church can do a noble *supplemental* work. We may see the special Divine favour resting on our age, and the best security for the permanence and nobility of our nation, in the wide spreading and vigorous improvement of our Sunday schools. The "peace" assured to the children is a term designed to include all sorts of good. We cannot be wrong in thinking that the better tone of society and family life in our day is the direct result of our increased concern for the moral and religious culture of the nation's children.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*The secret of stability.* "Through righteousness shalt thou be established." J. A. Alexander paraphrases thus: "When once established by the exercise of righteousness on my part and your own, you may put far off all dread of oppression, for you have no cause to fear it, and of destruction, for it shall not come nigh you" (comp. ch. xxxii. 16, 17). It is not assumed that the restored Jerusalem would have no enemies, only that they would have no commission from God to destroy, as the Assyrians and

Babylonians had. There are two sides of righteousness regarded as the ground of the Church's, or the Christian's, stability and security.

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. This is clearly in the thought of the prophet, for he has been giving large promises from God, and naturally reminds of the righteousness, or faithfulness, of God as the assurance that he will keep his word. The same ground of confidence is presented by the apostle. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." God's righteousness is our security, because it guarantees that he never promises (1) more than he intends to perform; (2) more than he can perform; and (3) more than he will perform. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men," for there is no basis of "righteousness" in their promises. Trust God utterly, for he is "righteous."

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS AS THE OBEDIENCE AND HOLINESS OF MAN. We might have preserved the covenant-figure, and said the "faithfulness" of man. Righteous keeping of covenant was the one condition of stability for the Jewish nation; but this was an illustration of the truth that *good* is, in its nature as arranged by God, of necessity *permanent*. It has no element of weakness or decay in it. There are no foes that can overcome it. "What can harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Restored Jerusalem must learn the old lesson, "The reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any Church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is not meat and drink, but it is righteousness and peace, holiness and love." Of the workers of righteousness it may always be said, "They that do such things shall *never be moved*."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The Divine control of evil forces.* "I have created the waster to destroy." This is an assurance which we, with our theological notions of the sphere of Satan, find it very difficult to realize. We cannot associate God directly with the forces that work evil. Even if we get so far as to say that God *permits* evil, and overrules it for good, we cannot see that he actually sends the evil and arranges the evil, which is as truly his angel, his messenger, as any form of good is. Perhaps the conception was less difficult to a Jew than to us, because he had better notions of the Divine *unity* than we can gain. The "waster" here is a comprehensive term for the great conquering kings of Assyria and Babylonia, at whose hands Israel had so grievously suffered. Isaiah declares that God raised them up; God sent them forth; God gave them their work. He assures the new Jerusalem that it is quite safe, for God does not intend to send against them any such "wasters;" and they may dismiss for ever from their thoughts that any other being exists who can send "wasters" forth. Matthew Arnold says, "Destroyers and destruction are God's work; they reach those only whom he means to reach, and he does not mean them to reach Israel."

I. GOD SENDS TO US ALL THE EVIL THAT COMES TO US. We must never rest with second causes, nor talk of circumstances as if they were under no wise control. We must see God in calamity, and enmity, and temptation, and everything to which we can attach the name *evil*. Evil indeed is, oftentimes, no more than good which we cannot understand. The supreme control of God over all that man calls evil is figured for us in Satan, as the angel of calamity, appearing, to give account of his work, among the sons of God (see Job i., ii.).

II. GOD WARDS OFF ALL THE EVIL THAT MIGHT COME TO US. For there is a sense in which, as free-willed creatures, we are bringing evil upon ourselves; and others, as free-willed creatures, in some limited sense, may contemplate doing evil to us. Therefore have we, in ver. 17, the further assurance, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee for the judgment shalt thou show to be guilty." It is with God, and God alone, to send into our lives, or to withhold from us, both the *evil* and the *good*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LV.

Vers. 1—7.—AN EXHORTATION TO SPIRITUALITY AND REPENTANCE. The prophet passes from the ideal to the actual, from the glorious future to the unsatisfactory present. The people are not ripe for the blessings of the Messianic kingdom—they do not sufficiently value them. Hence a tender exhortation is addressed to them by God himself, inviting them to become more spiritually minded (vers. 1—3), and fresh promises are held out to the obedient (vers. 3—5). The disobedient are then somewhat sternly exhorted to turn from their evil ways and repent (vers. 6, 7).

Ver. 1.—**Ho, every one that thirsteth.** Though the mass are gross and carnally minded, there will ever be some who have higher aspirations—who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. v. 6), and desire spiritual blessings. These are invited, first of all, to come and partake of the good things provided for them in Messiah's kingdom. **Come ye to the waters** (on the spiritual symbolism of water, see the homiletics on ch. xliv. 3, 4). Here the "peace" and "righteousness" of the Messianic kingdom (ch. liv. 13, 14) are especially intended. Our Lord's cry on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 7) is clearly an echo of this. **Wine and milk.** These are not symbols of temporal blessings, as many have thought. "Wine, water, and milk are," as Delitzsch says, "figurative representations of spiritual revival, re-creation, and nourishment." **Without money and without price.** God's spiritual gifts are freely given to men; they cannot be purchased. Being in their own nature "more precious than rubies," their value transcends human means of payment. They cannot even be earned by man's best works; for man's best works are comprised in his duty to God, and have, therefore, no purchasing power. God may choose to reward them; but if he does it is of his free grace.

Ver. 2.—**Wherefore do ye spend money?** literally, *wherefore do ye weigh silver?*—silver being the ordinary currency, and money transactions, in default of a coinage, being by weight (cf. Gen. xxiii. 16; Zech. xi. 12). **For that which is not bread;** *i.e.* "for that which has no real value—which cannot sustain you, which will do you no good." The affections of the great mass of the Israelites were set on worldly things, on enriching themselves—adding field to field, and house to house (ch. v. 8). They did not care for spiritual blessings, much less "hunger and thirst" after them. That which **satisfieth not.** Worldly things can never satisfy the heart, not even the heart of the worldly. "*What fruit* had ye then in those things," says St. Paul, "whereof ye are now ashamed?" (Rom. vi. 21). **Hearken diligently unto me;** rather, *hearken, oh, hearken unto me.* The phrase is one of earnest exhortation. It implies the strong disinclination of Israel to listen, and seeks to overcome it (compare the opening words of the next verse). **Let your soul delight itself in fatness** (comp. Ps. xxxvi. 8; lxiii. 5; and ch. xxv. 6). The spiritual blessings of the Messianic kingdom are richer dainties than any that this world has to offer. The soul that obtains them "delights" in them, and is satisfied with them (Ps. xvii. 15).

Ver. 3.—**Come unto me** (comp. ver. 1, "Come ye to the waters"). God dispenses the waters (see ch. xliv. 3). **I will make an everlasting covenant with you.** That the "everlasting covenant" once made between God and man had been broken by man, and by Israel especially, is a part of the teaching contained in the earlier portion of Isaiah (ch. xxiv. 5). We find the same asserted in the prophecies of his contemporary, Hosea (vi. 7). It would naturally follow from this that, unless God gave up man altogether, he would enter into a new covenant with him. Accordingly, this new covenant is announced, both in Hosea (ii. 18—20) and in the later chapters of Isaiah, repeatedly (ch. xlii. 6; xlix. 8; liv. 10; lv. 3; lvi. 4, 6; lix. 21; lxi. 8). Having been thus set before the nation, it is further enlarged upon by Jeremiah (xxxi. 31—33; xxxii. 40; l. 5) and Ezekiel (xvi. 60—62; xxxiv. 25; xxxvii. 26—28). Almost all commentators allow that the Christian covenant is intended—that "new covenant" (Heb. ix. 15) under which man obtains pardon and salvation through the Mediatorship of Christ. Even **the sure mercies of David.** The "sure mercies of David" are the loving and merciful promises which God made to him. These included the promise that the Messiah should come of his seed, and sit on his throne, and establish an everlasting kingdom (Ps. lxxxix. 2—5, 19—37), and triumph over death and hell (Ps. xvi. 9, 10), and give peace and happiness to Israel (Ps. cxxxii. 15—18). The promises made to David, rightly understood, involve all the essential points of the Christian covenant.

Ver. 4.—**Behold, I have given him for a witness.** By ordinary rules of grammar, the pronoun "him" should refer to David; and

so the passage is understood by Gesenius, Maurer, Hitzig, Ewald, Knobel, Delitzsch, and Mr. Cheyne. But, as Isaiah frequently sets aside ordinary grammatical rules, and as the position to the person here spoken of seems too high for the historical David, a large number of commentators, including Vitringa, Michaelis, Dathe, Rosenmüller, Umbreit, and Dr. Kay, consider that the Messiah is intended. It is certainly difficult to see how the historical David could be, at this time and in the future, a "leader and commander to the peoples" who were about to flock into the Messianic kingdom. **A witness . . . a leader and commander.** Christ was all these. He "came to bear witness to the truth" (John xviii. 37), and "before Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. vi. 13). He "feeds and leads" his people (Rev. vii. 17), and is the "Commander" under whose banner they serve (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). What he is to his people, he is also to the "peoples" generally; for they have been called into his kingdom. **People . . . people**; rather, *peoples*.

Ver. 5.—**Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not** (comp. Ps. xviii. 43). The object of address in this verse appears to be the Messiah. He, at his coming, will "call" into his kingdom "a nation," or rather, "people," with whom he has had no covenant hitherto; and they will readily and gladly obey the call. Thus God's kingdom will be enlarged, and Israel's glory will be increased, **Because of the Lord . . . for he hath glorified thee.** The great cause of the attraction will be the "glory" which God the Father has bestowed upon his Son, by raising him from the dead, and exalting him to a seat at his right hand in heaven (Acts ii. 32—35; iii. 13—15).

Ver. 6.—**Seek ye the Lord.** Again the strain changes. The people are once more addressed, but in a tone of reproach. Israel must "seek the Lord" without delay, or the opportunity will be past; God will have withdrawn himself from them. He "will not alway be chiding, neither keepeth he his anger for ever" (Ps. ciii. 9).

Ver. 7.—**Let the wicked forsake his way**; *i.e.* his mode of life. A general promise of forgiveness of sin upon repentance and amendment of life was first given to Israel through Solomon (2 Chron. vii. 14). The doctrine is largely preached by the prophets; but is nowhere more distinctly and emphatically laid down than in this place. God's will is to "multiply pardon," if man will only turn to him.

Vers. 8—13.—A FRESH ASSURANCE OF DELIVERANCE FROM BABYLON. Man can scarcely conceive of the deliverance which God designs; but God's thoughts are not as man's (vers. 8, 9). God's word, once pronounced, is potent to effect its purpose (vers. 10, 11). Deliverance from Babylon, having been promised, will take place, and will be accompanied by all manner of spiritual blessings (vers. 12, 13).

Vers. 8, 9.—**My thoughts are not your thoughts.** Though man is made in God's image (Gen. i. 27), yet the nature of God in every way infinitely transcends that of man. Both the thoughts and the acts of God surpass man's understanding. Men find it hard to pardon those who have offended them; God can pardon, and "pardon abundantly." Men cannot conceive of coming changes, when they pass certain limits. God knows assuredly what changes are approaching, since they are his doing.

Ver. 10.—**As the rain . . . and the snow.** The rain and the snow are God's ministers (Ps. cxlviii. 8), and go forth from him, just as his word does. They have an appointed work to do, and do not return to him, whose ministers they are, until they have done it. It is best to translate, with Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, except it hath watered the earth," etc. The writer is, apparently, aware, as the writer of Ecclesiastes is, that the water which falls from heaven in the shape of rain does return thither again in the shape of vapour (see Eccles. i. 7).

Ver. 11.—**So shall my word be.** God's word is creative. With the utterance the result is achieved. Hence the sublime passage, which even heathenism could admire (Longin., 'De Sublim.,' § 9), "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. i. 3). Hence, too, the more general statement, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. xxxiii. 6; comp. Ps. cxlviii. 5). **But it shall accomplish**; rather, *unless it has accomplished*. There is a mixture of two constructions, "It shall not return void," and "It shall not return unless it has accomplished," etc. **It shall prosper.** Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God has a prosperous course. It is endued with life from God, and (as Delitzsch says) "runs like a swift messenger through nature and the world of man, there to melt the ice, as it were, and here to heal and to save; and it does not return from its course till it has given effect to the will of the Sender." The special "word" which the prophet has here in mind is the promise, so frequently given, of deliverance from Babylon and return in peace and joy to Palestine. But he carries his teaching beyond the immediate occasion, for the benefit of the people of God in all ages.

Ver. 12.—**Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace** (comp. ch. xxxv. 10; xl. 9—11; xliii. 3—6, 19—21, etc.). A strong contrast is frequently drawn between the exodus from Babylon and that from Egypt. On the former occasion all was hurry, alarm, disquiet, danger. The later exodus will be accompanied with "peace" and "joy" (see ch. li. 9—16, etc.). (For the fulfilment, see Ezra i., ii., and vii., viii.) **The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.** All nature shall rejoice at your deliverance, especially the noblest and the grandest parts of nature—"the mountains and the hills." Isaiah's admiration of mountains continually reveals itself throughout the work (ch. v. 25; xiii. 2, 4; xiv. 25; xxii. 5; xxx. 17, 25; xxxiv. 3; xl. 4, 9, 12; xlii. 11, 15, etc.). It is quite in his manner to speak of nature as bursting forth into singing (ch. xxxv. 2; xliv. 23; xlix. 13). **All the trees of the field shall clap their hands.** The metaphor is not found elsewhere in Isaiah, but appears in Ps. xcviii. 8.

Ver. 13.—**Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.** "Briars and thorns" were to overgrow the unfruitful vineyard, according to ch. v. 6; and to cover the land of God's people, according to ch. xxxii. 13. This would be literally the case to a large extent, while the land was allowed to lie waste. The literal meaning is not, however, the whole meaning, or even the main meaning, here. "Briars and thorns" represent a general state of wretchedness and sin. The "fir" and "myrtle" represent a happy external condition of life, in which men "do righteously." **It shall be to the Lord for a name.** This "regenerated creation" will show forth the glory of God to mankind at large, and "get him a name" among them (comp. ch. lxiii. 12; Jer. xiii. 11). **For an everlasting sign.** It will also be to God himself an enduring sign of the covenant of peace which he has made with his people, not to hide his face from them any more, but to have mercy on them "with everlasting kindness" (ch. liv. 7—10).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The earthly objects of desire do not satisfy; the heavenly objects not only satisfy, but delight.* Man is so constituted as to desire a great variety of objects, often with extreme eagerness, but rarely to find in these objects, when they are attained, the satisfaction for which he looked. "Man never *is*, but always *to be*, blest," says one of our poets; and the fact is so nearly universal, that some tell us it is the pursuit of an object, not its attainment that gives us pleasure. Manifestly, the child's objects do not satisfy the boy, or the boy's the man; nor do the man's objects at his entrance on the struggle of life generally appear very desirable as he nears the close. Most men's history is a long series of disappointments. The boy desires freedom from restraint, and to have his time at his own disposal; but no sooner does he obtain his wish than time hangs heavy on his hands, and he does not know what to do with it. The best-loved amusement does not please for long—the pleasures of eating and drinking pall; drunkenness and excess are found to have attached to them an overplus of painful sensations; the praise of men, distinction, fame, when they have been enjoyed for a short time, appear worthless; wealth, comfort, ease, equally fail to satisfy. Men labour, as a general rule, during the greater part of their lives, "for that which satisfieth not." Only a fortunate few learn early to set their affections on objects of a different character. Heavenly objects are satisfying. He that drinks of that water of life which Christ supplies, thirsts no more (John iv. 14). The heavenly things do not pass away—they remain. The water that Christ gives us becomes, in us, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). God's favourable regard, God's peace, God's blessing, are eternally objects of desire, and their possession is happiness. He who has them needs nothing more, desires nothing more, finds them sufficient for him. Nor is his state one of mere passive acquiescence—his "soul is delighted with fatness" (ver. 2). He "enters into the joy of his Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21).

Ver. 11.—*The vital force of the Word of God.* There is a strange force in every utterance of God. In the account of creation given in Genesis we find, not only light, but all the other portions of the universe which it pleased God to make, created by an utterance—a word (see Gen. i. 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26). God said, "Let there be," and at once there was. "He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. cxlviii. 5). So the Son of God, when upon earth, gave life with a word (John xi. 43, 44), and destroyed it

with a word (Matt. xxi. 19); with a word cast out devils (Mark ix. 25, 26), healed diseases (Matt. xii. 13), calmed the tempest (Mark iv. 39), caused his enemies to "fall to the ground" (John xviii. 6). Isaiah, in the present place, declares three things of God's Word.

I. GOD'S WORD DOES NOT RETURN TO HIM VOID. His Word accomplishes itself. It is "sent forth," whether upon earth or in the heavenly sphere; and in either case "runneth very swiftly" (Ps. cxlvii. 15). In no case does it "return to him void." It has always an object, an end; and it would contradict the omnipotence of God that that end should be in no way advanced by a means which God made use of in order to advance it.

II. GOD'S WORD ACCOMPLISHES THAT WHICH GOD PLEASES THAT IT SHOULD ACCOMPLISH. God's Word often does not accomplish all that we might have expected from it. His offer of salvation freely to all does not effect universal salvation. His call of individuals is disobeyed by numbers of those who hear it. Yet always his Word accomplishes something; and that "something" is what he designed it to accomplish. He "knows the end from the beginning," and is not disappointed, even when the results are most scanty.

III. GOD'S WORD, IN EVERY CASE, PROSPERS IN RESPECT OF THE END WHERETO HE SENDS IT. Every work that God takes in hand "prospers" more or less. The end aimed at is often quite other from that which we should have imagined; and what seems to us failure is only failure from our point of view, not from the Divine standpoint. God cannot fail to accomplish any end that he really proposes to himself. Every word that proceeds from his mouth has an end, but that end is known only to him; and it may often be that he alone knows of its accomplishment. Its accomplishment is always, with respect to the intention, full, complete, such as satisfies him.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The Messianic blessings.* I. THE INVITATION. "Ho!" A cry arousing attention (ch. i. 4) or expressing pity (ch. xvii. 12). 1. It is addressed to *thirsty* ones. The figure occurs in ch. xliv. 3 also. What more powerful figure can there be for *desire*, and for the *pain of unsatisfied desire*? It is especially Oriental. It brings up the image of the hot, sandy waste, and by contrast that of the cool, bubbling fountain. Hunger and thirst are the "eldest of the passions," and it may be added, in a sense, the youngest; for age cannot still them, nor constant satisfaction take off their edge. They are daily, they are recurrent, they are the expression of life itself. Hence they may well symbolize the *ardent desire for salvation* (cf. John vii. 37; Ps. xlii. 2; lxiii. 1; cxliii. 6). And what can better represent salvation than water—the well that springs up into everlasting life? Waters, floods, overflowing streams, or copious showers, are often used to denote abundant blessings from God, especially blessings under the rule of the Messiah (ch. xxxv. 6; xliii. 20; xliv. 3). 2. It is addressed to *each and all.* The invitation is bounded only by the thirst—the felt need. Not the rich, the noble, the great; not the select and the few; but those who partake of a common want, and are capable of a common satisfaction. "It proves that *provision has been made for all.* Can God invite to a salvation which has not been provided? Can he ask a man to partake of a banquet which has no existence? Can he ask a man to drink of waters when there are none? Can he tantalize the hopes and mock the miseries of men by inviting them to enter a heaven where they would be unwelcome, or to dwell in mansions which have never been provided?" (cf. Matt. ix. 28; Mark xvi. 15; John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17). It is addressed especially to the *poor.* "No man can excuse himself for not being a Christian because he is poor; no man who is rich can boast that he has bought salvation."

II. THE BLESSINGS DESCRIBED. "Buy." The word is properly used of grain. "Its use here shows that the food referred to can be called equally well 'bread' or 'wine and milk,' *i.e.* it belongs to the supernatural order of things" (Cheyne). And the buying is to be understood spiritually. The blessings are only to be obtained for "that which is not money and not a price." It is faith, or the hearing of the inner ear (ver. 3), which is meant. In the wine we may find a *symbol of gladness* (Judg. ix. 13; 2 Sam.

xiii. 28; Ps. civ. 15). The blessings of salvation cheer men amidst their sorrows; and one of the firstfruits of the Spirit is joy. Milk, again, is the symbol of *nourishment* (Deut. xxxii. 14; Judg. iv. 1; v. 25; John vii. 22; 1 Cor. ix. 7). It is joined with "wine" and with "honey" in Cant. iv. 11; v. 1. These blessings are *rich and satisfying as compared with the pleasures of the world.* The latter may be emphatically described as *not-bread*—less satisfying. Happiness is our being's aim. But men seek it in erroneous ways. Bread is the support of life, and stands as the symbol of all that conduces to support life in the spiritual sense. "In ambition, vanity, and vice, men are as disappointed as he who should spend his money and procure nothing that would sustain life." Men toil for that which defeats their aim, because it does *not* satisfy. The blossom of pleasure "goes up as dust;" the fruits are those of the Dead Sea, "turning to ashes on the lips." The *desire* of the human soul is as insatiable as the grave. Where is the man who has been satisfied with ambition? Alexander wept on the throne of the world, and Charles V. came down from the throne to private life, because he had not found royalty to satisfy the soul. In one respect we are all like Alexander—our happiness is disproportioned to our appetites. Nature seems scanty, and, though we have never so much, we still long for something or other more. But to those who hearken to God, there is promised a perfect *luxuriation* (ch. lxvi. 11) in good things. "Fatness" stands for the richest food (Gen. xxvii. 28—39; Job xxxvi. 16; Ps. lxv. 11), and hence for the *abundance* of blessing flowing from the favour of God (Ps. xxxvi. 9; lxiii. 5). "Man seems as boundless in his desires as God in his Being: and therefore nothing but God can satisfy him." All else is "love lost" —is part of "the great lie or cheat that overspreads the world."

III. THE EVERLASTING COVENANT. Mention of it is made seven times in Isaiah. The idea of the original covenant, broken by Israel and renewed by Jehovah, is specially characteristic of Jeremiah (xxxi. 31—33; xxxii. 40; l. 5). The loving-kindnesses shown to David by Jehovah are meant (cf. ch. lxiii. 7; Ps. lxxxix. 49; cvii. 43; Lam. iii. 22). "David is probably to be understood in a representative sense; he is radiant with the reflected light and spirituality of the Messianic age." These loving-kindnesses are "unfailing" (Ps. lxxxix. 28). For Jehovah's word cannot be broken, and the reward of piety extends to the latest posterity (Exod. xx. 5, 6). David is termed a "witness to the people," apparently in the same representative sense. God, then, binds himself by solemn promises to be their God, their Protector, and their Friend. The promise was not to be revoked, was to remain in force for ever; and he would be their God to all eternity. Let them, then, hear, and their soul shall live. *Religion is life* (John vi. 33; v. 40; viii. 13; xx. 31; Rom. v. 17, 18; vi. 4; viii. 6; 1 John v. 12; Rev. ii. 7—10). *Hearing is the means whereby the soul is enlivened* (John vi. 45; v. 25; Acts ii. 37; Matt. xiii.).—J.

Vers. 6—13.—*Exhortations and assurance.* I. EXHORTATIONS. "Seek ye Jehovah." This is the beginning of a religious life—to seek for God, to inquire for his ways (Deut. iv. 29; Job v. 8; viii. 5; Ps. ix. 10; xiv. 2; xxvii. 8). "While he may be found" (Ps. xxxii. 6)—"in a time of finding." For a bitter "day" will come, when woe to his foes (ch. lxv. 6, 7)! It is hinted that a time will come when the offer will be withdrawn. "If a man will not do so simple a thing as *seek* for mercy, as ask for pardon, he *ought* to perish. The universe will approve the condemnation of such a man." "Who knows what a day may bring forth, and what may be the dangers of an hour's delay? This is most sure, that every particular repeated act of sin sets us one advance nearer to hell. Who can tell, while we go on our audacious course of sin, but God may swear in his wrath against us, and register our names in the black rolls of damnation? And then our condition is sealed and determined for ever." "Call upon him;" *i.e.* implore his mercy (Joel ii. 32; Rom. x. 13). How easy the terms of salvation! how just the condemnation of the sinner who calls not on God, first for pardon, then for a share in the promises (Jer. xxix. 12—14)! God (according to the manner of man's thoughts) *seems* to be nearer at some times than at others to men. Some special influences are brought to bear; some facilities of salvation. "He comes *near* to us in the preaching of his Word, when it is borne home with power to the conscience; in his providence, when he strikes down a friend, and comes into the very circle where we move, or the very dwelling where we abide; when he lays his hand upon us in sick-

ness. And he is *near* to us by day and by night; in a revival of religion, or when a pious friend pleads with us, God is near to us then, and is calling us to his favour. These are favourable times for salvation—times which, if unimproved, return no more." "Let the ungodly forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts." To seek Jehovah must involve the renouncing of all other gods; the calling upon him, the cessation of prayer in heathen temples; and, with this, all the "thoughts," the habits and feelings, of impure heathen life. It is to renounce corruption and destruction for blessedness and peace, which are contained in the thoughts of Jehovah (Ps. xxxvi. 5, 6; Jer. xxix. 11). "He has plans for accomplishing his purposes which are different from ours, and he secures our welfare by schemes that cross our own. He disappoints our hopes, foils our expectations, crosses our designs, removes our property or our friends, and thwarts our purposes in life. He leads us in a path we had not intended, and secures our ultimate happiness in modes which we should not have thought of, and which are contrary to all our designs and desires."

II. ASSURANCE OF FUTURE FELICITY. 1. *The certainty.* God's purposes fulfil themselves. They are as certain as the law of gravitation, as the falling of rain and snow. In poetic religious thought these elements of nature are his angels (cf. Ps. cxlviii. 8; cii. 4). They fulfil his purpose in inanimate nature; so shall his Word fulfil his purpose in the moral world—it shall not return empty, nor until it has done its work. (On truth compared to rain or dew, see Deut. xxxii. 2; Ps. lxxii. 6; 2 Sam. xxiii. 4; ch. v. 6.) 2. *Its glory and joy.* The exode from Babylon is not only meant, but the glorious condition of Israel after the return. It is compared to the transition from the wilderness (the misery of the exile), with its monotonous dwarf shrubs, to a park of beautiful trees (ch. xli. 18, 19), in the midst of which Israel is to walk "in solemn troops and sweet societies" (so in ch. xxxv. 9). 3. *The sympathy of nature.* (For similar views, see ch. xiv. 8; xxxv. 1, 2, 10; xlii. 10, 11; xliv. 23. So in Virgil, 'Ecl.,' v. 62; and in Oriental poetry generally.) When the god Rama was going to the desert, it was said to him, "The trees will watch for you; they will say, 'He is come! he is come!' and the white flowers will clap their hands. The leaves as they shake will say, 'Come! come!' and the thorny places will be changed into gardens of flowers." A change will be produced in the moral condition of the world, as great as if the useless thorn should be succeeded by beautiful and useful trees. It is of the very soul of poetry that it hints and presages spiritual events which cannot be made clear to the senses nor certain to the understanding.—J.

Ver. 1.—*The soul's thirst satisfied.* "Ho, every one that thirsteth!" This is a Divine invitation, and as such shows us *the nature of God*, which is in itself a healing and a satisfying nature, finding expression in the incarnation and redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. THE AWAKENING SOUL. "Thirsteth." When the soul is quickened and feels new life, then is consciousness of need—need of God. New thirsts are sometimes awakened in *human nature*—thirsts for love and friendship; and in *the intellectual nature*, thirsts for knowledge and mental light. This is the highest thirst—*soul-thirst*—which God by his Spirit alone can satisfy.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SOUL. "Come ye." We must seek for friendship, seek for knowledge, and so we must be searchers after God. Finding Christ, we must also follow him, and come to the waters of forgiveness, of purity, and of immortal blessedness.

III. THE CHARITY OF GOD. "God *is* love." Amazing, free, boundless love. Having made provision for our salvation, God says, "All things are now ready; come." The marriage-banquet is open to us all. The spread table is God's own table, and we are to be receivers of his fulness of grace, "without money and without price."—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*Foolish investments.* "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" This is man's great misery, that he has the "deceived heart" which leads him to false investments.

I. SOUL-SATISFACTION. The soul is made for God, and there is no bread that will satisfy man but God himself. "I am the living Bread," says Christ. Bread of fortune, bread of gold, bread of æsthetic beauty, bread of worldly honour,—these only satisfy the

outward man, and leave "the hidden man of the heart" hungry and starven. Yet men spend their money—that is, their time, strength, enthusiasm, and energy—on sham bread.

II. SOUL-ATTENTION. "Hearken diligently unto me." For God has spoken—in nature, in conscience, by the prophets and by his own Son, the express Image of his Person. 1. *God, who made the soul, knows all its mysterious depths and needs.* 2. *God, who redeemed the soul, knows that without pardon man knows no peace, and without life in God he knows no blessedness.* The "delights" of a godly man attest the change in his nature—he "joys in God, by whom he has received the atonement." —W. M. S.

Ver. 5.—*Man's true glory.* "The Holy One of Israel, he hath glorified thee." We need to fill the word "glory," which often has such false renderings, with its true and ancient meaning.

I. TRUE RELIGION GLORIFIES MAN. He cannot be really glorified by titles or splendours of fame, but only by beauty and majesty of being. God says, "I will make *a man* as the gold of Ophir." Man is only truly glorified as he fulfils the great end of his being, which is to be in his moral nature like God.

II. THE HOLY ONE ACCOMPLISHES THIS. Christ took our manhood up into God. He redeemed body, soul, and spirit; so that all parts of our complex nature might be complete in all the will of God. 1. *Christ glorified the body.* He became *man*, not taking the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. Thus he shows us how to live a heavenly life in an earthly citizenship. False philosophies of religions had, in the East, put—as the Manichæans did—disdain on the body. 2. *Christ glorified man's estate.* He lived in humble estate, and showed that the poorest framework might enclose a Divine picture of character. 3. *Christ glorified the soul.* He lifted man *as man* above all grandeur of mere outward estate and honour, and propounded this great question, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his *own life?*" That life was to be supreme in grandeur as a God-like life. "And the glory which thou gavest me," said our Saviour, "I have given them."—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The provision which cannot be purchased.* In a country like our own we hardly know what thirst means. Few Englishmen have suffered from intense thirst. A man must live or travel in other latitudes to be exposed to this evil. But judging from the accounts of those who have suffered, we conclude that it is almost, if not absolutely, the severest and most intolerable sensation to which "flesh is heir." It may very well be taken as a picture of—

I. THE UNSATISFIED CRAVING OF THE HUMAN SOUL. The hunger and thirst of the human heart must necessarily be more serious by far than the cravings of the body; for they are the longing, the yearning, the keen and imperious demand of our higher and truer self. Man thirsts after God. Spite of all the downward tendencies, the earthward inclinations, the sensuous leanings of our human nature, it remains true that there is a profound, ineradicable crying of our soul after the living God (see Ps. xlii. 1; lxiii. 1). 1. The intelligence of man thirsts for the ultimate Cause of all things. 2. The immortal spirit which man (not *has*, but) *is*, thirsts for the satisfying joy which is only found in his fellowship and his service. 3. The guilty heart of man thirsts for a thorough reconciliation with him. Man knows that he has sinned, that he is condemned, that his guilt stands as an impassable barrier between him and his God, and he earnestly longs to be forgiven and restored, so that he may again lift up his face to his Divine Father in filial confidence and joy. But he asks—*How?* "How shall man be just with God?" (Job ix. 2). "Wherewith shall we come before the Lord?" (Micah vi. 6, 7). Beneath all the louder cries that fill the air, deep in the soul of man is the demand—What shall we do that we may live before God and with him? There can be no final rest in our heart until this question has been answered in our experience.

II. THE PRECIOUS PROVISION WHICH IS OFFERED US. In the truth which God has revealed in his Word, and more particularly in that Son of God who is himself the great Revelation of the Father, we have that which satisfies our spiritual need. 1. It is that which *slakes our spiritual thirst.* "Come ye to the waters." Water relieves and removes thirst as nothing else will. The forgiveness, the restoration, the reinstatement which

is in Jesus Christ perfectly satisfies the intense craving of the soul. It brings a surpassing, transcendent peace. 2. It is that which *nourishes* the soul in all *spiritual strength*. "Buy . . . milk." 3. It is that which *gladdens* it with true and abiding *joy*. "Buy wine."

III. THE PRICELESSNESS OF THIS DIVINE PROVISION. The prophet may indeed say, "Buy;" for these provisions are worth all the wealth that the most opulent can offer. But he has to add, "without money and without price;" for these blessings cannot be earned or purchased by us. God cannot *sell* his love, his mercy, his restoration of erring children. He does not meet us on the ground on which a creditor meets his debtors. He is, indeed, a Divine Creditor; we owe him ten thousand talents of reverence and gratitude and service we have never paid. But he does not demand of us some pence in the pound before he certifies that we are free. We frankly confess that we have nothing to pay, and he "frankly forgives us all" (Luke vii. 42). God offers us his redeeming love, everlasting life, as the gift of his grace—a glorious gift, freely offered on his part, and to be gladly accepted on ours. He necessarily imposes conditions; but these are open to every soul, and none need reject them; they are the turning away of our hearts from sin, and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Divine Saviour and Lord.—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Wasted strength.* It has often been remarked of the criminal population that, if they would only give to honest and honourable pursuits the same patient attention, the same untiring energy, the same keen ingenuity, which they now devote to illegal schemes, they would soon rise to competence and honour. Perhaps the essence of this great mistake may be found in those who are very far removed from the criminal class; there are many in all vocations and positions of life who are wasting their strength on that which is unprofitable, who might be effecting great things for others or for themselves if they would only "labour for that which satisfies." This principle will apply to—

I. THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE. What immense pains were taken by the scribes of our Lord's time in mastering the minute points of Old Testament Scripture! It ended in a barren and guilty formalism which called down the severest condemnations that came from the lips of Christ. If they had only spent their strength on gaining the heavenly wisdom with which those sacred pages are enriched, they would have been much better men, and would have received the Messiah in a very different spirit. We, too, may expend a vast amount of unprofitable labour on the Scriptures, trying to secure their sanction for our fancies or foibles, and leave untouched their springs of truth and power and life.

II. THE WORK IN THE MASTER'S VINEYARD. We shall certainly not include in wasted strength or unsatisfying labour the energy spent in laying the foundation, although the workman may not live to see the walls of the building rise; this may be the most honourable, remunerative, profoundly satisfying work of a man's life: this, indeed, was the work of the Saviour of mankind. But we shall include: 1. Labour which is merely superficial, which the wind of changing circumstance soon "driveth away." 2. The deliverance of one-sided truth—a statement of doctrine which is so partial as to be practically false. This must issue in disappointment; it is building of "wood, hay, and stubble," which will be burned. 3. Irreverent activity, on which the blessing of God is not sought, and on which, consequently, it does not descend.

III. THE PURSUIT OF PERSONAL WELL-BEING. 1. All men seek happiness; they give freely of their various resources to obtain it—money, strength, ingenuity, patience; they endure hardship and even suffering in order to secure it. 2. A very large proportion of mankind is bitterly disappointed. What promised to be bread turns out to be chaff; what looked like satisfaction in the distance proves to be weariness and heartache in experience. 3. The disappointment is due to one fundamental mistake—*they adopt a false method.* They risk everything on some one object—wealth, fame, power, pleasure, friendship—which either eludes their grasp or proves unsatisfying and vain. They should become the active servants of God, listening when he speaks, accepting what he offers, going whither he directs. In the earnest, faithful service of a Divine Saviour is happiness of the truest kind—blessedness, well-being, life; the pure, lasting satisfaction of the soul.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The leadership of Christ.* These words, primarily applicable to David, are true of that Son of David whose course was to be so different, but whose work was to be so much deeper and greater than that of the King of Israel. David was a man who showed himself possessed of all the essential qualities of a great leader of men. He had the power of attaching them to his own person with a strong affection; he shared their hardships and their perils; he impressed on them his own principles and habits; he lifted them up with his own elevation. In these respects, but with a depth and fulness to which the earthly monarch can lay no claim at all, Jesus Christ is the great "Leader to the people" of God.

I. HE ATTACHES US TO HIMSELF. The devotion of his soldiers to Napoleon Bonaparte was extraordinary; but that great commander, with all his egotism, acknowledged that this was nothing compared with the devotion of Christian men to the Person of Jesus Christ. The pity with which he pitied us in our low estate, the tender interest with which he has sought and rescued us, the shame and the sorrow which he bore for us, the death he died for us, the patient love with which he has been loving us,—all this will well account for the fact that, as no king, or general, or statesman has ever done before, Jesus Christ has shown himself the Leader of men by attaching them to his Person with a passionate and unwavering devotion.

II. HE HAS SHARED OUR HARDSHIPS AND OUR SUFFERINGS. He does not bid us go the way he went not himself.

"He leads us through no darker rooms
Than he went through before."

He asks us to drink of his cup, but it is only to taste that bitter draught which he himself drained even to the dregs. Whether it be bodily pain or spiritual distress; whether it be suffering, or poverty, or loneliness, or disappointment, or desertion, or shame, or death,—Christ has himself endured darker and sadder trials than any he calls us to encounter.

III. HE CONSTRAINS US TO LIVE HIS OWN LIFE. He not only demands of us that our minds shall be possessed with his own principles, and that our lives shall illustrate them, but he *has the power of constraining us* to think as he thought, to feel as he felt, to do as he did, to be what he was. If this purpose of his is not accomplished or is not being wrought in us, then are we not his "disciples indeed."

IV. HE SHARES WITH US HIS OWN EXALTATION. If we bear his cross, we shall sit down with him on his throne. To us all he says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom." If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.—C.

Ver. 6.—*God's especial nearness.* It is one of the familiar Scripture truths, open even to the little child, that God is always near to us; and that there is no time we can think of when he may not be found by the humble, believing heart. But there are times when he is *comparatively near*, and when, if we are wise, we shall go to him in the spirit of full self-surrender, shall enter the kingdom of his grace, and secure his everlasting favour.

I. THE PERIOD OF YOUTH; when the mind is open, the conscience tender, the soul responsive.

II. THE DAY OF VISITATION; when the stricken and wounded heart wants a Divine Healer, and can find none but in him who binds up the broken heart and heals its wounds.

III. THE TIME OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE; when we listen to the minister, read the book, have fellowship with the friend whose true and earnest voice has an unusual power to penetrate to the secret places of our soul.

IV. THE HOUR OF DIRECT DIVINE CONTACT; when God lays his hand upon us, touches the springs of our sacred thought, reveals to us our sinfulness and our need, awakens us to the seriousness of our life and the nearness of eternity, and calls us to return unto himself. *Wise* is it beyond all earthly wisdom then to hearken and obey, to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near; *foolish* is it beyond all other folly to turn a deaf ear or to show a disobedient spirit then; for God may never again come so near to our souls—may never again be so readily found by our human spirits; the distance between us and our Saviour may be continually

enlarging, until some great gulf of sin or hard-heartedness separate us from his side and from his service evermore.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Distance—return—welcome.* Few more gracious words than these can be found in Scripture: they are of those which the world would not willingly let die; whole libraries could be better spared from human literature than this single verse. We may express the thoughts it offers to us by four simple propositions.

I. SIN MEANS SEPARATION—the separation of the soul from its Creator. The distance we can calculate in miles or in degrees is nothing to that which divides one spirit from another; it is nothing to that which separates the erring, guilty soul of man from the Holy Spirit of the living God. We may be in the same room with another of our race or even of our family, and yet feel further apart than if many leagues of ocean came between us. We are always near to him who is everywhere, and yet our ingratitude, our unworthiness, our guilt, may compel us to feel terribly far off from him.

II. REPENTANCE MEANS RETURN—the abandonment by the sinful soul of its evil way, and its return to the righteous God whom it has forsaken. It signifies much more than a change of creed and of profession; or than a passing emotion of sorrow, however violent the feeling may be; or than an alteration in outward habit. It signifies: 1. *The aversion of the heart* from the thought and love of evil. "Let the unrighteous man forsake his [evil] thoughts." 2. *The consequent change of the habit of life.* "Let the wicked forsake his way." 3. *The return of the soul to God.* The man who has neglected, forsaken, disregarded, and disobeyed God, coming back in penitent thought and with the language of confession on his lips to the Father from whom he has wandered.

III. THE WAY BACK IS OPEN. Can the sinner be forgiven? Is the way clear? Are there not insuperable obstacles in the way—grievous transgressions of Law, accumulated guilt, darkening and deepening iniquity? How can all this be removed from the path of reconciliation? The answer is in the gospel statement: "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "He is the Propitiation for . . . the sins of the whole world."

IV. THE WELCOME HOME IS SURE. There is an assurance, here as elsewhere, which is "doubly sure." The mercy of God is not only enough for our necessities, it is far more than enough. It is not only a lake, it is a deep and wide sea; it is not merely a hill, it is an overtowering mountain; there are not only riches, there are exceeding riches, unsearchable riches of grace; on the repentant and believing sinner God will not only have mercy, he will *abundantly* pardon him; the returning prodigal will not merely be taken in when he arrives; the Father will run to meet him, and lavish upon him all possible proofs of his parental love.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The human and the Divine.* Man was made in the image of God, and once bore his likeness; then his spirit was like that of the Spirit of God. Under the debasing influences of sin he has become utterly unlike his Maker, and, instead of being compared with him, he is placed in sad and painful contrast with his heavenly Father. "My thoughts are *not* your thoughts," etc.

I. THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMAN. 1. The spirit of man is *selfish.* Not that he is incapable of generosity, but the prevailing and penetrating spirit which runs through his acts and his institutions is that of self-love, self-interest. What will it profit *me?* What shall *I* gain by it? How will it affect *my* interests? These are the questions which come up from the depths of the human heart, and are perpetually recurring. 2. The spirit of man is *vindictive.* Men hate their enemies; they wish ill to those who have in any way done them an injury. Men are secretly if not openly glad when any harm happens to those who have successfully opposed them, or to those who have outstripped them in the race, or to those whose material interests clash with theirs, or to those who have rebuked and shamed them, or to those whom they have wronged and thus made their enemies. Their thoughts are vindictive and malignant, and their ways answer to their thoughts. By pronounced hostility, or by artful intrigue, or by a criminal silence and inaction, they further the end for which they look,—the discomfiture of their fellows.

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE DIVINE. 1. The Spirit of God is *beneficent.* God lives to bless—to communicate life, love, beauty, joy, throughout his universe. That Son of

man who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" perfectly represented the Spirit of the Father, who occupies his eternity and expends his omniscience in doing good to all his creation. 2. The Spirit of God is *magnanimous*. God delights not to give pain or to send sorrow to those who have offended him; that is his "strange work." He *delights to pardon*. He "abundantly pardons." He receives back and reinstates his penitent children with abounding joy. His mercy, his grace, is inexhaustible—it is an overarching sky with no horizon-line; it is a sea without a bottom or a shore.

III. THE DIVINE OFFER. So great, so surpassing, so all-sufficient, is the magnanimity of God that we may cast ourselves on his mercy with the utmost confidence. "Iniquities may prevail against *us*," but the pardoning grace of God will prevail against *them*.

IV. THE HUMAN ASPIRATION. Jesus Christ summons us to rise from the level of the human to the height of the Divine; to breathe his spirit of forgiveness, to live his life of love, to move on the noble and lofty plane of a sustained magnanimity, "that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven;" that we may "be perfect as he is perfect."—C.

Vers. 10—13.—*The fruitfulness of sacred truth*. It may be said that the rain and the snow do, in fact, return to the heavens whence they came, drawn up by the sun as it shines on sea and lake, on stream and river, everywhere. But *not until they have done the work for which they came*, not until they have "accomplished that which God pleases," until they have prospered in the purpose for which he sent them; not until they have fertilized the soil, and made it bring forth its precious fruits. The vast amount of rainfall which the earth receives during every year renders incalculable service before it returns to the skies. So also does all the outpouring of Divine truth on the mind and heart of men. There may be times when the human spokesman may question this—when he may have grave misgivings as to its utility, when it may seem unprofitable and vain. But we have the strong assurance that God's Word "shall *not* return unto him void"—that the issue shall be one in which all surrounding nature may well take its part with jubilant acclaim (vers. 12, 13). The excellency of sacred truth will be seen if we regard—

I. OUR CONDITION IN ITS ABSENCE. 1. The *unproductiveness* of the human mind when thus untaught; the sad fact that men who are capable of the loftiest conceptions, the most ennobling convictions, the most elevating feelings and aspirations, live and die without cherishing any one of these, in blank and dreary ignorance. 2. The *noxious growths* which flourish: the errors, the superstitions, the dark and foul imaginations which defile the mind in which they spring up, and those also on whom these are acting.

II. THE BENIGNANT POWER WHICH IT EXERTS. 1. *The outward transformations* it works—great and happy reformations in the conduct, the career, the condition of individual men, of families, and of nations. 2. The *inward blessedness* it confers—peace, freedom, purity, love, joy, hope.

III. ITS OCCASIONAL, APPARENT FRUITLESSNESS. Even as the rain and the snow often fall on rock and sand and sea without seeming to produce any beneficent result, so does the truth of God, as preached, or taught, or printed, often seem to be unavailing; and there is discouragement, despondency, even despair, in the heart of the Christian worker. But we look at—

IV. ITS ACTUAL EFFICACY. 1. There is much of actual efficacy *which we can discover*—of *incidental* result, bringing strength and sanctity to those whose benefit is not sought; of *indirect* result; of *ultimate* result, being "found after many days." 2. There is more *which we take on trust*. God has ways of using material things which long escaped our notice, and doubtless many ways which still elude our observation. Has he not ways of using our spiritual efforts, of turning them to account, so that one day we shall find that his own Word *never* returns to him void—that it always prospers in the thing whereto it is sent? "He that goeth forth *weeping* . . . shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—C.

Ver. 1.—*Man's need and God's provision*. This well-known and much-used verse is the model of gospel invitations. "Ho!" as to persons at a distance; beyond the pale,

according to Jewish thought. "Wine," that cheers; "water," that refreshes; "milk," that nourishes. "Buy without money" impresses the *worth*, as well as the freeness, of the thing obtained.

I. THE CRY OF SOULS IS SO VARIED, THEY NEED LARGE AND COMPREHENSIVE INVITATIONS. So various, so large, so intense, so immediate, so urgent. 1. Think of the cry of creation to God, rising day and night for precise blessings, from the world of vegetable and animal life. 2. Then think of the cry of man's bodily nature. How complex are its demands if it is to be kept in vigour! But souls are altogether more wonderful, more mysterious, than bodies, and body-needs do but suggest and illustrate *soul*-needs. What is the cry of all souls? What is the cry of some souls? It is impossible to press the cries of souls into any one mould. There is difference between men's cry and women's cry; between the cry of the shallow and of the thoughtful; between the cry of the educated and uneducated; between the cry of the moral and the profligate. And yet there is one word in which the deep want of all men everywhere can be expressed—they want *God*, though so many do not know his Name, or cannot articulate it. If we carefully distinguish the cries of men, we may say, (1) some cry for light amid the dark perplexities of our time; (2) some for guidance amid difficulties; (3) some for earnestness amid frivolities; (4) some for pardon under pressure of the sense of sin; (5) some for truth amid the allurements of error; and (6) some for rest from the weariness of toil and failure; and (7) some for comfort under woes that press heavily. What a cry that must be which enters into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth!

II. NONE BUT GOD CAN MAKE INVITATIONS LARGE ENOUGH, AND VARIED ENOUGH, TO MEET THE CRIES. The cry for happiness is too big for the world to meet; the cry for truth is beyond all the skill of science to satisfy. "The fountains of this earth are dried, and I am thirsty still." 1. Human conscience cries for pardon. In Christ is proclaimed "forgiveness of sins." 2. Human affection cries for love. It may spend its uttermost and best on Christ, and be fully satisfied with his response. 3. Human intellect cries for truth. Jesus, by his Spirit, leads into all truth. 4. Human will cries for a supreme authority. And Christ is Lord. For every want we can translate into a cry, Christ is the Supply. For every want we can feel, but cannot translate into a cry, Christ is still the infinitely adapted and all-satisfying Supply.—R. T.

Ver. 1.—*The thirst of the soul quenched.* Compare the assurances and invitations of Christ, in John iv. 13, 14; vi. 35; vii. 37, 38. It is singular to note that the prophet chose a form of speech very common in the East. In Jerusalem the shopkeepers cry to the passers-by, "Ho, every one that hath money, let him come and buy!" "Ho, such a one, come and buy!" They indeed expect to get full value, though they offer for nothing. God intends a free and sovereign gift.

I. THIRST. A figure for unresting desire, setting us upon pursuit and effort. Thirsting differs from hungering in this—the hungering man will quietly lie down and die; the thirsting man will spend himself in mad strivings. Illustrate from desert scenes. So thirsting is the more impressive figure of a man's condition. Everybody is eagerly wanting something. Of this there are both painful and pleasing signs. Illustrate how this thirst takes special religious forms at special times, as in opening youth, seasons of sickness, scenes of revival, death of first friend, as in cases of Luther and Norman Macleod. This restless soul-thirsting is (1) man's suffering; (2) man's glory; (3) man's hope. He may satisfy the thirsting, but it would be a sign of soul-death simply to *lose* it. The thirst of the soul is ever for one satisfaction—it is thirst for *God*.

II. THIRSTING AGAIN. This is the result of all attempts to quench the thirst of the soul by anything earth can offer. There are lines upon which temporary supplies seem to come. Man offers "cups of cold water." 1. Thirst quenched for a time in worldly pleasure. Illustrate from the familiar picture, 'The Pursuit of Pleasure.' There never were such strivings for sense-gratification as there are now. Life makes a loud noise to drown the soul's cries. 2. Thirst quenched for a time in the externalities of religion. Satiated with pleasure, men sometimes turn to religion. Illustrate from experience of Ignatius Loyola. Also see confidence in holy wells and shrines. There is a fascination at first in ceremonial religion, but it soon palls. You can soon empty these cups, and then there is nothing for your thirsty soul when you come again.

III. THIRSTING NEVERMORE. Christ does not destroy the thirsting, but sets us down

close beside the living spring. And all the bitterness is gone, if the supply is close beside us, and we may drink when we please. Apply to the soul's *love*. The love of Christ is the satisfying response. To the soul's *trust*. The work of Christ is the satisfying response. To the soul's *ideal*. The Person of Christ is the satisfying response. To the soul's *anxiety about the future*. The promises of Christ are the satisfying response. The soul that has Christ has an upspringing well beside him; he lives close near to the waters of life.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Vain expenditure on things.* Comp. ch. xliv. 20, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside." A very striking illustration of unsatisfying food is given by the Rev. H. Macmillan. "A strange plant, called the nardoo, grows in the deserts of Lento, Australia. Its seeds formed for months together almost the sole food of the party of explorers who, a few years ago, crossed the continent. When analyzed, the nardoo bread was ascertained to be destitute of certain nutritious elements indispensable to the support of a European, though an Australian savage might, for a while, find it beneficial as an alterative. And thus it happened that these poor, unfortunate Englishmen perished of starvation, even while feeding fully day by day upon food that served to satisfy their hunger." An old author, date 1600, says, "It is a thing that the Emperor Caligula is laughed at in all stories. There was a mighty navy provided, well manned and victualled, and every one expected that the whole country of Greece should have been invaded; and so it might have been; but the emperor had another design in hand, and employed his soldiers to gather a quantity of cockle-shells and pebble-stones, and so returned home again. Just such another voyage doth almost every man make here in this world, were the particulars but truly cast up." J. A. Alexander makes an important distinction. "Observe, too, that he does not seek to remedy the evils which arise from perverted and unsatisfied desire, by the extinction of the appetite itself—of that immortal, inextinguishable craving, which can only cease by annihilation or by full fruition. This, indeed, is a distinctive mark of true religion, as opposed to other systems. Since the evils under which the human race is groaning may be clearly traced to the inordinate indulgence of desires after happiness, under the influence of 'strong delusions' as to that which can afford it, we are not to wonder that when unassisted reason undertakes to do away with the effect, it should attempt the extirpation of the cause; and you will find, accordingly, that every system of religion or philosophy, distinct from Christianity, either indulges, under some disguise, that perversion of man's natural desire after happiness which makes him wretched, or affects to cure it by destroying the desire itself." "While one voice cries to the bewildered sinner, 'Cease to hunger, cease to thirst;' and another from an opposite direction bids him 'Eat and drink; for to-morrow we die;' the voice of God and of the gospel is, 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?'"

I. SOUL-HUNGER CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED WITH THINGS. It is easy to confuse the soul's hunger with the bodily cry for pleasure, the mental cry for knowledge, the society cry for place and wealth, or the æsthetic cry for the beautiful. Men readily enough mistake their own longings, their own unrest. There is much that we have not, and we think the craving is to get what others enjoy. Men need to have translated for them their own restlessness and desire. Augustine does it. "Man was made for God, and can find no rest till he finds rest in him." The hymn does it—

> "My heart is pained, nor can it be
> At rest till it finds rest in thee."

Things can never rest and satisfy souls. Angels cannot feed on man's bread. Things can satisfy some things in man—his taste, his passions, his sentiments—but not the *man himself*. They who have had the most of the good in things that this world can command have complained most deeply of the yawning and yearning of their unsatisfied souls. "If a man ask a fish, will ye give him a stone?" If a man wants love, what good is it to give him gold, or fame, or pleasure? The gains and honours and so-called "good" of this world are not only brief in their duration, but unsuited, in their very nature, even while they last, to satisfy the wants of an immortal spirit.

II. SOUL-HUNGER CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED IN A PERSON. Therefore Jesus said, "I am

the Bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." On Christ, as the Gift of God to us, our souls may "eat, and live for ever." There is in ver. 4 a first allusion to King David, but a further final allusion to Jesus. "He that *hath* the Son hath life." The points which may be illustrated and impressed are suggested in the following paragraph: "The prophet, speaking in the name of God, after calling men to come to him, to hear him that their souls may live, annexes to this gracious invitation the specific promises of a sure salvation—a salvation not contingent or fortuitous, but one provided by a gracious constitution on the part of God himself; a salvation promised and confirmed by oath; a covenant of mercy, eternal in its origin and everlasting in its stipulations, comprehending in its wonderful provisions the essential requisite of an atonement, a priest and sacrifice, an all-sufficient Saviour; not a Saviour whose performance of his office should be partial, or contingent, or uncertain from the change of person, but the one, the only Saviour—the same 'yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' the Son of God, the Son of man, the Son of David." Soul-rest in the living personal Saviour finds expression in the familiar verse—

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a Resting-place,
And he has made me glad."

R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The time for seeking after God.* Compare "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." After showing the *need* for seeking after God, and the *duty* of seeking, dwell on the appropriate *time* for the seeking, unfolding and illustrating two points.

I. THE TIME FOR SEEKING IS NOT FIXED BY OUR CONVENIENCE. Yet men constantly act as if it were. They assume that they can find God *when they please.* But such an idea proves that they neither know themselves nor God. 1. They do not know themselves; for a man is not at all sure of feeling the desire when he thinks he will and arranges to. If a man plays with his deeper emotions, and puts off responding to them until some unknown time, he has no security that the feelings will return. If a man resists good inclinations, he will find that he cannot get them when he would. 2. And they do not know God; for he can never permit man to play with his offers of mercy and willingness to accept. Rejected gifts, neglected gifts, cannot be still pressed on acceptance. It is inconceivable that God can ever wait on man's convenience. We must take advantage of God's time for seekers, for he can never recognize times that seekers are pleased to arrange for themselves.

II. THE TIME FOR SEEKING IS FIXED BY GOD'S INVITATIONS. It must be; for the gift is an absolutely sovereign and free gift, and the Giver must be allowed to find his own time and way. If salvation were a matter of purchase, we might expect it to be dependent on our good will. It is wholly a matter of grace, and so absolutely dependent on God's good will. Our Lord even said, "No man cometh unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." The general invitations of God stand in his Word; the precise and special invitations to individuals, in which we find our golden opportunities of salvation, are, in the text, called times when "God may be found," or when God is propitious towards us; and times when "God is near," or gives an impressive sense of his nearness. Such times may appear to us as (1) providences,—circumstances that arouse, awaken, humble us; or as (2) persuasions,—such as come through appeals of ministers, or the atmosphere of revival-times. Anything, everything, that brings to us the sense of God's *nearness* is an appropriate thing to set us hopefully seeking after salvation, eternal life, and heart-rest in God.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Man's preparations for receiving God's pardon.* Two things have to be clearly recognized, and harmoniously set together. 1. God's pardon and favour are absolutely *free and priceless*; they are sovereign gifts, based on no condition, won by no payment, responsive to no merit in us. He saves us purely for his "own Name's sake." 2. And yet there are *conditions* which those who receive the grace are reasonably required to be in, if they are to be recipients, and make right use of the grace received.

These conditions are absolutely necessary, and yet there are in no sense at all any merit, or price, on which the grace is obtained. The harmonizing of the two things is not difficult. When we bestow a gift we look for a proper recipiency in those who receive. It would be to waste our gifts to bestow them where there was no preparedness to use them rightly. In this verse the preparation takes a threefold form.

I. THERE MUST BE THE PUTTING AWAY OF ALL WRONG-DOING. It would be insult for a child to ask pardon of a father while he kept on doing the disobedient thing that grieved his father. Sincerity of desire for pardon is shown in separating ourselves from the sin. Sense of the evil of the act is indicated in resolutely putting it away. This is the first thing God looks for in all who seek him. Kept sin, always and everywhere, keeps off the "grace."

II. THERE MUST BE A CLEANSING OF THOUGHT AND HEART. The love of sinning must go, and the act of sinning must cease. In the view of God, sin is not merely some positive act done. The Heart-searcher knows that the act was but the expression of evil thought, biassed will, selfish purpose. And so a man is not ready for forgiveness until his thought is changed, and exactly that *changed thought* is what we put into the word "repentance." Reformation of life and repentance of heart must go together to make the proper recipient attitude.

III. THERE MUST BE A POSITIVE TURNING TOWARDS GOD. The difference between evangelical *repentance* and worldly *remorse* is that repentance draws us toward God in hope, and remorse drives us from God in despair. It is distinctly expected that man will make positive efforts; and therefore we find the plea, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." Bishop Wordsworth says, "In proclaiming God's loving promises, and the free offers of Divine grace, the prophet does not forget man's duties both in will and work." H. Ward Beecher gives the following illustration: "Every day, from my window, I see the gulls making circuits and beating against the north wind. Now they mount high above the masts of the vessels in the stream, and then suddenly drop to the water's edge, seeking to find some eddy unobstructed by the steady-blowing blast; till at length, abandoning their efforts, they turn and fly with the wind; and then how like a gleam of light do their white wings flash down the bay, faster than the eye can follow! So, when we cease to resist God's influences, and, turning towards him, our thought and feelings are upborne by the breath of the Spirit, how do they make such swift heavenward flight as no words can overtake!" When these three preparations indicate to God a readiness to receive his grace, then will that grace overflow, and he will "abundantly pardon."—R. T.

Vers. 8, 9.—*God is like yet unlike man.* We are made in his image. We are called to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect." The hope of the future is that we "shall be like him." And yet we must keep up the conviction that we are but faint copies of him, and he is altogether better than we, the Infinite that is ever high above us, at once our inspiration and our despair. Apply God's unlikeness to us especially in the matter of redemption.

I. GOD CAN FORGIVE. This man finds it hard to do.

II. GOD CAN RESTORE. This man cannot do.

III. GOD CAN BLESS, HOPING FOR NOTHING IN RETURN. Man never very certainly succeeds in doing anything save for pay (see Acts viii. 20).

IV. GOD CAN ABSOLUTELY KEEP HIS WORD OF PROMISE. Man is ever swift to promise, slow to perform. "The point of the comparison, in ver. 11, is that the predominance of fertility in the natural world, in spite of partial or apparent failures, is the pledge of a like triumph, in the long run, of the purposes of God for man's good over resistance. It does not exclude the partial, or even total, failure of many; it asserts that the saved are more than the lost." The betterness of God is the ground of our admiration, trust, and love; it is the incitement of a perpetual imitation. Perfection, for those who know God, is to be *like God.*—R. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Change and permanence in God's Word.* Dr. George Dana Boardman sees, in these verses, an unconscious anticipation of two great doctrines of modern science—the doctrine of convertibility of energies, or correlation of forces; and the doctrine of conservation of energy, or indestructibility of force. "We are now taught that heat,

light, electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity, etc., are modes of motion, and, as such, mutually interchangeable. And we are also taught that there is no evidence of any atom of matter having ever been annihilated. Disintegration is not annihilation."

I. GOD'S WORD IS CAPABLE OF ENDLESS TRANSFORMATIONS. God's truth, coming down like rain or snow from heaven, does not return to him void, but is transfigured into Christian character. Truth, like force, undergoes metamorphosis. For instance, the motion of enterprise glides into the heat of enthusiasm; the heat of enthusiasm into the light of influence; the light of influence into the magnetism of love, and so on. The history of Christianity itself, what is it but the history of the grace of God metamorphosed into various virtues?

II. GOD'S WORD IS INDESTRUCTIBLE. "What though rain falls on barren ledges? Not a drop is lost; for the rain trickles down into rills, the rills grow into brooks, the brooks swell into rivers, the rivers broaden into the sea, and the sea forms the international exchange of the world's commodities. What though snow mantles desolate deserts? Not a flake is a failure; for the snow melts, percolates the sands, feeds unseen springs, re-emerges as the bearded wheat of autumn." We may hopefully engage in the teaching and preaching of God's Word; for not one lesson can be really lost. —R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LVI.

Vers. 1—8.—AN EXHORTATION TO OBSERVE THE LAW, ESPECIALLY THE LAW OF THE SABBATH, COMBINED WITH PROMISES. There was much of the Law which it was impossible to observe during the Captivity. Sacrifice had ceased, the temple was destroyed, almost all the ceremonial law must have been suspended; even the command to do no work on the sabbath day cannot have been kept by a nation of slaves, whose masters would certainly not have permitted them to be idle one day in seven. Still, the spirit of the ordinance might be kept by devoting the day, so far as was possible, to religious observance, as to prayer and to meditation upon holy things. This is now enjoined on the captive Jews, with the promise of a blessing—a blessing in which even the most despised part of the nation, the proselytes and the eunuchs, might participate.

Ver. 1.—**Keep ye judgment, and do justice**; rather, *keep ye Law, and observe righteousness.* The exhortation is general, and has no special bearing on trials or law-courts. It is a call on the Jews, in their captivity, to keep, so far as was possible, the whole Law given on Sinai. **My salvation is near to come.** The nearer the time of deliverance approaches, the more faithful and exact ought Israel to be in life and conduct. God's "salvation" and his "righteousness" go hand-in-hand. It is as his righteous people, "a holy seed" (ch. vi. 10), that he is about to vindicate and rescue them. If they are no holier than others, why should he do more for them than for those others?

Ver. 2.—**That doeth this . . . that layeth hold on it**; *i.e.* that doeth according to the exhortation in ver. 1. **That keepeth the sabbath.** The prominent place assigned to this duty by the evangelical prophet is remarkable. We may observe, however, (1) that the spirit of obedience is better tested by a positive than by a moral ordinance; and (2) that as, probably, there could be little outward keeping of the sabbath by the captives, it would have had to be kept inwardly by spiritual exercises, by silent prayer and praise, together with prolonged meditation upon holy things. In the absence of all the ordinary aids to devotion, the religious condition of the people must have depended very much on their keeping up the recollection of the sabbath, and hallowing it so far as was possible; *e.g.* doing no work for themselves, neither buying nor selling, making their devotions longer, and keeping God in their thoughts throughout the day.

Ver. 3.—**The son of the stranger**; *i.e.* the foreigner, who has become a proselyte. During the depression of the Captivity these are not likely to have been many. Still, there were doubtless some; and these, who had embraced Judaism under such unfavourable circumstances, were entitled to special consideration. As Messianic hopes prevailed, and the time of restoration to Palestine drew near (ver. 1), they might naturally be afraid that they would not be looked upon as equals by the native Israelites, but would be made into a lower grade, if not even excluded. **The Lord hath utterly separated me**; rather, *the Lord will utterly separate me.* They do not suppose it done, but think it will be done. **The eunuch.** Isaiah had prophesied to Hezekiah that a certain number of his seed should serve as eunuchs in the royal

palace of the King of Babylon (2 Kings xx. 18). Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were such persons (Dan. i. 3—6), and there may have been others. By the letter of the Law (Deut. xxiii. 1), they were cut off from the congregation, but practically it would seem that during the Captivity they were on a par with other Israelites. These persons feared, with more reason than the foreign proselytes, that, on the return of Israel to their own land, a stricter practice would be established than had prevailed during the Captivity, and the letter of the Law would be enforced against them. **I am a dry tree.** Therefore useless, and entitled to no consideration at all.

Ver. 4.—**The eunuchs that . . . take hold of my covenant.** The law of Deut. xxiii. 1 shall be abrogated under the new condition of things, for such as "take hold of God's covenant."

Ver. 5.—**In mine house**; *i.e.* "in my Church" (comp. 1 Tim. iii. 15). **Within my walls.** Within the walls of my "holy city" (see above, ch. liv. 11, 12; lx. 14; lxii. 12). **A place and a name**; or, *a memorial and a name*; i.e. honourable mention, like that promised to the woman who anointed Christ for his burial (Matt. xxvi. 13). Such mention is found in Matt. xix. 12; Acts viii. 27—39.

Ver. 6.—**Also the sons of the stranger** (comp. ver. 3). The proselytes shall not be treated as they fear. On the contrary, God will treat them in exactly the same way as his original people—will conduct them to Palestine, settle them in his "holy mountain," admit them to the temple services, accept their burnt offerings and their sacrifices. All this will be a foretaste of their position in the Christian Church, where there will be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a community where all are brethren and all have equal privileges.

Ver. 7.—**My house of prayer.** In Solomon's address to God at the dedication of the temple, its character, as a house of prayer, is abundantly laid down (1 Kings viii. 29—53). And no doubt it was used for the purpose of prayer, as well as for the purpose of sacrifice, from its first erection to its final destruction. But the purpose of sacrifice so far predominated, in fact, over the other, that the expression, "my house of prayer," comes upon us in this place to some extent as a surprise. The prophet seems to anticipate the time when the temple should be emphatically a προσευχή, the legal sacrifices having received their fulfilment (ch. liii. 10), and being thenceforth superfluous and out of place. **For all people**; rather, *for all the peoples.* All the ends of the earth were to see the salvation of God (Ps. xcviii. 3); "All nations were to fall down before him; all people to do him service" (Ps. lxxii. 11).

Ver. 8.—**The Lord God**; rather, *the Lord Jehovah—Adonai Jehovah.* An unusual phrase. **Which gathereth together the outcasts of Israel**; *i.e.* the Lord who has pledged himself to bring back Israel from captivity, and to gather together Israel's outcasts from all regions (ch. xi. 11; xxvii. 12, 13; xliii. 5, 6, etc.). This same Lord now promises something further: "He will gather others also to Israel, besides his own gathered ones." Introduced with such emphasis and formality, this was probably, when delivered, a new revelation. In the present arrangement of the prophecies, however, it announces no novelty. The addition of Gentile members to the Israelite community has been declared frequently (see ch. xliv. 5; lv. 5, etc.).

SECTION V. A WARNING TO THE WICKED (CH. LVI. 9—LVII.).

Vers. 9—12.—THE BLIND GUIDES OF ISRAEL REBUKED. A sudden change of style marks the introduction of an entirely new prophecy. The eye of the prophet, apparently, goes back from the period of the exile, which he has been so long contemplating, to his own day, or at any rate to the pre-exile period, and rests upon Israel in their own land. He sees them misled by their teachers (vers. 10—12), given to idolatry (ch. lvii. 3—9), and offering themselves a ready prey to their enemies (ch. lvi. 9). Many modern critics regard the passage as the composition of an unknown prophet belonging to the time of Manasseh. But there is no sufficient evidence of this. The prophecy has many Isaian characteristics.

Ver. 9.—**Beasts of the field . . . beasts in the forest**; *i.e.* "all wild beasts of whatever kind"—all the enemies of God's flock (see Jer. xii. 9; Ezek. xxxiv. 8). **Come to devour.** Make haste, now is your opportunity. The people have none to protect them, and will be an easy prey. Come, set to work; devour.

Ver. 10.—**His watchmen are blind.** Israel's "watchmen" are his guides and teachers, the prophets (Jer. vi. 17; Ezek. iii. 17; Hab. ii. 1, etc.). At the time of which Isaiah speaks, they are "blind" (ch. xxix. 18; xxxv. 5; xlii. 7, 16, 18, 19; xliii. 8, etc.), or without knowledge—like the "blind guides" of the Gospel (Matt. xv. 14; Luke vi. 39, etc.). They have not the spiritual discernment which would enable them to lead the people aright. Further, they are dumb dogs. Instead of acting as faithful watch-dogs, who give warning of the approach of danger by

their barking, they remain apathetic, and utter no warning at all. It is as if they passed their lives in sleep.

Ver. 11.—**Yea, they are greedy dogs.** Another defect is noted. Not only do they fail in the way of neglect of duty, but they are actively culpable. Being worldly and not spiritually minded, they are "greedy" after gain. Anciently, the taking of a gift, or fee, from those who came to consult them was regarded as no dishonour to the prophetic office (Numb. xxii. 7; 1 Sam. ix. 7; 1 Kings xiv. 3); but the nobler class of prophets declined to make a profit of their spiritual powers, and would receive no fee (2 Kings v. 16; Matt. x. 8; Acts viii. 20). In Ezekiel and Micah the taking of gifts by prophets is regarded as discreditable (Ezek. xiii. 19; xxii. 25; Micah iii. 3). **From his quarter**; rather, *to the uttermost* (Kay), or *every one, without exception* (Cheyne).

Ver. 12.—**Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine.** Here we have mention of a third defect. The prophets of the time are not only negligent of their duty, and covetous, but they are given to excess in wine and to long revels, such as even the heathen considered to be disgraceful (comp. ch. xxviii. 7, where both priests and prophets are taxed with habitual drunkenness). **To-morrow shall be as this day**; *i.e.* the drinking shall continue—we will have a two days' bout of it. **And much more abundant**; rather, *very exceedingly abundant.* There is no comparison of one day with the other; but simply a promise that on both days the drinking shall be without stint. (On the drunkenness occasionally prevalent in Oriental countries, see Herod., i. 133; Xen., 'Cyrop.,' viii. 8, § 10; Dur. Sam. Fr., 13; and compare the remarks of Sir H. Rawlinson on the inebriety of the modern Persians in the author's 'Herodotus,' vol. i. p. 219, edition of 1862.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3—7.—*Outward defects and defilements no hindrance to full communion in the Church of God.* In the infancy of humanity, and with a people so carnal as the Israelites, it was necessary to teach the great doctrines of purity and holiness by a material symbolism. Hence the multitude of regulations in the Law concerning defects, blemishes, sources of outward defilement, methods of removing defilements, clean and unclean meats, and the like. God strove to train his people by these outward shows to the recognition of the eternal distinction between inward purity and impurity, and to a proper sense of the fact that impurity is an utter disqualification for communion with him and with his Church. But these distinctions were never intended to be lasting. Our Lord himself declared to his disciples, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. . . . Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man" (Matt. xv. 11—20). It was long before the Jews could fully understand this doctrine, or believe that the Levitical Law on all points of external defilement was absolutely done away (see Acts x. 9—35; xi. 3—18; xv. 5—20; 1 Cor. viii. 4—13). There was at first a great objection to receive any Gentiles into the Christian Church, and many miracles had to be wrought to overcome it. There was, after this, a line of separation drawn, and a claim set up by those of the favoured nation to form a higher grade than the Gentile Christians, with whom they refused to eat (Gal. ii. 11—14). So persistent is the spirit of formalism, that, notwithstanding our Lord's teaching and that of his apostles, it was centuries before the Church was wholly freed from dissension and difficulty in this matter (Burton, 'Church of the First Three Centuries,' vol. i. pp. 348—351).

Vers. 9—12.—*When their spiritual guides go astray, the flock of Christ suffers.* Spiritual guides are bound to watch for the flock, as "they that must give account" (Heb. xiii. 17). It is ill for the flock when they are even negligent in their duties—still worse when they engage actively in evil courses. Israel's guides at this time were open to both charges, and are blamed on both accounts. Isaiah taxes them with being—

I. BLIND GUIDES, destitute of spiritual wisdom and spiritual discernment. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge" (Mal. ii. 7). It is the office of priests and ministers to guide aright the souls committed to their charge, and for this purpose

they require a large fund of "the wisdom which is from above," a large experience of human life and of the human heart, and a deep acquaintance with the written Word, wherein treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid away. "Blind guides" constitute a terrible danger. "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the pit?" (Matt. xv. 14). What havoc may not be wrought by a "blind guide," who undertakes to be the director of thousands or even hundreds of souls! And yet how lightly do young men, after no more than a year or two of experience, seek to obtain "sole charges"! "Sole charges" should be reserved for those who have been thoroughly tried and tested, and have shown themselves able ministers of the Word and wise directors of men's consciences.

II. DUMB DOGS. If we are without knowledge, it is better to be "dumb" than to speak. But to have knowledge, to be able to direct and improve others, and, having undertaken the ministerial office, then to draw back and remain silent, through sloth and laziness, because we would fain "lie down, and dream, and slumber," and pass our life without care, or anxiety, or trouble,—this is a most "dangerous downfall," a shirking of our responsibilities, a "drawing back unto perdition of the soul" (Heb. x. 39). There are ministers even now, in this latter part of the nineteenth century, whose object in their ministerial life seems to be to do as little as possible, who preach little, visit less, reprove and rebuke vice least of all, whose desire seems to be always for "a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep" (Prov. vi. 10). Such persons will one day experience a terrible awakening!

III. GREEDY DOGS. Ministers are bound to be patterns to the flock. If they preach the doctrines of the gospel—self-sacrifice, spirituality, unworldliness—and are themselves greedy of gain, conspicuous examples of the worldly and covetous spirit which they denounce, what possible effect for good can their preaching have? Such men do more harm than infidels. They dishonour their Master, bring scorn and contempt upon religion, do their best to create the impression that Christianity is a sham, a make-believe, a device for bolstering up a rotten state of society and repressing revolutionary effort. "The labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke x. 7), and they that preach the gospel are entitled to "live of the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 14); but a hard, grasping, or even niggardly spirit in a Christian minister is a disgrace to his profession, a scandal to the Church whereto he belongs, and a danger to society. Such as "look to their own way," and seek their own gain, "to the uttermost," as did the pseudo-prophets of Isaiah's day, are wholly unfit to bear the message of him who, "though rich, for man's sake became poor" (2 Cor. viii. 9), and chose "the poor of this world" for his ministers (Jas. ii. 5).

IV. WINE-BIBBERS. Intemperate habits are, if possible, more unbecoming to the minister of Christ than even covetousness. Covetousness may be secret, and escape detection; intemperance is a public scandal. The man of intemperate habits can scarcely have the face to rebuke any vice in others, seeing that his own vice is so open and patent to all. He is thus utterly disqualified for the ministerial office, which he degrades and disgraces so long as he bears it. Fortunately, at the present day, intemperance is recognized as incompatible with the cure of souls; and the intemperate minister, in modern Churches, can scarcely remain a minister for many months.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The true observance of the sabbath.* Foreign converts are commended for their observance of the sabbath, and promised an appropriate reward. The day was more strictly observed during the Babylonian and Persian periods (Jer. xvii. 19—27; Ezek. xx. 11—21; xxii. 8, 26; Neh. xiii. 15—22; cf. 2 Kings xi. 1—16 with 1 Macc. ii. 32—38). Its estimation rose with the estimation of prayer (Cheyne).

I. THE DUTY OF OBEDIENCE. The Law is "the objective rule of life, the Law of Jehovah." Or, with others, "equity, justice." And the "practice of righteousness" is ever a necessity with him. The more so as every serious *crisis* draws on. My salvation is near—the kingdom of heaven is at hand. A crisis means a time of *sifting* and *separation*. "God's salvation is not indiscriminate. And the grounds on which he distinguishes his people from his enemies are not external, but internal. It is the

Israel within Israel, the spiritual circumcision, the holy seed, that he acknowledges, vindicates, rescues, glorifies" (Cheyne).

II. SABBATH-KEEPING AS AN EXPRESSION OF OBEDIENCE. How significant the sabbath in the institutions of Judaism! True, the seventh day belonged also to Babylonian religion, but we know its beauty and its blessing through the Jews. It was a sign of the great standing covenant between God and the nation (Exod. xxxi. 13—17). By this the Jews were marked as a nation. Narrow notions, Puritan superstitions, have gathered about the sabbath; still, the idea of it is very beautiful. Ewald brings it under the idea of sacrifice of time. It is the representative of the duties of the first table (Ezek. xx. 11—21). But mere sabbath-keeping avails not without the honest heart and the upright life—the man must "keep his hand from evil."

III. THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE UNIVERSAL. The prophet would remove a misunderstanding. The beatitude is universally applicable to those who keep God's commandments. The foreigner might be anxious about his position in the spiritual commonwealth. For there were exclusive injunctions directed against him (Deut. xxiii. 4—7). During the Captivity probably an exclusive spirit was growing; it may be observed in the restored exiles (Neh. xiii.). They are here assured that they shall be admitted to the spiritual commonwealth on an equal footing with the Jews. National barriers are broken down before the new expansive spirit of love. There was also a law against eunuchs (Deut. xxiii. 2). But this disability is also to be removed. This class of men may stand for the outcast and degraded in general. They are to be admitted to communion, and are to receive some "trophy and monument" (1 Sam. xv. 12; 2 Sam. xviii. 18) in the temple itself—provided they have been faithful to the commands and covenant of Jehovah. Probably a spiritual and everlasting memorial is meant (cf. Rev. iii. 12; Matt. xxvi. 13). Then the foreign proselytes who should (1) join them to the Lord, (2) with intent to serve him, (3) and who should love the Name of the Lord, (4) who should be his servants, (5) who should keep his sabbaths, (6) and take hold of his covenant, were to be admitted to all the privileges of the chosen people. The same terms of salvation were to be applicable to all. In 1 Kings viii. 41—43 Solomon prays that God should do "according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for." In Ps. cxxxv. 19, 20 the proselytes are called to bless Jehovah, after the house of Israel, of Aaron, of Levi.

IV. THE BLESSINGS OF THE HOUSE OF PRAYER. All shall be brought to God's holy mountain—shall be admitted to the one sacred fellowship. They shall be made joyful by the revelation of the Shechinah—the presence of the Eternal in his power and mercy. Their offerings (those of the proselytes) shall be accepted on his altar. There should be no invidious distinctions. The house should be a "house of prayer to all peoples" (cf. Matt. xxi. 13). Moreover, other nations, not now of Israel, would be united to the one spiritual stock. The exiles in distant lands would be gathered; also other Gentiles of whom the proselytes are the firstfruits—"other sheep not of this flock" (John x. 16)—and they will become fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 19). The race—"on a level with respect to moral character, all having sinned and come short of the glory of God—is on a level with respect to redemption; the same Saviour died for all, the same Spirit is ready to sanctify all. The wide world may be saved, and there is not one of the human race so degraded in human estimation by rank, or colour, or ignorance, who may not be admitted to the same heaven with Abraham and the prophets, and whose prayers and praises may not be as acceptable to God as those of the most magnificent monarch who ever wore a crown."—J.

Ver. 9—ch. lvii. 2.—*The neglectful shepherds.* Here in a series of powerful pictures *religious indifference* on the part of *pastors* is described.

I. THE BLIND WATCHMAN. Nothing can be more beautiful than the idea of the shepherd as descriptive of the true teacher and minister to souls; tenderness, watchfulness, self-denial, all are his. So, on the other hand, nothing can more hold up the faithless pastor to scorn than the character of the faithless shepherd (John x.). As the flock becomes a prey to the wild beasts when there is no shepherd, or when he neglects his care, so Israel, bereft of her natural defenders, lies at the mercy of the

great heathen empire (cf. Ezek. xiii. 4; xxxiv. 8; xxxix. 4; Jer. xii. 9; Rev. xix. 17, 18). Especially the prophets are referred to (cf. Ezek. iii. 17; ch. xxi. 11). These "dumb dogs" are opposed to the faithful shepherd-dogs (Job xxx. 1). "We must suppose that the prophets referred to were no better than the ancient soothsayers, who gave oracles respecting the difficulties of everyday life, but were silent on the great moral questions" (Cheyne). Immersed, perhaps, in sin themselves, they were blind to the national sins. "God requires *knowledge* in his ambassadors. Ignorance of the truth; of the nature, existence, and pollution of sin; of the claims of God and of the way of pardon,—is an effectual disqualification for the office."

II. THEIR SLUGGISHNESS AND GREED. They are like those who *rave* in sleep, moving among idle phantasms rather than serious realities. The false teacher not only does not know the truth, he falls into some species of delusion, and leads his flock along with him. He "loves to slumber." "Alas! that this should be too true of multitudes who bear the sacred office, and are appointed to warn their fellow-men of danger! Some are afraid of giving offence; some have no deep sense of the importance of religious truth; some embrace false opinions; some engage in worldly projects, and fill up their time with the cares and plans of this life; and some are invincibly indolent. An inactive and unfaithful ministry suffers the great enemy to come and bear away the soul to death, as an unfaithful mastiff would suffer a thief to approach the dwelling without warning the inmates. *Instinct* prompts the faithful animal to act the part God intends; but alas! there are men whom neither conscience, reason, hope, fear, nor love will rouse to put forth efforts to save a soul from hell! Their *greed*. They "keep up the old custom, rejected by the higher prophets as an abuse, of taking fees" (see references in Cheyne). Each and all are bent upon private interest and gain, and upon selfish enjoyment. One of them is represented as inviting another to a carouse of two days.

III. THE CONTRASTED FATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. They "perish"—prematurely cut off; a contradiction peculiarly great from an Old Testament point of view (Eccles. vii. 15). It seemed as if this premature departure were an ill reward for faithful service; but it was dictated by mercy. The godly were delivered from sights of horror which might have vexed their souls.

> "O Brettinoro! wherefore tarriest still,
> Since forth of thee thy family hath gone,
> And many, hating evil, join'd their steps?"

Moreover, they were spared from the coming retribution; so Abraham goes to his fathers in peace, and Isaiah is not to see all the evil which God will bring upon the place. "His soul is pleasing to God; therefore he hastens with him out of the evil life" (Wisd. iv. 14). Here was a warning to the wicked; great must be the evil doomed to be so punished. A few remaining righteous might have saved the city (Gen. xviii. 23—32). Sorer punishment was therefore at hand. The departure of a good man is a public calamity. His example and his influence are among the richest blessings of the world. If men are not deeply affected by the withdrawal of them, it is a proof of guilt and stupidity. Who knows, asked a heathen poet, if dying be not life, and life dying? On the hither side of the grave the wicked remain steeped in sin and sloth; on the further side there is rest and peace. "Let them rave, thou art quiet in thy grave." "Who does not envy those who have seen to an end their manful endeavour? Who that sees the meanness of our public life, but inly congratulates the pure statesman or teacher that he is long wrapped in his shroud, and for ever safe; laid sweet in his grave, the hope of humanity not subjugated in him? Who does not sometimes envy the good and brave, who are no more to suffer from the tumults of the natural world, and await with curious complacency the speedy term of his own conversation with finite nature? Yet the love that will be annihilated sooner than treacherous, has already made death impossible, and affirms itself no mortal, but nature of the deeps of absolute and inextinguishable being" (Emerson).—J.

Ver. 6.—*Service.* "The sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him," etc. This word is often degraded in human speech. "Service" is considered humiliating, and only mastership is glorious. But "the Son of man came not

to be ministered unto, but to minister." We are all of us "debtors" to others; we owe them much, and we owe Christ all.

I. SERVICE CALLS OUT WHAT IS BEST IN MEN. 1. Their *unselfishness.* 2. Their *heroism.* 3. Their *patience.*

II. SERVICE CHARACTERIZES THE NOBLEST AND THE BEST OF MEN. 1. Think of the *world's great leaders.* 2. Think of the *Church's sufferers and martyrs.*

III. SERVICE IS EMBODIED IN MANY FORMS. There is a service of gift; a service of speech; a service of submission.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

All God's universe is alive with blest activity. The idler is out of harmony with the entire creation of God.—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The attitude of holy expectation.* God evidently requires of us that, when we are anticipating any special manifestation on his part, there should be special purity on our part. We look at—

I. OUR CONDITION. This is one of complete dependence on God. We need the action of the Divine power to give efficacy to all our labour; nothing that we do, of any kind whatever, is effectual without the energizing touch of his hand. We need also the manifestation of this Divine power for deliverance from danger and trouble. Salvation from any evil, temporal or spiritual, can come only from God. "All our springs are in him."

II. OUR EXPECTATION. We hope for great things of God. He has taught us to hope from the beginning (Ps. xxii. 9). It is with a true instinct that the farmer looks up to God for his annual harvest; that the soldier trusts for victory in the favour and the aid of the God of battles; that the sailor cries to Heaven for help when his ship is tossing on the waves in the overwhelming storm; that the faithful witness of Jesus Christ appeals to his Divine Lord when the persecutor is on his track or has him in his cruel grasp. We hope in God, for we know (1) the *benignity of his Spirit,* his desire to bless his children, and his compassion for them in their distresses; (2) the *faithfulness of his word,* and that he has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Ps. l. 15).

III. THE RIGHT ATTITUDE OF EXPECTATION. It is that of special purity or righteousness; separating ourselves from all that is offensive in the sight of God. To expect any unusual manifestation of Divine power or grace when we are holding any iniquity to our heart, is only to delude ourselves, and to be the heirs of disillusion and disappointment. 1. When God manifested himself at Sinai he required that the people should be sanctified in readiness for his coming (Exod. xix. 10). 2. When the Lord of hosts would give victory to the armies of Israel he required that they sanctified themselves, not only by religious rite, but by cleansing themselves of their sin (Josh. iii. 5; v.; vii.). 3. When the children of Israel were delivered from the land of captivity they fasted and prayed that the hand of God might be upon them (Ezra viii. 21—23). 4. When the kingdom of God was announced there was a solemn summons to repent (Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17). 5. When we seek Divine mercy and eternal life in Jesus Christ we must put away evil from our heart and life; repentance never has been and never can be dissociated from a living and saving faith (Acts xx. 21). 6. When we draw near to God in worship we must come to him with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. xv. 24; lxvi. 18; ch. xxxiii. 15, 16; Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 8). 7. When we look for a manifestation of God's power in the renewal of a Church, or the regeneration of a community, we must appear before him in purity of heart and integrity of life; or his "salvation" will not "come," his "righteousness" will not "be revealed."—C.

Vers. 3—8.—*The open gate.* The temple or house of God (ver. 7) stands for his kingdom of righteousness; and in exalted vision the prophet foresees the time when it shall stand open to every man—to the stranger or heathen, and even to those physically debarred. It is to be called "a house of prayer *for all people.*" It is worthy of note that it should be called a house *of prayer;* the truth is intimated that, in the kingdom of God, sacrifice performed by the few on behalf of the many will yield to the spiritual

approach by all to the Father of souls; that one principal purpose of worship is that of coming into close, holy, personal fellowship with the living God. But the main truth of the passage is found in the thought of—

I. THE OPEN GATE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. When God's full purpose should be revealed, there would be a kingdom or Church which should be open to every child of man, irrespective of his nationality or his physical peculiarities; the time should come when there would be neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. The gracious purpose of God is fulfilled only in the gospel of his Son. There we find "the common salvation," broad as the race of man. 1. It is adapted to all men everywhere, however apart and afar they may be from the scene of its birth. Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, have local features; they are peculiarly adapted to men living in certain latitudes and longitudes, with certain surroundings and national habits and wants; they have their limitations. But into the gospel of Jesus Christ limitation or partiality does not enter; it is as perfectly suited to men of one clime as to those of another; we cannot think of men under any earthly conditions whatever for whose elevation and happiness it is not thoroughly fitted. 2. It is intended for, and is powerful over, those furthest removed from the knowledge and the likeness of God. It purified the corrupt Corinthian; it softened the hard Roman; it sobered and solemnized the flippant Athenian; it has civilized the most savage barbarian; it has rescued and transformed the most degraded citizens of our modern civilization; it has proved itself the power of God to redeem and regenerate the very worst that have defaced the human image and disgraced the human name. 3. It is needed by those who are nearest the sources of truth; for it convicts even the best of unworthiness and guilt, and it finds for them a Saviour and a reconciliation.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF CITIZENSHIP. The gate is open into the blessed kingdom, but it is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy (Rom. xiv. 17). Only they can be accounted citizens who fulfil certain spiritual conditions. These are indicated here. They are: 1. Drawing nigh to God through the appointed means—the sabbath day, the house of prayer, etc. 2. Accepting God's method of reconciliation; *i.e.* by faith in his Son, our Saviour; "taking hold of his covenant" (see Phil. iii. 7—9). 3. Conforming the life to God's holy will; "choosing the things that please him," rather than those which please ourselves or others; engaging in his service (ver. 6).—C.

Vers. 9—12.—*Unfaithful ministry.* Three truths appear as we consider these strong words.

I. THAT GOD HAS PLACED THE WELFARE OF THE MANY IN THE CHARGE OF THE FEW. Practically, the moral and material condition of the country in the course of the next twenty years depends greatly on the character of those of its citizens who are parents. The fathers and mothers in the land are determining its future to a large extent by their parental wisdom or folly. But we may narrow the issue considerably; we may say that what the next generation will be, in respect of conviction and conduct, depends on the character of the ministry it is receiving at the hands of its religious teachers. If these are loyal to their Lord, and do faithfully the work committed to their care, the community will know the truth and do the will of God. And so long as the nation walks in the light of the Lord it will be prosperous and strong; its worst enemies will not prevail against it; it will grow in wisdom, in honour, in power.

II. THAT MEN MAY PROVE UTTERLY UNWORTHY OF THE HIGH POSITION TO WHICH THEY ARE CALLED. It may be said that no one has a right to take a step which may result in the responsibilities of parentage, unless he or she is prepared to teach and train children in the knowledge and fear of God. It must certainly be said that no one has a right to take on himself the functions of a Christian minister unless he is qualified to teach Christ's truth and to commend his gospel to the minds and the hearts of men. It is the grave misfortune of the Church and the world that so many have incurred responsibility without any such qualifications. They have failed either *in doctrine*, having been as "dumb dogs," not warning sinners of the perils besetting them, wilfully and culpably silent; or *in understanding*, being "blind" and "ignorant," never having understood the truth, or having become insensible to its excellence by reason of their unfaithfulness; or *in consistency of life*, falling into the sin of idleness (ver. 10), or that of covetousness and consequent rapacity (ver. 11), or that of bodily indulgence

(ver. 12). And sin is never so ugly a garment as when it clothes the person of a minister of Jesus Christ.

III. THAT AN UNWORTHY MINISTRY SEALS THE FATE OF THE UNFORTUNATE COUNTRY ON WHICH IT IS IMPOSED. There is little hope for a land cursed with an unfaithful and an ungodly ministry. Not only is the truth of God withheld from men, but it is made positively distasteful and repugnant to the more spiritual by being associated with such professors. Its power is reduced to the very lowest possible point; the people are abandoned to error and to folly. It will soon be time for the enemy to appear at the gates—for the destroying beast to ravage the flock (ver. 9). 1. Let all but those whom God has fitted for it shrink with holy diffidence from the sacred office. 2. Let the Church of Christ take the greatest care whom it invites to be "over it in the Lord."—C.

Ver. 1.—*God's nearness a plea.* "My salvation is near to come;" therefore "keep ye judgment, and do justice." Isaiah announced God's delivering and redeeming from Babylon as close at hand, and used this fact as a plea by which to urge immediate moral preparation. "When God is coming to us in a way of mercy we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty." Illustration may be found in Ps. l. 23; Mal. iv. 4—6. John the Baptist had a similar commission to this of Isaiah. He was to call to repentance on the ground of the fact that the "kingdom of heaven was at hand." Further illustration may be found in the preparing of roads for a coming Eastern king, and the preparations made in our towns when the sovereign is about to visit them. The general subject suggested is the call to be ready for every display of Divine grace. Our getting the blessing of any near coming of God to us depends on our preparedness for the manifestation. We may note two points.

I. PREPARATIONS FOR GOD'S COMING ARE SPIRITUAL. They are right states of mind and feeling. They are cleansings of thought and heart. They are humiliations on account of sin and shortcoming. They are the putting away of doubts, and the nourishing of trust. They are cherishings of all reverent sentiments. They are earnest efforts to gain an open and receptive mood of soul. Sabbath worship and sacramental seasons are times of special nearness of God, and they are dependent on the spiritual moods with which we approach them. Fitting moods are gained by times of meditation and prayer. A point of importance to impress is that spiritual preparations are quite as necessary in view of God's mercies, benedictions, and prosperities, as in view of his chastisements and judgments. So easily we miss observing the necessity for spiritual readiness to receive Divine bestowals and blessings. See St. Paul's teaching concerning self-examination before partaking of the sacramental feast (1 Cor. xi. 28).

II. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FINDS EXPRESSION IN ALTERED CONDUCT. On this the prophet dwells. Because God's salvation is near, men ought to readjust their conduct and rearrange their relations. They should keep judgment and do justice; or love the right and try to do it, remembering always that the "right" includes the "kind." Just as, if a visitor is expected at a house, all kinds of house-preparations are made, but the heart-welcome is the chief thing, so when God would come to us, we must fit up the house of conduct for him, but take good heed that this only expresses the hearty welcome of our souls. In conclusion, show how these two mutually help each other. Soul-culture aids in mastery of life and conduct. The wise ordering of life brings good opportunity for soul-culture. Jesus came to save from sin; but there was little preparation for him. He came as a babe, and there was no room for him in the inn.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The sabbath a test of obedience.* It is singular to find Isaiah now making so much of the sabbath when, in the earlier part of his prophecy, he had, in the name of God, spoken of it so scornfully (see ch. i. 13, "The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with"). Matthew Arnold refers to this contrast, and says, "That related to a time when the kingdom of Judah yet stood, when the service of the temple was in full course, the whole exterior part of the Jews' religion splendid and prominent. At such a time a prophet might naturally undervalue the whole of this exterior part in comparison with the inward part. But during the exile in Babylon all the services and sacrifices of the temple had ceased, and the one testimony of faithfulness to their religion which the Jews among an idolatrous people

could give, was the observance of their sabbath; their sabbath was the one outward thing which brought their religion to their mind. Hence its observance acquired quite a special value." Inquire what signs of their allegiance to Jehovah, and their obedience to his commands, pious Jews in Babylon could give to those around them. None could be so important or so effective as to show themselves a nation of *sabbath-keepers*, because Jehovah, their God, had commanded sabbath-keeping.

I. SABBATH-KEEPING A FORMAL ACT. As such it is of comparatively small importance. It bears good relation, indeed, to the physical health and the social order of a community, providing seasons of rest and change, and reminding of the claims of soul as well as body. But if sabbath-keeping be the mere formal act, with no deeper meaning in it, then it may be judged as a matter of expediency, and valued as a wise and excellent Mosaic arrangement, more or less wisely imitated by other rulers.

II. SABBATH-KEEPING A MORAL STATE. Souls must keep sabbath, or it is not really kept. Souls must keep sabbath (1) as an act of obedience to God; (2) as an expression of love for worship; (3) as a sign of loyalty and affection for God. There is never any difficulty about the proper ordering of the day when the soul is full of the sabbath-spirit.

III. SABBATH-KEEPING THE FORMAL ACT WHICH EXHIBITS THE MORAL STATE. Man cannot test the soul-conditions of his fellow-man save by observing the expressions of that condition in his *conduct*. God can read soul-states, but, for purposes of revelation and teaching, he treats us as we treat each other, and asks for signs in the *life* of what may be in the soul. Therefore he still looks for careful and faithful sabbath-keeping.—R. T.

Vers. 4—6.—*Disabled ones sharing Divine blessings.* From the points of view of the earlier Judaism, eunuchs and strangers were persons placed under special disability. Neither could take full share in national or sanctuary privileges (Deut. xxiii. 1—8). To understand the feeling towards eunuchs we must remember the two prevailing ideas among the Jews, which made offspring seem so desirable. 1. A man found a sort of quasi-immortality in the feeling that he would live over again in his children. 2. It was possible to any Jewish parents that they might be progenitors of the promised Messiah. Eunuchs were persons who, either by reason of physical infirmity or cruel custom, could not have children born to them. They were despised because of their infirmity. The prophet assures such that the new spiritual kingdom of Messiah would have room for them, and gather them, as well as the foreigners and strangers, into its embrace, and even put special honour on them if they were found men of faith. "The prophet's whole conception of the Gentiles in relation to the religion of Israel is unexampled in the Old Testament for its admirable width, depth, and grandeur." The term "dry tree" is still a phrase used in the East of a person of either sex who has no children. Roberts, writing of Hindoo customs, says, "People without posterity, of both sexes, are called dry trees; which, strictly speaking, means they are dead, having neither sap, nor leaves, nor fruit." Matthew Arnold says, "It must be remembered that, attached to a great Eastern court like that of Babylon, were a multitude of eunuchs, some of whom had perhaps adopted the religion of Israel. It is probable, also, that some of the Jewish youths were taken for the court service as eunuchs, and their countrymen would afterwards have been likely to abhor them on that account." These considerations will enable us the better to feel the exquisite tenderness and mercifulness of this passage. The general topic suggested is the gracious way in which the gospel kingdom embraces all the disabled. This may be illustrated from—

I. THOSE UNDER PHYSICAL DISABILITIES.

II. THOSE UNDER RACE-DISABILITIES.

III. THOSE UNDER SOCIAL DISABILITIES.

IV. THOSE UNDER MENTAL DISABILITIES.

V. THOSE UNDER DISABILITIES FROM PAST EVIL LIVING.

Christ's salvation is for man as man. In his kingdom there are found black and white, bond and free. Its gate is open to *whosoever will*.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*God's house of prayer for everybody.* "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." These words were quoted by the Lord Jesus when he drove

out the shopkeepers who defiled the temple (see Matt. xxi. 13). The prophet declares that the "prayers and praises (those spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gentiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious Jews, and no difference shall be made between them; for, though they are Gentiles by birth, yet through grace they shall be looked upon as the believing seed of faithful Abraham, and the praying seed of wrestling Jacob, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision." God's house, the old temple, had been thought of as a place of *sacrifices*. The new temple, and above all the spiritual temple, the Christian temple, must be thought of as a place of *prayer*. This contrast gives the following topics.

I. THE OLD IDEA OF GOD'S HOUSE WAS A HOUSE OF SACRIFICE. The old worship was one of multiplied and varied rites and ceremonies. It was a round of bodily services; it was honouring God by the devotion to him of the things that men possessed. It had its deeper spiritual meanings, but the prominent things were exact obediences, minute services, gorgeous and impressive spectacles. The "shadow of good things to come."

II. THE NEW IDEA OF GOD'S HOUSE IS A HOUSE OF PRAYER. Prayer comprehensively indicates all forms of spiritual worship, of communion with the Divine Being. Illustrate by the essential differences between the Jewish temple and the Christian Church. Even the Jewish worship, when a synagogue could not be built, was held in a *proseuché*, or place of prayer. It was the work of the prophets to lift men's minds away from the more formal to the more spiritual associations of God's house. Explain the senses in which *prayer* may stand for the whole of Christian worship.

III. THE OLD IDEA FITTED GOD'S HOUSE FOR A LIMITED FEW. Just those to whom his particular directions about ritual and sacrifice had been given. If God has to be served by formal acts, they must be such as he requires and has duly explained to us. So God's house was of old exclusively for Jews.

IV. THE NEW IDEA FITS GOD'S HOUSE FOR EVERYBODY. Because prayer is just the great human *commonplace*. Man has been satirically, yet truthfully, called "a praying animal." Prayer is characteristic of him. He has uplooking eyes and a yearning heart. When men know the unutterable value of prayer, "then shall the nations from the east and from the west build the last great temple of all—the temple of an eternal religion—whose foundations shall be wide as the whole nature of man, and whose dome, reaching up to heaven, shall shelter and overshadow the world."—R. T.

Vers. 10—12.—*Worthless shepherds.* "Dumb dogs;" "Greedy dogs;" "Shepherds that cannot understand." The prophet's messages are in the main addressed to the pious and believing among the exiles. But he knows well how many of them were living in self-indulgence and sin, and were not in the least likely to heed his words, and prepare themselves for the coming deliverance. The evils were especially manifest in the leading people, who ought to have been leaders in goodness to the people. Instead of this, they were neglecting their duty, and presenting a debasing example of self-indulgence, and even of covetousness. The term "watchmen" is used for chief men, princes, priests, prophets. These were utterly unable to comprehend or to meet the spiritual wants of the nation at this time, when God was so near, for carrying out his redeeming purpose. "The language here employed strikingly depicts the feelings of the voluptuous in every age."

I. THE HELPLESSNESS OF THE LEADERS AND TEACHERS OF THAT AGE. Observe the blending of figures suitable to the *shepherd* and to the shepherd's *dog*. Such a blending of figures is common in poetry and in Scripture. Inefficiency and sinful neglect are suggested in the terms (1) blind; (2) ignorant; (3) dumb; (4) loving to slumber; (5) greedy; (6) void of understanding; (7) drunken.

II. THE REAL SECRET OF THEIR HELPLESSNESS. They thought of *self*. They did not live for their *charge*, but for *themselves*. "They all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." And this is the root of evil in all who are placed in positions of responsibility, authority, and influence—all who are in any sense leaders and teachers. They must serve others, not get for self. Therefore the Apostle Paul pleads, saying, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Compare the plea of the noble Samuel, on giving up his life-ministry, "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have

I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" (1 Sam. xii. 3). In this way St. Paul counsels the young teacher Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." And a bishop is thus described, "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous" (1 Tim. iv. 12; iii. 3). St. Paul complains of the teachers of his time, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. ii. 21).—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LVII.

Vers. 1, 2.—THE EARLY DEATH OF RIGHTEOUS MEN ACCOUNTED FOR. The Hebrews were given to expect that long life should, as a general rule, accompany righteousness (Exod. xx. 12; 1 Kings iii. 14; Ps. xci. 16; Prov. iii. 1, 2, etc.); and under the Mosaical dispensation we must suppose that it did so. But there were exceptions to the rule. Wicked persecutors, like Ahab, Jezebel, and Athaliah, cut off the righteous ere they had seen half their days. So probably did Manasseh (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4). And God sometimes removed the righteous from earth by a natural death before they had grown old (Eccles. vii. 15; viii. 14). At the time of which Isaiah is here speaking there had been such removals; and of this he takes note, partly to rebuke those who lightly passed over the phenomenon, partly to justify God's ways to such as were perplexed by it.

Ver. 1.—**The righteous perisheth.** The word translated "perisheth" does not imply any violence; but the context implies a premature death. The righteous disappear—are taken from the earth before their natural time. Yet **no man layeth it to heart**; *i.e.* no one asks what it means—no one is disturbed, no one grieves. The general feeling was either one of indifference, or of relief at the departure of one whose life was a reproach to his neighbours. **Merciful men**; rather, *godly men*, or *pious men* (comp. Micah vii. 2). **Are taken away**; literally, *are gathered in.* Compare the phrase so frequently used, "gathered to his fathers" (Gen. xlix. 29; Numb. xxvii. 13; Judg. ii. 10; 2 Kings xxii. 20; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 28). **From the evil**; or, *out of the way of the evil*—in order that he may escape it (comp. 2 Kings xxii. 20, where Josiah is promised that he shall be gathered to his fathers (prematurely), in order that he may escape the sight of the evil that was coming on Jerusalem soon after his decease.

Ver. 2.—**He shall enter into peace.** Not merely into "stillness" or "silence" (Ps. cxv. 17), but into "peace," or, as the word might be rendered (Cheyne), "a state of peace." There is, no doubt, primarily, "a contrast to the awful troubles which the survivors will have to encounter" (Hengstenberg); but perhaps this contrast is not all that is meant. The "peace" is positive rather than negative, or it would scarcely be a consolation to any one. **They shall rest in their beds**; or, *upon their beds.* This expression seems to imply a consciousness of rest, and so a certain enjoyment of it. Each one **walking in his uprightness**; rather, *whosoever hath walked uprightly*, or *in a straight path* (see Prov. iv. 25—27). The phrase is an equivalent for "the righteous" of ver. 1, and refers to the life on earth of those who have gone down into silence, not to their life after they have reached the silent shore. Of that life the evangelical prophet is not commissioned to give us any information.

Vers. 3—14.—ISRAEL SEVERELY REBUKED FOR IDOLATRY. Though Hezekiah had made a great reformation of religion when he ascended the throne (2 Kings xviii. 4; 2 Chron. xxix. 3—19), and had done his best to put down idolatry, yet it was still dear to large numbers among the people, and was easily revived by Manasseh in the earlier portion of his reign (2 Chron. xxxiii. 2—9). Isaiah now rebukes various kinds of idolatrous practices, and shows the vanity of them.

Ver. 3.—**Draw near hither.** Approach, to hear the reprimand which ye so well deserve. **Ye sons of the sorceress**; rather, *of a sorceress.* Judah herself, the nation, is the "sorceress" and "adulteress," whose individual children are summoned to draw near. She is an adulteress; for she has transgressed against the mystic marriage-tie which bound her to Jehovah (see ch. liv. 5, and the comment *ad loc.*). She is also a "sorceress," since she has bewitched her children, and given herself up to magical as well as to idolatrous practices (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6). **Seed of the adulterer and the whore**; rather, *seed of an adulteress, and that thyself committest whoredom.* The con-

genital tendency has broken out into act. The Israel addressed is as "adulterous," *i.e.* idolatrous, as the Israel of former times.

Ver. 4.—**Against whom do ye sport yourselves?** The idolatrous Israelites here addressed, no doubt, made a mock of the few righteous who were still living among them, and vexed their souls, as his fellow-townsmen did the soul of "just Lot" (2 Pet. ii. 7). They "made wide the mouth" at them, and "drew out the tongue" in derision (comp. Ps. xxii. 7; xxxv. 21). The prophet asks, "Against whom do ye do this? Is it not rather against God, whose servants these men are, than against them?" **Are ye not children of transgression?** rather, *are ye not, yourselves, children of apostasy? and therefore more truly objects of scorn than they?* **A seed of falsehood.** Idols were viewed by Isaiah as "lies" (ch. xlv. 20; cf. Rom. i. 25; Rev. xxii. 15). Idolaters were therefore "a seed of falsehood"—men who put their trust in a lie.

Ver. 5.—**Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree** (comp. ch. i. 29; lxv. 3; lxvi. 17; and see also 2 Kings xvi. 4; xvii. 10; Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6, etc.). The reference is, as Mr. Cheyne says, to the "orgiastic cults in the sacred groves of Palestinian heathenism." The nature of these cults is well stated by Professor Döllinger ('Jew and Gentile,' vol. i. p. 430): "At the spring festival, called by some the 'brand-feast,' by others that of torches, which was attended by streams of visitors from every country, huge trees were burnt, with the offerings suspended on them. Even children were sacrificed; they were put into a leathern bag, and thrown the whole height of the temple to the bottom, with the shocking expression that they were calves, and not children. In the fore-court stood two gigantic phalli. To the exciting din of drums, flutes, and inspired songs, the Galli cut themselves on the arms; and the effect of this act, and of the music accompanying it, was so strong upon mere spectators, that all their bodily and mental powers were thrown into a tumult of excitement; and they too, seized by the desire to lacerate themselves, deprived themselves of their manhood by means of potsherds lying ready for the purpose." **Slaying the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks.** The sacrifice of their children to Moloch was largely practised by the Jews in the later period of the kingdom of Judah. It seems to have been originally introduced by the superstitious Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, who "made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen" (2 Kings xvi. 3; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3). Suspended during the reign of Hezekiah, it was renewed under Manasseh, who followed the example of his grandfather in himself sacrificing one of his sons (2 Kings xxi. 6). Under the last three kings it prevailed to a very wide extent, and the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel are loud in their denunciations of it (Jer. vii. 31, 32; xix. 2—6; xxxii. 35; Ezek. xvi. 20; xx. 26; xxiii. 37, etc.). Arguments have been brought forward to prove that the child was merely passed before a fire, or between two fires, and not burnt; but the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming (see the article on "Moloch" in Dr. W. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' vol. ii. pp. 403, 404). The rite belonged especially to the worship of Chemosh and Moloch by the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Kings iii. 27; Micah vi. 7), from whom it was adopted by the Israelites (2 Kings xvii. 7) and Jews. The sacrifice was supposed to be expiatory (Micah vi. 7). In the later times of the Jewish kingdom the place of sacrifice was the valley of Hinnom, west and north of Jerusalem, which is overhung by rugged rocks.

Ver. 6.—**Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion.** Smooth stones, rounded by water-action, were among the objects worshipped by many Semitic peoples. Such stones were called *βαίτυλοι* or *βαιτύλια*—Bethels, or "houses of God"—and received libations of oil and wine from their worshippers (see Gen. xxviii. 18; and comp. Herod., iii. 8; Arnob., 'Adv. Gentes,' i. 39; Lucian, 'Pseudomant.,' p. 30; Apul., p. 349; etc.). Stones of this kind, the prophet says, had now become "the portion" of Israel, instead of Jehovah (Ps. cxix. 57; comp. Ps. xvi. 5). To such objects they offered their "meat offerings" and "drink offerings." **Should I receive comfort in these?** Can I, Jehovah, be comforted, when my people indulge in such practices?

Ver. 7.—**Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed.** Instead of reserving thy marriage-bed for me, Jehovah (ch. liv. 5), thou hast set it up on those "high places," with which the hill-tops of Judæa are everywhere crowned (see 1 Kings xiv. 23; xvi. 4; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 17; Ezek. xv. 16, etc.). Almost every hill-top is still, in a sense, held sacred in Palestine (Conder, in 'Quarterly Statement of Palest. Explor. Fund,' 1875, p. 39). **Even thither wentest thou up,** etc. (On the persistency of the Jews in maintaining the high-place worship, see 1 Kings xiv. 23; xv. 14; xxii. 43; 2 Kings xii. 3; xiv. 4; xv. 4; xxi. 3, etc.) The best kings failed in their attempts to put it down

Ver. 8.—**Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance.** It has been usual to explain this of a removal from its proper place into an obscure posi-

tion of the formulæ which the Israelites were commanded in the Law to write on their doorposts and on their gates (Deut. vi. 9; xi. 20). But, in the first place, there is no evidence that anciently these passages were understood literally, or that such inscriptions were ever set up; and secondly, as Mr. Cheyne remarks, they would have been more, rather than less, conspicuous in a new place. Probably, therefore, the "memorial" (*zikkârôn*) of this place is some idolatrous symbol or emblem newly adopted by the Jews, and made use of as a sort of talisman. Many commentators think that it was of a phallic character (see Ezek. xvi. 17). **Discovered** thyself; rather, *uncovered thyself*. **Thou hast enlarged thy bed**; *i.e.* multiplied thy idolatries (comp. 2 Kings xvi. 3, 4, 10; xxi. 3—7). It is a feature of the idolatry of the time, that it was a mixture adopted from many quarters. It included Baal and Ashtoreth-worship from Phœnicia, Moloch-worship from Moab and Ammon, worship of the Queen of Heaven from Syria, high-place worship from the Canaanites, and stone-worship from their own remote Mesopotamian ancestors. **And made thee a covenant with them**; *i.e.* "a bargain for wages," that aid and protection should be rendered in return for worship and sacrifice. **Where thou sawest it.** The original is very obscure, but can scarcely have this meaning. It is certainly a distinct clause, and may perhaps be best translated, "thou sawest indecency."

Ver. 9.—**And thou wentest to the king.** Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne understand "the King of Assyria," and regard the verse as bringing forward a new subject of complaint: "Not only hast thou deserted me for other gods, but thou trustest for aid, not to me, but to the Assyrian monarch." But there is no indication of the Jews having put any trust in Assyria after the reign of Ahaz, to which this chapter, by its position in the prophecy, cannot belong. Moreover, the King of Assyria is never called simply "the king." It is, therefore, better to regard "the king" as Moloch, whom the Jews of Isaiah's time certainly worshipped (see ver. 5), and whose name was a mere dialectic variety of *Melech*, "king" (see Dean Payne Smith's 'Sermons on Isaiah,' sermon iv. p. 119). **Ointment . . . perfumes.** Either bearing them as offerings, or herself perfumed with them, as was the practice of lewd women (Prov. vii. 17). **And didst send thy messengers far off**; *i.e.* to distant Moloch-shrines. **And didst debase** thyself even **unto hell**; *i.e.* "didst take on thee the yoke of a mean and grovelling superstition, which debased thee to the lowest point conceivable." There was nothing lower in religion than the worship of Moloch.

Ver. 10.—**Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way.** Judah had travelled far from God, seeking aid from all quarters, and might well be "wearied" with her quest; but she would not confess her weariness—she would not say, **There is no hope**; she stirred up her remaining strength, and persisted in her course, not suffering herself to "grieve."

Ver. 11.—**Of whom hast thou been afraid?** Judah's abandonment of Jehovah and devotion to new deities was caused by fear—the fear of man, especially of Assyria. This induced them to seek for help in each new superstition that presented itself, and produced the enlarged syncretism which has been noticed in the comment on ver. 8. But how absurd to be driven by fear of man into offending God! **That thou hast lied** (see the last clause of ver. 4, with the comment). **Have not I held my peace, etc.?** *i.e.* "Is it not because I have for so long a time held my peace, that thou fearest me not?" God had for a long time suffered them to "go on still in their wickedness"—he had not interposed with any severe judgment; therefore they had ceased to fear him, and had feared men instead.

Ver. 12.—**I will declare thy righteousness, etc.** The Syriac Version has "*my* righteousness," which gives a much better sense, and is adopted by Bishop Lowth, Dr. Weir, and Mr. Cheyne. God will be silent no longer. He will "declare," or show forth, "his righteousness," by visiting Judah with some righteous punishment. Then it will be seen of what value are those things in which Judah has hitherto trusted. Her works—whether her "idols" are meant (Cheyne, Delitzsch), or her "deeds of iniquity" (Kay)—what will they profit? She will "cry" out under the rod of chastisement—cry to her false gods to save her.

Ver. 13.—**When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee.** Then, when she thus cries, let her mixture of gods (ver. 8), if they can, deliver her; they will fail utterly to do so. **The wind**—or rather, *a breath*—**shall carry them all away; vanity shall take** them. The idol gods shall be shown to be wholly futile, unable to save, incapable of rendering any the slightest assistance. **But he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land.** If, however, at that dread hour, there be any among the people who are not idolaters, but "trust in Jehovah," the crisis shall turn to their advantage. They shall "possess the land," *i.e.* have the promised land for their inheritance (Deut. iv. 1; v. 33; Ps. xxxvii. 11—29, etc.); and **inherit** Zion, God's **holy mountain** (see ch. **xi.** 9; xxvii. 13; lvi. 7, etc.).

Ver. 14.—**And shall say**; rather, *and one*

said. The prophet hears a voice, saying, **Cast ye up, cast ye up**; *i.e.* make a highway to the holy mountain by heaping up material (ch. lxii. 10); and, having made it, remove every obstruction from the path of my (righteous) people. The voice is, probably, an angelic one.

Vers. 15—21.—A PROMISE OF SALVATION TO THE HUMBLE AND PENITENT, WITH A FURTHER THREAT AGAINST THE WICKED. The prophet, in this portion of his discourse, whereof "comfort" is the key-note (ch. xl. 1), can never continue threatening long without relapsing into a tone of tenderness and pity. He now sets against his long denunciation (in vers. 3—12) an ample promise (vers. 15—19), and against his brief encouragement (in vers. 13, 14) a short menace (vers. 20, 21).

Ver. 15.—**For.** The ground of the promise of salvation in ver. 15 is God's combined might and mercy, which are now set forth. **The high and lofty One** (comp. ch. vi. 1, where the same words are translated "high and lifted up"). In God's loftiness are included at once his exalted majesty and his almighty power. He is "high" in himself, transcending thought, and "lofty" or "lifted up" in that he is absolute Lord of his creatures, and therefore high above them. **That inhabiteth eternity.** So the LXX., κατοικῶν τὸν αἰῶνα. But the Hebrew is less abstract, and would perhaps be best translated "that liveth eternally." **I dwell in the high and holy place.** Solomon's "heaven of heavens" (1 Kings viii. 27), which, however, "cannot contain him;" St. Paul's "light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16); Zechariah's "holy habitation" (Zech. ii. 13). **With him also that is of a contrite**—literally, *crushed*—**and humble spirit.** "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6); "He humbleth himself to consider the things that are in heaven and earth" (Ps. cxiii. 6). He is not an Epicurean Deity, too far exalted above man to have any regard for him, or concern himself with man's welfare (see Job xxii. 12, 13). On the contrary, he condescends to "dwell with" man, only let man have a "humble" and "crushed," or "bruised," spirit. **To revive the spirit of the humble.** When God condescends to visit the contrite and humble spirit, the immediate effect is to comfort, console, revive. His presence is a well of life, springing up within the soul to everlasting life (John iv. 14).

Ver. 16.—**I will not contend for ever.** God "will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever" (Ps. ciii. 9). If he were "extreme to mark what is done amiss," none could abide it (Ps. cxxx. 3). He remits somewhat, therefore, from the claims of strict justice, and is content to take lower ground. Were it otherwise, man's **spirit should fail before him.** Man, *i.e.*, would be utterly unable to justify himself, and would faint and fade away before the Divine fury. **The souls** which God has made would, one and all, perish. He, however, has not made them for this purpose, but that they should live (Deut. xxx. 19; Ezek. xviii. 31); and has therefore devised for them a way of salvation (see ch. liii. 5—10).

Ver. 17.—**For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth.** Among the sins that angered God most against the Jews of the later kingdom of Judah was their covetousness—that desire of unjust gain which led them continually to oppress their weaker brethren, to remove their neighbours' landmarks, to harass them with lawsuits, to obtain from the courts corrupt judgments against them, and so to strip them of their inheritances (see ch. i. 15—23; iii. 5, 14, 15; v. 8, 23; Jer. vi. 13; Ezek. xxxiii. 31, etc.). This was far from being their only sin; but it was their besetting sin, and it led on to a number of others. It would seem even to have been the principal cause of those judicial murders with which they are so constantly taxed by the prophets (ch. i. 15, 21; xxxiii. 15; lix. 3; Jer. ii. 34; xix. 4; Ezek. vii. 23; xi. 6; Hos. iv. 2; Micah iii. 10; vii. 2, etc.). Isaiah selects the sin of covetousness here, as typical or representative of the entire class of Judah's besetting sins—the most striking indication of that alienation of their hearts from God, which constituted their real guilt, and was the true cause of their punishment. **And smote him.** The form of the verb marks *repeated* action. God gave Judah many warnings before the final catastrophe. He punished Judah by the hand of Sargon, by that of Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 14—16), by that of Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11), by that of Pharaoh-Necho (2 Chron. xxxv. 20—24), by that of the Syrians, the Moabites and the Ammonites (2 Kings xxiv. 2), and others, during the hundred and forty years which intervened between the accession of Hezekiah and the completion of the Captivity. **I hid me** (comp. ch. viii. 17; liv. 8).

Ver. 18.—**I have seen his ways, and will heal him.** God had seen the wanderings of his people in perverse ways, and his heart had been touched with pity thereat. The good Shepherd follows and recalls the wanderers of the flock. When they have suffered hurt he "heals" them. He is willing to "lead" them also—to go before

them, and show them the way that they should walk in (ch. xlix. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 11—16), and "restore comforts" to them, especially to such of them as have begun to "mourn" over their perversity.

Ver. 19.—**I create the fruit of the lips**; literally, *creating the fruit of the lips*. The clause is best attached to the preceding verse. By his tender treatment of the wanderers, God brings forth fruit from their lips in the shape of praise and thanksgiving. **Peace, peace**; or, *perfect peace*, as in ch. xxvi. 3. Judah's prophets were apt to say to her, "Peace, peace," when there was no peace (Jer. vi. 14; viii. 11; Ezek. xiii. 10). Isaiah is now commissioned to give the promise from the mouth of God (comp. John xiv. 27; xx. 21, 26). **To him that is far off, and to him that is near**; *i.e.* either "to both the Gentiles and the Jews," or "to both the scattered members of the Jewish body" (ch. xi. 11; xliii. 5, 6) "and the collected nation in Canaan."

Ver. 20.—**The wicked are like the troubled sea.** A striking metaphor, but one which occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament, and once only in the New (Jude 13). The sea's restless action well expresses the unquiet of the wicked; and the mud and mire that it casts up resembles their evil thoughts and evil deeds. "There is no peace" for such persons, either bodily or spiritual, either in this world or the world to come.

Ver. 21.—Comp. ch. xlviii. 22, where the prophet ends another section of this part of his work with almost the same words.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 14.—*The ministry of angels.* Without intruding it on the reader's attention, Isaiah is continually implying the interest which angels take in all God's dealings with his Church, and the assistance which they render. Voices fill the heavenly sphere around him and about him, which can only be angelic utterances, and from time to time he records the sayings. Sometimes he records them openly as angelic; *e.g.* the seraph's words, when he took the live coal from the altar in the court of heaven, and therewith touched the prophet's lips (ch. vi. 7). But more often he names no speaker, but simply gives the words or introduces them impersonally with the phrase, "and one said" (see ch. xxi. 11; xxvi. 2; xl. 6, etc.). It is sometimes said that the Jews first learnt to believe in the existence of angels from the Babylonians. But Isaiah's writings furnish a proof, if proof were needed, that this was not so. Isaiah shows us angels—

I. AS MINISTRANT TO GOD IN HEAVEN. Above the throne of God in heaven were seen by Isaiah, in vision, a number of seraphim, or winged creatures of the angelic class, attendant upon the great King, and ready at each moment to do his pleasure (ch. vi. 2). They "stood," to show respect and reverence; they had two of their wings outspread, to show readiness to fly at once whithersoever God should send them; they had two others veiling their faces, to indicate a sense of their unworthiness to look on the face of the Almighty. As they stood, they praised God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (ch. vi. 3). The scene drawn reminds us of St. John's vision in Patmos (Rev. iv. 1—11), and also, to some extent, of the vision of Micaiah the son of Imlah, in the First Book of Kings (xxii. 19—22). The teaching of all these passages is consentient. God has always attendant upon him, in the courts of heaven, angelic beings of varied powers and capacities, who stand before him in adoration, and at the same time are eager to go whithersoever he may send them, and carry into effect his purposes.

II. AS DOING SERVICE TO MEN ON EARTH. Angels are represented by Isaiah as interested in the life of God's faithful ones, as watching God's dealings with them, and occasionally showing their sympathy. Christians are expressly taught that all angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). Isaiah seems to have divined their functions in this respect. He "sees indeed through a glass darkly," and not yet "face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12); but still he not obscurely intimates from time to time their close relationship to man. God places them upon the walls of the new Jerusalem to watch (ch. lxii. 6). They stand there, and "take no rest." They are Jehovah's "remembrancers," not reminding him of human sin or human shortcomings, but of his promises to his people, and of their need that he should give them succour (see Mr. Cheyne on ch. lxii. 6). It is, perhaps, a cry of the angels that rings out in the "splendid apostrophe," "Awake, awake, put

on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old" (ch. li. 9). Angels exchange "cries" when the promise of Christ's coming is given (ch. xl. 6—8). Angels are interested in a path being made by which the faithful ones may reach God's holy city (ch. lvii. 14). Angels call on their fellows to open to the saints the gates of heaven (ch. xxvi. 2). The dwellers in the empyrean are joined with the believers on earth in the bonds of charity and love, and form with them one community in the city of the living God (ch. lxii. 6; comp. Heb. xii. 22—24).

Ver. 15.—*The humility of God.* An ancient Jewish writer says, "Wherever the Scripture bears witness to the Divine mightiness, it brings out side by side with it the Divine humbleness" ('Megilla,' 31, *a*); and this is nowhere more strikingly manifested than in the present passage. God "dwells in the high and holy place"—in the most exalted sphere to which human thought can possibly mount; and yet at the same time he dwells with the human spirit that is humble and crushed. As Delitzsch says, "The heaven of heavens is not too great for him, and a human heart is not too small for him, to dwell in." He who sits upon the cherubim, and hears the seraphim praise him with ceaseless voice, does not scorn also to "dwell among the sighs of a poor human soul." Note, in connection with this theme—

I. THAT ALL GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH THE THINGS THAT HE HAS CREATED ARE A CONDESCENSION. It is necessary that he should "humble himself" even to "behold the things which are in heaven and earth" (Ps. cxiii. 5). He is infinitely above these things—their "goodness extendeth not to him" (Ps. xvi. 2). All contact with them is contact of the higher with the lower, and involves necessarily the higher stooping from his high estate. The distance between him and the highest of the angels is an infinite distance. His condescending to accept the praises of the angels is an infinite condescension.

II. THAT IT IS A GREATER CONDESCENSION FOR GOD TO HAVE DEALINGS WITH MEN THAN WITH ANGELS. Angels are pure, at any rate, from the taint of sin. God may "tax them with folly" (Job iv. 12), but he does not tax them with sin. There is no barrier of iniquity or impurity between God and the lowest angel. But with man the case is different. Man is "very far gone from original righteousness." He has corrupted his way before God. The best man "has sinned, and come short of God's glory" (Rom. iii. 23). "What then is man, that God should be mindful of him? or the son of man, that he should visit him?" (Ps. viii. 4). It is an extraordinary condescension and humility that God should bring himself down to the level of man, hold communion with him, "dwell" with him, "heal" him. Yet he does this. Although his throne is in heaven, "yet his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. xi. 4). He "looks down from heaven upon them" (Ps. xiv. 2). "From the place of his habitation he beholdeth all the dwellers on the earth" (Ps. xxxiii. 14). The gratitude of men should correspond to the condescension of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—10.—*Pictures of idolatry.* The idolaters are summoned to hear the judgment upon them. They are characterized as "sons of a sorceress, seed of an adulterer." The source of all idolatry is *unfaithfulness* to God regarded as the Husband of his people (Ezek. xvi. 44, 45). Yet, in their pride, these idolaters make sport of and scoff at the true servants of God.

I. THE RITES OF IDOLATRY. There were enthusiastic orgies in the sacred groves of oak and in the gardens (ch. i. 29; Ezek. vi. 13; Hos. iv. 13). There were *sacrifices* of *children* to Moloch. There were fetish-stones, which were anointed with oil, and these continued to be devoted to heathen uses. And Israel, having by covenant a "portion," or property, so to speak, in God, has exchanged this for the senseless stones; and to these food-offerings are made. The pictures of Phœnician, Israelitish, and Greek superstitions are in this respect much the same. Jehovah, in that jealousy which is the expression of a holy love, is deeply grieved by these things.

II. THE PROFLIGACY OF IDOLATRY. On the high hills shrines were erected, and tombs are still seen upon them, overshadowed by the tree on which votive offerings

hang. Saints or prophets have replaced the old gods. Here idolatrous symbols were set up. And idolatry polluting politics, the people negotiated and coquetted with heathen powers, and humbled themselves to the lowest servility. And yet these negotiations and journeys had been in vain. For all that, the attempts had been renewed. "It is a striking illustration of men seeking happiness away from God. They wander from object to object; become weary in the pursuit, yet do not renounce it; still cling to hope, though often repulsed; though the world gives them no permanent comfort, though wealth, ambition, and gaiety, all fail of imparting happiness,—yet they do not give up the pursuit in despair. The world is still pursued with just as little success, with continually augmenting evidence that it cannot satisfy the desires of the immortal soul, with just as much reluctance to seek permanent bliss in God."

III. DIVINE REMONSTRANCE. The tone is one of gentleness and softness. "Who is there so strong and so terrible as to justify thee in thy infidelity to Jehovah? None." Yet there may be some excuse for them in his long silence. Passed over again and again, it might seem that God had forgotten to be gracious—that they were hidden from him. But now he will draw near again: "The speech of mingled mercy and judgment shall work more effectually on the heart" (cf. ch. xlvi. 13; Ps. xxii. 31; xcviii. 2). Or the words may be taken *ironically*—it depends on whether we read "*my* righteousness" or "*thy* righteousness." In the coming trial, no help but Jehovah's will avail thee. "Her medley of gods" will not deliver her—the Pantheon of various divinations set up by her (cf. Micah i. 7). The wind shall carry them off like all dwellings and defences of merely human structure (cf. Matt. vii. 26, 27).

IV. ETERNAL ASSURANCE. "To take refuge in Jehovah," in the Eternal, is the only safety, the only guarantee of stability and possession, amidst the flux and change of things. To say that they shall "possess the land" is to say, according to the manner of the Hebrew, everything that denotes favour for this life (ch. xlix. 8; Ps. xxxvii. 11, 29; cf. Matt. v. 5; Ps. lxix. 35, 36). And to "inherit the holy mountain" is to enter upon all spiritual privileges and joys—"as great as if they had possession of a portion of the mount on which the temple was built, and were permitted to dwell there." And then mysterious voices are heard, hinting that all obstacles shall be removed from the path of those who trust in God. The language is suitable to the return from exile, as if persons should go before them, crying, "Cast up!" So before a pacha the labourers go and remove stones out of the way, with the cry, "Cast up the way; remove the stones!" (cf. ch. xxvi. 7; xxxv. 8; xl. 3, 4; lxii. 10). He who places obstacles in the path (Jer. vi. 21) is he who gives command in his own time for their removal. War and peace, welfare and hindrances to welfare, are from the same hand.—J.

Vers. 15—21.—*The character of Jehovah.* I. HIS EXALTATION. "High and holy:" high because holy, exalted far above the meanness of human thoughts and the impurity of human ways. Far above creatures of all species and all ranks, it is needless further to designate him. He is the Incomparable One. He dwells in eternity (cf. ch. ix. 6). His Name is "the Holy One" (ch. i. 4; xxx. 11; xl. 25; xli. 14; xliii. 3, 8; xlvii. 4); his place the high and holy place, or temple (ch. vi. 1).

II. HIS CONDESCENSION. "Wherever the Scripture bears witness to the Divine mightiness, it brings out side by side with it the Divine humbleness (Deut. x. 17, 18; ch. lvii. 15; Ps. lxviii. 4, 5)." It is not an Epicurean view of God (Acts xvii. 18), nor the Gnostic view that God had left the world to the management of inferior beings, by himself created. Though illimitable and unapproachable, he delights to make his abode with men. "He cannot direct the affairs of his people from without. He desires to be enthroned in their hearts." He is with them that are of a *contrite*, or crushed, spirit—souls bowed down with a sense of sin and unworthiness (Ps. xxxiv. 18; cxxxviii. 6), to make alive their spirit, to impart strength and comfort, even as genial rains and dews fall upon the drooping plant. Such a lowly state of mind can only have been produced by affliction (ch. lxi. 1; lxv. 14; lxvi. 2; Ps. xxxiv. 18; cxlvii. 2, 3).

III. HIS FAITHFULNESS AND LOVE. He will not be angry with his people for ever (Ps. ciii. 9). The soul could not hold out in a prolonged contention with its Maker. Its power must fail; it must sink into destruction. "If we are God's children, we are safe. We may suffer much and long. We may suffer so much, it may seem scarce possible we should endure more. But he knows how much we can bear, and will lighten

the burden and remove the load" (Ps. lxxviii. 38, 39). Why has he smitten them at all? It is because of their sin. Unjust gain is put for sin in general (cf. Jer. vi. 13; v. 1; Ezek. xxxiii. 31; Ps. cxix. 36), even, as in other places, the shedding of blood. He has seen their ways, both of sin and aberration, of suffering and amendment. Having hidden himself, he will now interpose to heal their wounds, and to guide them by a clearer path (ch. lviii. 11). (For sin as disease, and pardon as healing, cf. Jer. xxxiii. 6; 2 Chron. vii. 14; Ps. xli. 4; Jer. iii. 22; xvii. 4; Hos. xiv. 4.) And as the result of all this, he creates the "fruit of the lips" (cf. Hos. xiv. 2), *i.e.* praise and thanksgiving; of which the subject would be *peace* (cf. Eph. ii. 14—17) to the near and remote, Jew and Gentile, or with reference to the holy city; no degree of remoteness was to disqualify true Israelites from the enjoyment of the promise.

IV. THE CONTRAST. The impure and the unpardoned alone shall know no peace. Those who are in a state of alienation from Jehovah shall be, on the contrary, like the restless, ever-shifting sea (Jude 13; cf. Ovid, 'Tristia,' i. 10. 33). They have no *fixed* happiness, no substantial peace; a rage of passion ever ferments within them; past guilt casts up its mire in memory; fears of the future torment. How different from the scene where "the good man meets his fate, quite in the verge of heaven"!

So fades a summer cloud away;
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies a wave along the shore.

J.

Ver. 10.—*The weariness of life.* "Thou art wearied." What do we mean by "weariness"? Look at the word. It means "to wear;" not to wear out, but to wear away, to exhaust the nervous sensibilities, the tissues of brain and heart. So we use the word in relation to mind. We become worn and weary. St. Paul felt this. It is not lassitude which comes from indifference, but the exhaustion felt by the earnest and the faithful soul. Let us thank God for restorative power. In nature how blessed this is! The weary traveller, unable to drag his tired limbs one step further through the leaden air and under the copper sky of the East, laves his limbs in the limpid stream, and lies down to rest. When the sun fills the east with rosy light he is up and off again—the birds sing, the air is full of vitality; freshened and cheered, he is young once more! So with grace. God has provided refreshment for us all. We need not despair of reaching the goal. "They shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head." We have the ever-open fountain of a Saviour's precious blood, to which we can come for cleansing and renewal; the Holy Ghost to quicken and inspire; and the Word of God, which is spirit and life—

"Come, let us anew our journey pursue."

I. WEARINESS COMES WITH TEMPORARY DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEFEAT. I say "temporary," because God himself has promised to perfect that which concerneth us. The top-stone shall be put on the temple of character with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." The way of perfection is just the way which wearies us. The building for immortality cannot be completed in a day. Moreover, the stones are living stones. We are disappointed that the building does not progress quickly and easily. And we are human as well as Divine. We have citizenship and home to deal with. We are related to friends and to children. Think of Rebekah! She said, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth—such as these?" The motherly anxiety was at work. She knew how slight her power was in such a sphere as that of her boy's love; and she knew what life-issues depended on that. As we get older we feel "limitations" of power. We can counsel and pray, but we cannot command. The mind looks with sorrow on the feeble sceptre of the will! We stand *outside* events, and all we can do is so little. Disappointment is a school wherein we learn humility and trust in God. Disappointment is a cloud, and we wait till the heavens are clear and the all-revealing light comes again. But we are *defeated*, too, in ourselves; in others. "Depart from me," Peter said; "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"Oppressed with sin and woe
A burdened heart I bear."

But first defeat has made many a true general, has quickened many inventors, like Watt, Stephenson, and Brunel, and the vanquished one has become the victor in after-hours. Still, weariness comes—to student, explorer, scientist, and missionary, to philanthropist saddened with ingratitude, and to disciple following the Lord. But this is not the weariness of sin; *that* not only exhausts, but destroys.

II. WEARINESS COMES WITH SELF-DISCOVERY. We become more revealed to ourselves. The volcano tells what is in the earth. The lightning reveals the latent electricity in the air. Passions and lusts reveal terrible possibilities in good men. David said, "I am *weary* with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim;" and again, "I am *weary* of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." Conflict with sin in all its forms is weary, weary work. 1. *The roots are so hidden.* Like some garden weeds, they have roots that never seem uprooted, long white threads that interlace the earth and strangle other plants. 2. *The battle is so varied.* Like Stanley's passage of the falls, enemies on both banks and on the island mid-stream—cannibals who cry, "Meat, meat!" Scripture speaks of enemies who devour our souls. "Their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." 3. *The avengements are so real.* There is no escaping the voice! "Thou art the man!" And the soul cannot pretend not to hear. It turns pale. Scepticism says, "It is not a real voice!" How does scepticism know? The *induction* is so wide and comprehensive. All men feel it *after* sin. Take Divine advice. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." Weariness, you say, then, is to be expected. Yes; think of the cry of St. Paul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer is, "Christ—Christ alone." "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." More than conquerors! Yes, because we do not leave a desolate province. The gospel is a creator as well as a conqueror. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

III. WEARINESS COMES WITH UNBELIEF. It was so in the old world, and so it will be in the new. The Greeks had an underlying sadness in their outwardly beautiful life, as Luthardt so well shows in his volume on the Christian evidences. It is faith which gives life and zest. Thomas Carlyle says in his essay on Diderot, "All epochs, wherein unbelief, under whatever form soever, maintains its sorry victory, should they ever for a moment glitter with a sham splendour, vanish from the eyes of posterity; because no one chooses to burden himself with study of the unfruitful." So he shows us how French philosophism vanished into non-entity. Yes, that is it; there is non-entity, no-being in unbelief. What a glorious creed is the Christian creed —meeting all deepest necessities of sin, and want, and sorrow, and immortal instinct, by its doctrines of Divine atonement, fatherhood, sympathetic brotherhood, and eternal life! Who can be weary when he believes in One who is himself the revelation of the Father? Bringing life and immortality to light, Christ has made *this world* more beautiful. There is a deeper life even in human love. As Esther Lyon says, in 'Felix Holt,' "One likes a beyond everywhere." Men must be weary who have lost faith. 1. Round of same duties without a goal. 2. Growth a mockery merging into weakness. 3. Health into pain. Vision into dimness. Thought into blank! If this age becomes an unbelieving age, its joy-bells will all be muffled, its fruit will all wither. It is faith that foresees, foretastes, and forestores.

IV. WEARINESS COMES FROM SOLITUDE. The regiment is thinning, thinning, in which you started. You have seen many arms of the soldiers "dip below the downs" into the valley. You are beginning in a human sense to feel solitary. Yes; it is not enough to *give* help even to the poor; you must *visit* the fatherless and widows in their afflictions. Show them a face. An old woman was once speaking to me of a young visitor who was timid and shy, and could not pray with her! "What did she do then?" I said. "Oh, she *looked* at me, and it did me good!" Yes; the face *is* a revelation. The Master was weary in solitude: "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" So was St. Paul: "At Athens alone." We cannot take the poet's recipe—

> "Bury our dead joys,
> And live above them with a loving world."

No; it is ignoble to forget *them*. But the Christian is never alone. The Saviour is near. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." God grant that

all our solitude may be lightened by his presence, all our weariness refreshed by his love. Into green pastures he will lead us, by still waters he will talk to us. And all the weary and heavy-laden may find rest in him.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Three pictures of the human.* Our attention is called to—

I. A PICTURE OF HUMAN GOODNESS. A good man is represented as "the righteous," as "the merciful," as one who "walketh in uprightness." These characterizations include: 1. *The fear of God*—reverence for his Name, the worship of his Divine Spirit, the recognition of his righteous claims, a supreme regard for his holy will. 2. *The love of man*—a practical acknowledgment of his claims on our sympathy and our succour, a hearty and practical desire to promote his well-being. 3. *The regulation of daily life*, in all stations and spheres, by the laws of truth, purity, honesty, sobriety. A righteous, merciful, and upright man is one who will be making an honest and earnest endeavour to realize all this in his character and his career. Nothing less will satisfy his aspiration.

II. A PICTURE OF HUMAN THOUGHTLESSNESS. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart." When a community—nation or Church—has not been living and walking in the light of the Lord, it becomes dull of apprehension, spiritually blind, incapable of estimating the true character of events. 1. It fails to appreciate the worth of one good man's life. What an incalculable blessing a single true, pure, and holy life may be, and indeed must be! and what a fountain of good is dried up when one who leads such a life is taken away! It is a bad time, indicative of evil and prophetic of decline and death, when human worth is disregarded. 2. It fails to feel the injury and wrong done by arbitrary violence; it ought to resent it with keenest indignation, and to take vigorous steps to arrest and remove it. 3. It fails to recognize a valuable mitigation: "None considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." It is natural enough for men to wish to go on into the future, that they may see what is coming, and that they may help to shape the event; but the wise and thoughtful will consider that there may be a future impending from which they would earnestly pray God to save them. It was not a threat, but a promise, sent to Josiah, "I will gather thee to thy fathers . . . neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place" (2 Kings xxii. 20). Many are they who have outlived the period of prosperity and peace, to whom an earlier death would have been a happier lot. We cannot be sure that a sudden and even (what we call) a premature death may not be a most merciful removal from intolerable pain, or from overwhelming temptation, or from grievous burdens and sorrows. We sing, "Our times are in thy hand," and we do well to continue, "O God, we wish them there."

III. A PICTURE OF HUMAN REPOSE. "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds." From the tumult and the strain, from the battle and the burden of life, even the rest of the grave is welcome. But how much more welcome to the weary spirit is that rest which Jesus Christ has revealed, and which remaineth for the people of God!—rest in the home, in the likeness, in the glory, in the untiring service of the ascended Saviour.—C.

Ver. 10.—*Weariness in sinful error.* Whether the guilty error of Israel consisted in its departure into idolatry, or in its having recourse to the arm of flesh instead of to the power of its Divine Redeemer, we reach the same conclusion, viz.—

I. THAT SIN GOES TO TEDIOUS LENGTHS IN ITS WANDERING FROM GOD. It is "wearied in the greatness of its way." Whatever may be the particular course which iniquity may take—whether it moves in the direction of disbelief, or of covetousness, or of any one of the vices, or of worldliness—it goes far enough to find that the path of sinful error is a long and tedious road, that it is one in which the soul finds no lasting satisfaction, that there continually recurs a sense of want and spiritual craving, a hungering of the heart for that which is not supplied. Their name is legion who find their own chosen course of sin a weary round, an unsatisfying pursuit.

II. THAT, SPITE OF ITS OWN WEARINESS, IT PERSISTS IN ITS UNHALLOWED PATH. It is weary enough, yet it "says not, There is no hope." It finds just enough to maintain some kind of existence—"the life of thine hand"—to go on without being altogether changed and restored. Are there not multitudes of men who are dragging

on a weary life, profoundly dissatisfied with what they are in themselves and what they are accomplishing, and yet allowing themselves to continue in their guilty course? The path of sin is a very pitiable one; it is no wonder—

III. THAT IT CALLS DOWN A STRONG DIVINE REPROACH. (Ver. 11.) God reproaches his erring children: 1. That they have given themselves up to that which is utterly unworthy of their devotion: "Whom hast thou feared?" 2. That they have neglected the strong claims he has on their worship and service—he who has laid them under such deep obligations and has held out to them such glorious prospects; "Hast not remembered me." Nor must it be forgotten—

IV. THAT GOD'S SILENCE, AS WELL AS HIS SPEECH, IS AN ARGUMENT FOR RETURN. "Have not I held my peace . . . and thou fearest me not?" 1. God's silence is strangely and grievously misinterpreted (Ps. l. 21). 2. Instead of making it an encouragement to sin, it ought to be employed as an opportunity for repentance. It is a Divine pause, in order that, while it lasts, the guilty may reconsider and return. 3. God's silence is temporary; it is imposed on himself by a strong and merciful restraint. But it cannot be very long continued; the interests of righteousness demand that it shall be broken. Let not the impenitent presume—

"For tho' mercy be kind and its patience endure,
To the path of repentance it seeks to allure,
And they who are deaf to its voice may be sure
That God will not always be silent.
Oh, Time brings the hour—we shall soon all be there—
When the Judge on his judgment-throne shall appear,
And his sentence of mercy or wrath shall declare,
And then will no longer be silent."

C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The fate of folly and the reward of wisdom.* The Divine One whom Israel has so grievously wronged (vers. 4—9) intimates (ver. 12) that he will make known to his people the results of their apostasy from him; he will tell them "how unprofitable are their works," how suicidal is their policy; he will tell them also how great is the reward of the wise—of those who abide in his service.

I. THE BITTER FATE OF THE UNGODLY. Departing from God, they have no resort but that which they find in their own poor divinities, in those "heaps of idols" whose power is blown away with the first breath of adversity; they may cry to these wretched images, but they will meet with no response. This will prove the portion of the ungodly in every age: the powers to which, in God's absence, they have recourse will fail them utterly in their time of need; they may be numerous, they may be "companies," they may be highly esteemed, but they will certainly fail when the hour of trial arrives. Worldly wealth, a great reputation, troops of friends, high social position, varied attainments, strength of bodily constitution,—any one or all of these, or other resources besides these, may be possessed, but they will ignominiously fail in the hour of supreme necessity; they will not, for they cannot, deliver a human soul in its deepest troubles, in its darkest hours; they will be as impotent as "the chaff which the wind driveth away." "Vain things for safety" are they all. The soul of man has wants which strike deeper and which rise higher than any of them can reach.

II. THE BLESSED HERITAGE OF THE GODLY. "He that putteth his trust *in me* shall possess the land." To him may come, *will* come, hours of darkness, of loss, of trial; but he has a stay and a resource in God his Father, in Jesus Christ his unfailing Friend, which will make him *blessed* at every point of his pilgrimage, in every stage of his career. For him will be: 1. The rest of heart which comes with a consciousness of spiritual integrity. 2. Growth in all that is good and wise. 3. The happiness of heart which is found in the worship of God: "He shall inherit my holy mountain." 4. The joy of sacred service, of rendering succour, of imparting strength to the weak and comfort to the sad, of rescuing and reinstating the fallen and despairing. 5. The hope of the heavenly inheritance.—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The greatness of God and the hope of the humble.* The prophet presents us with a most noble contrast as he draws for us the surpassing greatness

of the infinite God, and then pictures him to us as resident in a humble human soul—

I. THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF GOD. And this whether we have regard to (1) *the duration of his existence*,—the fact that he "inhabits eternity," that he is "from everlasting to everlasting;" or to (2) *his position in the universe*,—he is the "high and lofty One," King of kings, Lord of lords, immeasurably removed in his majesty and authority above the highest and mightiest of his creatures; or to (3) *his character*,—"his Name is Holy." This name of holiness is indicative of all moral excellence, and reminds us that God is he in whom all goodness of every kind whatsoever has its residence and its source. So surpassingly great, in all respects, is he whom we worship, with whom we have everything to do.

II. THE HOPE OF THE HUMBLE IN REGARD TO HIM. We naturally ask—What hope is there that finite and guilty men can ever be brought into a close relationship with this infinite and holy God? what chance is there of anything like happy fellowship with him? Our text provides the answer. 1. The conclusion to which our philosophy and our experience point us—this is to a hopeless separation from him. Our *human thought* (see ch. lv. 8) would lead, has continually led, to the conclusion that God would dwell apart from man in some remote, select region of illimitable space, not concerning himself with creatures so small and insignificant as we are. Our *experience of guilt* would lead us to the conclusion that we are hopelessly barred from his presence, and that those who have grieved and wronged him, as we have done, must be content to be banished for ever from his royal presence. But against this reasoning and this instinctive dread we have to place: 2. The fact which Divine revelation establishes; "with him also [does God dwell] who is of a contrite and humble spirit." It is a well-established *fact*, built on sure premises, on words which are stronger than the hills and the skies (Matt. xxiv. 35), that God abides with all penitent souls, manifesting himself to them as their Father and their Friend, inviting their trust, their love, their joy in himself and in his near presence (see text; ch. lxvi. 2; Ps. xxxiv. 18; li. 17; cxxxviii. 6; Matt. v. 3; xviii. 4; 1 Pet. v. 5). 3. The explanation of this fact lies in two Divine attributes: (1) *His mercy*. The merciful Father desires to restore and "to revive" the heart that has been crushed under a weight of sin. He wounds, but it is in order that he may heal. He desires to see, and he promotes both by word and action, the contrition of spirit which appropriately follows a sinful deed or a guilty course; then the gracious and pitiful Lord extends his Divine mercy, and he heals the broken heart, restoring to it "the joy of his salvation," the blessedness of "the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (2) *His considerateness*. "I will not contend for ever . . . for the spirit should fail before me," etc. We have to do with a considerate Father, who "knows our frame, and who remembers that we are dust;" with a considerate Saviour, who remembers that the spirit is willing though the flesh be weak; with One who has a gracious forbearance in his chiding, lest too severe a sentence should crush the spirit he only means to bend and bless. We can hardly take too humble a view of ourselves, of the heinousness of our guilt and of the imperfection of our service; but our hope is this—we have to deal with a merciful and considerate Lord, and his friendliness toward us may be measured by the lowliness of the view we are taking of ourselves. Well may the proud of heart be afraid, for the heaviest penalties impend above their head; but let the humble-hearted be full of hope, for God is with them, and he will dwell in them, making their hearts his home.—C.

Vers. 17—21.—*The course of the soul.* These words of Isaiah indicate the course which the human spirit often takes in its downward and upward path. We have—

I. THE ESSENCE OF INIQUITY—THIS IS SELFISHNESS. "The iniquity of his selfishness," as it may be rendered. Whether it takes the specific form of rapacity, of unholy ambition, of self-indulgence or of any other special sin, you may trace iniquity home to the evil spirit of selfishness—the withholding from God, for self, of that which is due to him. Those who are transgressing none of the ten commandments in the letter, but are yet living to themselves, are living in iniquity.

II. DIVINE DISPLEASURE AND REBUKE. "I was wroth and smote him: I hid me." Our wilful departure from God and refusal of our hearts and lives excite his profound displeasure, his sacred grief—call forth his parental wrath and displeasure. In a

very solemn sense "God is angry with the wicked;" they abide under his "wrath." He is compelled to withhold from them the light of his countenance; he rebukes them; he sends the penalty which is due to sin, and which is appropriate to the particular sin which is being committed. He hides his face; he withdraws his blessing; he causes pain, disappointment, sorrow, to visit the doer, to afflict the heart.

III. HUMAN RESENTMENT AND INCREASED REBELLIOUSNESS OF SPIRIT. "He went on frowardly in the way of his heart." That which is intended to draw near, sometimes drives away. Godly sorrow works repentance; but sorrow, taken ill and treated wrongly, works death. If the heat does not melt, it hardens.

IV. THE VICTORY OF DIVINE LOVE. Still, in spite of a growing waywardness, the pity of God pursues the wandering soul. And though deceived and led astray, man travels far and wanders long, God "sees his ways;" he stretches forth the hand of power and grace, and he "heals him;" he leads him home and comforts him with the priceless blessings which are under the Father's roof. These blessings are: 1. *Reconciliation:* the being spiritually healed, being restored to God after the saddest of all separations—spiritual distance from God. 2. *Peace:* peace offered and granted to those who were more distant and also to those less far removed from truth and righteousness and purity—the peace of conscious acceptance. 3. *Praise:* "the fruit of the lips," joyful ascription unto him that redeemed and restored; the daily song of gratitude that wells up from a heart filled with gratitude and love.

V. A POWERFUL INCENTIVE TO RETURN. Perhaps it may be taken as one "fruit of the lips" that the healed and restored soul now speaks for God to men; now becomes his spokesman; now teaches transgressors his way (Ps. li. 12, 13). And one convincing and impressive truth which a home-brought wanderer can enforce better than an unfallen angel is *the hardness of the transgressor's road*, the weariness of the way to him who is leaving God for the far country, the restlessness of a heart that is separated from its Divine Source and Friend; the truth that the mirth of unhallowed enjoyment is very shallow and short-lived, that fast on the heels of guilty pleasure come pursuing pain of body and misery of soul; the fact that there is no peace to the wicked, no lasting joy to any one who has abandoned the fountain of living waters for the broken cisterns of earth and time. The plaintive cry which comes from the aching hearts and troubled lives of guilt is answered by one voice alone—by that of him who stands before all generations of men, and says, in the accents of sweet and sovereign pity "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—C.

Ver. 1.—*Mercy and wrath in the death of the righteous.* Possibly the good king Josiah is here prophetically referred to. His untimely death seems a strange dispensation of Providence even to us now. Josiah's case may be taken as illustrating the general truth which is thus stated by Bishop Wordsworth: "Good and merciful men, who are taken away in the midst of their efforts to do good in their generation, and whose endeavours appear to be disowned by God, and to be blighted and withered by him, may perhaps seem to men to be *cut off* by a violent stroke of Divine indignation, and may be mourned by some as having died an untimely death; but the truth is—which these Scriptures reveal—they are gently *gathered* by God in love, and are *in peace*." The terms used have precise significations. The "righteous" means "those who walk straight, and stand upright." An honoured pastor lay upon his dying bed, and a member of his congregation stood beside it, whose business ways were known to be somewhat shifty. Beckoning him to bend down close to him, the pastor solemnly said these few, but searching, words, "William, *go straight!*" "Merciful men" are men of kindness; gracious men, who, having themselves felt the loving-kindness of God, deal kindly with their fellow-men.

I. MERCY IS SHOWN IN SPARING THE RIGHTEOUS FROM COMING CALAMITIES. We have often to notice how graciously the death of our friends is timed. At first we wonder why they were taken *just then*, but the lapse of a few months satisfies us that they were taken "from the evil to come." The widow is removed before her little estate is wrecked by some inefficient or unfaithful trustee. The honourable business man is gathered in before some wrong-doer brings disgrace on his firm which would have broken his heart. Methuselah died the year before the Flood; Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo. Pareus just before the taking of Heidelberg; Luther a little before

the wars broke out in Germany. We have known beloved ones who all their life long prayed that they might not be spared to become troublesome to anybody, and mercy called them away almost suddenly, ere bodily powers began to decay. Most graciously the *time*, the *place*, the *manner*, of our exit from earth are divinely arranged; and in this matter too we may *perfectly trust*.

II. WRATH IS SHOWN IN REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO ONCOMING JUDGMENTS. This is one point which the prophet would enforce. The death of good men should be regarded as a sign that calamity is at hand. Righteousness can hold back judgment, as is seen in Abraham's pleading for Sodom. Prayers and intercessions can hold back judgment. Then the removal of the righteous men and the intercessors removes barriers and lets free the flood.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Insult of good men is insult of God.* "The righteous dies, and is at rest; but ye, what will ye make at last of your derision of the righteous, and of the follies and idolatries wherein ye trust? Nothing." Matthew Henry says, "Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin; for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reproved for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the Word of God with the rudest and most indecent gestures and expressions of disdain. They sported themselves and made themselves merry with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made wry mouths at the prophets, and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's servants with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them on an errand." Illustrations may be found in the treatment of Isaiah (see ch. xxviii. 7—15); of Jeremiah; and, above all, by the insults offered to the Lord Jesus by the men of Jerusalem. The "wide mouth" and the "drawn-out tongue," are the natural symbols of derision (see Ps. xxxv. 21). We may note some of the conditions under which the messengers of God are likely to be insulted and misunderstood.

I. WHEN THEY DO NOT COME IN THE REGULAR AND RECOGNIZED ORDER. God has his order of ministrants in every age, and his ordinary messages to men may be expected to come through them: patriarchs in one age, priests in another, prophets in yet another, clergy in still another. And all due honour should be put on the Divine order for the particular time. But God has always held the right of sending messengers outside the order, as he sends comets into our solar system, and there is as real a law for the sending of seemingly erratic messengers as of the seemingly erratic comets. But there is always the disposition in those who belong to the order, and the *attachés* of the order, to reject the outside man. Compare our Lord's disciples saying to the Master, "We found one teaching in thy Name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." The questions concerning any apparent messenger from God, which we ought to ask, are these—Will his work bear the test of God's revealed Word? And does God seal his work with his Divine benediction? To reject any man's work which can stand this dual test is to insult God, whose messenger he certainly is.

II. WHEN THERE ARE ODDITIES IN THE MAN HIMSELF OR IN THE MANNER OF DELIVERING HIS MESSAGE. Just as we have established the notion that there must be an "order" through whom Divine messages alone can come, so we have convinced ourselves that there are particular styles and methods in which alone Divine messages do come. So if a message is not *to pattern*, we think we are right in rejecting it. The personal peculiarities of a messenger may touch the humorous faculty, and so close men's minds and hearts against the reception of the message. But this is to insult the messenger, and in him the God who chose him and sent him with the message. We have not to ask what a man is; but we have to ask—Is he of God? If he is, we must hear him.

III. WHEN THE MESSENGER MAKES SEVERE DEMANDS. Illustrate from Jonah at Nineveh. No doubt there were many who scorned him on this ground. Also see the demand of Savonarola which led to the great burning in the market-place of Florence. Many of the wilder spirits of Florence did jeer at him. Men in every age have preferred the prophets who prophesied smooth and soft things; and they have always been disposed to reject the prophets who had to do the nobler and more necessary work

of prophesying rough things and hard things. Exactly what our over-civilized generation needs is some prophet of God, who will tell us strongly, plainly, sternly, what God would have us do. But of this we may be quite sure, even in this enlightened nineteenth century, such a prophet and teacher would have a hard time of it.

IV. WHEN THE MESSAGE GOES AGAINST THE FASHION OF THE AGE. For there are fashions in thinking and religion, as well as in manners and dress. And none of us like to be out of the thinking or religious fashion. But fashions may become slavery to us, and degrade us as slavery always does. Let a man of God come and show us the evils into which fashions—mental and religious—have brought us, and we hate the man, we cry out against him, we are all alarm, because we have deluded ourselves with the notion that *fashion* is synonymous with *truth*. Urge that we are bound to test every public witness, and decide for ourselves whether he is of God. If he is, then to neglect his message is to sin against God, and to insult him is to insult God.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The worship of stones.* "In the smooth stones of the valley is thy portion . . . even to them hast thou poured out drink offerings." A good deal of information is at command on this subject. Illustrative matter will be found in Kitto's 'Daily Bible Illustrations,' vol. 'Isaiah,' p. 209. Matthew Arnold sums up the matter in the following note: "The worship of stones is a very early form of idolatry, and originated, probably, in the veneration paid to meteoric stones—stones which, as the people said, 'fell down from heaven.' But the worship extended to other stones also. Traces of this worship occur in Genesis, in Jacob's consecration of the stones in his passage by Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 18). The Greeks, too, had this stone-worship. 'In the earlier times,' says the Greek traveller Pausanias, 'all the Greeks worshipped, in place of images of the gods, undressed stones.' We find the name Bætylia given to these stones, and it has even been conjectured that this name comes from Bethel." Smooth stones (named salagrams), chiefly from the river Gaudaki, are treated as sacred objects by the Vaishnavas all over North India. Dr. Turner writes, "I have several 'smooth stones of the stream' from the New Hebrides, which were used as idols, and have heard of precisely similar stones being used in other parts of the Pacific." At Inniskea, off the coast of Mayo, a stone, carefully kept wrapped up in flannel, used to be brought out at certain periods to be adored; and when a storm arises, this god is supplicated to send a wreck on their coast! It is narrated that there is a stone set up to the south of St. Columba's Church, in the island of Eriska, about eight feet high and two feet broad. It is called by the natives the *bowing-stone;* for when the inhabitants had the first sight of the church, they set up this stone, and then bowed, and said the Lord's Prayer. Three points may be illustrated.

I. GOD IS OFFENDED WHEN THINGS ARE PUT IN PLACE OF HIM. This is the coarser form of idolatry. Material things are superstitiously invested with powers, and become actual idols.

II. GOD IS OFFENDED WHEN THINGS ARE USED TO REPRESENT HIM. This is the refined form of idolatry which some thinking and educated persons approve. The *thing*—stone or figure—becomes for them a material representation of the invisible God. This is offensive because of the limitations it puts on men's conceptions of the Divine Being.

III. GOD IS OFFENDED WHEN THINGS ARE MADE THE MEDIUM FOR GETTING TO HIM. This is one phase of modern idolatry. It is an offence because the essence of the last, the Christian, revelation is that each individual soul can have direct and immediate access to God. There is no place for idol-mediators.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The weariness of sinful ways.* Cheyne thinks the first reference of this verse is to the ceaseless quest of the nation, in this its troublous time, for help and protection, including, of course, embassies to foreign kings, and also every other specimen of untheocratic policy. "Nothing could convince these idolatrous Jews of the folly of their misplaced trust and vain confidence." Barnes gives the following suggestive note on the general application of the passage: "This is a striking illustration of the conduct of men in seeking happiness away from God. They wander from object to object; they become weary in the pursuit, yet they do not abandon it; they still cling to hope though often repulsed, and though the world gives them no permanent comfort, though wealth, ambition, gaiety, and vice all fail in imparting the happiness

which they sought, yet they do not give it up in despair. They still feel that it is to be found in some other way than by the disagreeable necessity of returning to God, and they wander from object to object, and from land to land, and become exhausted in the pursuit, and still are not ready to say, 'There is no hope; we give it up in despair, and we will now seek happiness in God.'" Matthew Henry keenly, if somewhat quaintly, says, "Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin." Henderson puts in a good sentence the immediate and local association of the verse: "The idolatrous Jews wearied themselves with their unhallowed practices; but finding that they had not entirely exhausted their strength, they would not give up their pursuits as hopeless, but rather emboldened themselves in wickedness."

I. IT IS A FACT—SINFUL WAYS DO WEARY US. Illustrate the pursuit of pleasure by means of self-indulgence. Or the "quest of the chief good" on purely human lines (illustrate this from the Book of Ecclesiastes). Or the mastery of evil by effort of self-will. Or the effort to get eternal life by our own doings and strivings. In every case we are soon left wearied out and sick at heart.

II. THIS FACT MEN ARE SLOW TO RECOGNIZE. They will not say, "There is no hope." By all kinds of delusions men persuade themselves to try once again. The last thing men will give up is *hope in themselves* and their own self-schemes.

III. MAN'S CHANCE COMES ONLY WHEN HE IS HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE THIS FACT. He must be willing to say, "Myself I cannot save." Then, turning to God, he will say, "Thou canst save, and thou alone."—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Wrong thoughts of God keep men from repentance.* God pleads, saying, "Who filled thee with dread, or of whom wast thou afraid, when thou provedst false, and didst not remember me?" Some mental creation of God, or some false teaching concerning God, occupied the thought and the heart, and kept the men of Israel from feeling all those persuasions to repentance which come from the full and the worthy knowledge of him. Compare the expressions, "Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance;" "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Some think that the allusion is to the helpless idols in whose aid the people vainly trusted. Matthew Arnold paraphrases thus: "How could thy calamities, and the fear of thy Babylonian tyrant, make thee so superstitious and forgetful?" Illustrating the earlier method of interpreting the verse, it may be shown how wrong and imperfect thoughts of God are still the great hindrances in men's way. These wrong thoughts come either as—

I. CREATIONS OF MEN'S OWN FEARS. God too often is not to men what he really is, but what he seems to be when seen through their fears and conscience of sin. So a revelation was needed which could assure men of God's pitying mercy and forgiving love. When men, conscious of transgression and fearing judgment, try to paint God, we cannot wonder that their picture should be untrue and unworthy. The thing of which it is so difficult to persuade sinners is that there is forgiveness with God, and that he delighteth in mercy.

II. MISCONCEPTIONS OF THEOLOGICAL TEACHINGS. There is always the danger to be guarded against that the exigencies of a *system* make us fashion a suitable God, rather than try to recognize in all simplicity the God who has been revealed. Therefore, in our day, so many resist the teachings that are known as Calvinistic. The hard, legal Deity of that system is felt to represent most imperfectly and unworthily the Father of Jesus, and Saviour of the world. But we must understand that the false representations are more often found in the statements of those who attempt to expound a system than in the system itself.

III. AS ONE-SIDED VISIONS OF TRUTH WHICH NEEDS TO BE SEEN AS A WHOLE. This mistake is often pointed out in connection with the two attributes of "mercy" and "justice." The modern tendency to dwell on the milder features of the Divine nature, and to exclude the sterner ones, is perilously keeping men from that *repentance* which is the only open highway to the eternal life.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The new test of religion.* "I dwell . . . also in him that is contrite, and of a lowly spirit." The earlier test of religion had been formal, and precise obedience to all the claims and conditions of the Jehovah-covenant; the exact keeping of every

ritual, social, and national requirement. St. Paul states the old test thus: "The man that *doeth them* shall live in them." It was the work of the prophets to introduce the new moral test, and prepare the way for the higher spiritual test of Christianity. The later prophets even venture to be severe on mere ritual obedience, as if, in the sight of God, it had become quite worthless. They intimate that God searches hearts, looks for right motives, asks not for what a man *has*, save as the man can, through his gifts, *give himself to God*. The "broken and contrite heart" are especially presented because this stands in most severe contrast with the self-satisfaction and self-will of unregenerate man. If a man is humble, sensible of sin and sorrow for sin, God knows he is such a man as can be made a monument of Divine grace. (Another treatment of this theme will be found under ch. lxvi. 2.) It has been said, "God has three sorts of dwellings: first, in the *highest*; second, in the *sanctuary*; third, in *humble hearts*. The first dwelling is the *universalis præsentia*, the universal presence, by which he fills all (Jer. xxiii. 24); but there he is too high and incomprehensible for us. The second is *gratiosa*, the gracious presence, by which he lets himself be found in the Word and sacraments, and also comes finally to us, and makes his dwelling in our hearts." And the test is whether our hearts are such as he can make his dwelling in. The three tests are—

I. DOES A MAN STRICTLY OBEY AND KEEP ALL RITUAL AND SOCIAL INJUNCTIONS? That test may suffice for children, and child-ages of the world; for we must begin moral education by requiring obedience to formal commands.

II. IS A MAN IN A RIGHT STATE OF MIND AND HEART? Such a state must include *reverence* before a God so great; *thankfulness* to a God so kind; *humbleness* through a sense of shortcoming before a God who makes such claims; and *penitence* through conviction of sin against a God so holy.

III. DOES A MAN ACCEPT GOD'S GIFT OF PARDON AND LIFE IN HIS SON CHRIST JESUS? "He that believeth on the Son hath life: he that believeth not on the Son of God hath not life." We cannot be tested only by the two first tests; the third searches, and perhaps condemns us.—R. T.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The unrest of the wicked.* "But the wicked are like the sea that is tossed up, for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and mud" (Cheyne). Comp. Jude 13 for the figure. It is curious to note the marked contrast between our ideas and sentiments concerning the sea, and those of ancient times and Eastern lands. To us it is the beautiful shining sea, and many of us feel that we must see it at least once a year. To us it is the most soothing and calming of Nature's influences, and we sympathize with Bonar as he sings—

"Summer ocean, how I'll miss thee,
Miss the thunder of thy roar,
Miss the music of thy ripple,
Miss thy sorrow-soothing shore.
Summer ocean, how I'll miss thee,
When 'the sea shall be no more'!"

But to Eastern people generally in ancient times, and to Israelites in particular, the sea was a great dread. It was the separator, the engulpher of life, the restless storm-darkened, storm-tossed, wailing sea; suggestive only of foulness, unrest, and peril. So it was a type of the wicked man in ways, and with applications, which we find it most difficult to realize. But the unresting character of the sea does impress us. There is no peace to the heaving, swirling, wind-driven, tide-drawn sea.

I. THERE IS NO PEACE TO THE WICKED BECAUSE, IN HIS WAY, HE CAN NEVER GET IT. His way is breaking up the Divine order: rest can never come that way. His way is striving with everything that makes fair promises, apart from God: rest can never come that way. His way is to seek for rest in things that he can possess, not in the character which he can be: rest can never come that way. God's world was made for good men, and it will yield its best treasures to, and satisfy, nobody but the good.

II. THERE IS NO PEACE TO THE WICKED BECAUSE, ON HIS CONDITIONS, GOD WILL NEVER GIVE IT. And peace for man is the *gift of God*. So, speaking for God, Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." The wicked want to *buy*

it. God does not sell it. The wicked would consume it on their lusts if they obtained it. God will never allow his gifts to be abused. The wicked are not prepared to call that peace which God calls peace; so he will wait until they come to a right mind. Show, in contrast, that we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"—a heart-peace that works itself out into all sacred restings of life and relationship.—R. T.

SECTION VI. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND WARNINGS, FOLLOWED BY A CONFESSION AND A PROMISE (CH. LVIII., LIX.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Vers. 1—12.—FORMALISM REBUKED AND INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN WITH RESPECT TO FASTING. As in the last section, so here, the prophet's eye seems to rest upon his contemporaries rather than upon the exiles; and to note the vices of the time, which have a general resemblance to those rebuked in ch. i. The whole Law seems to be in force, and the people to make a show of keeping it, and to complain that they are not properly rewarded for their religiousness. God tears the mask from their face, and shows the difference between true religion and the pretence of it.

Ver. 1.—**Cry aloud**; literally, *cry from the throat*; "à plein gosier," as Calvin says. The command is addressed to the prophet by Jehovah, who will have him warn the people in such sort as to compel their attention. **Lift up thy voice like a trumpet** (comp. Hos. viii. 1; Joel ii. 1). The trumpet gives a note of alarm. **Show my people their transgression**; *i.e.* "show them how they are especially offending me at this time" (see Micah iii. 8).

Ver. 2.—**They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways** (compare the picture drawn in ch. i. 11—15). We have there exactly the same representation of a people honouring God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from him—zealous in all the outward forms of religion, even making "many prayers" (ch. i. 15), but yet altogether an offence to God. They are not conscious hypocrites—quite the reverse; they are bent on "doing righteousness," on not forsaking God's ordinance, on continually "approaching" him; but they are wholly without a proper sense of what religion is—they make it a matter of outward observance, and do not understand that it consists in the devotion of the heart. **That did righteousness, and forsook not**; rather, *that hath done righteousness, and hath not forsaken.* The righteousness is, of course, forensic legal righteousness—the offering of the appointed sacrifices, the abstaining from unclean meats, the avoidance of external defilement, the payment of vows, the observance of the one appointed fast, and the like. **They ask of me the ordinances of justice.** Either "they claim at God's hands righteous judgments on their enemies" (Delitzsch); or "they demand of God a fidelity to his covenant engagements correspondent to their own (assumed) fidelity to theirs." **They take delight in approaching to God.** So the LXX., the Vulgate, Calvin, Vitringa, and Kay. Others prefer to render, "they desire the approach of God" (Knobel, Delitzsch, Cheyne); *i.e.* they desire that he will come to help them against their foes.

Ver. 3.—**Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?** The fasting spoken of is probably that of the great Day of Atonement, the only fasting commanded in the Law (Lev. xvi. 29, 31). Other fasts were from time to time appointed by civil or ecclesiastical authority (1 Kings xxi. 9, 12; 2 Chron. xx. 3; Joel i. 14; ii. 12, 15); but they were rare, and do not seem to be here intended. Still, the lesson is general, and would apply to all occasions of fasting. The Jews of the time expected, it would seem, some special definite result, in the way of victory or relief, to follow from their observance of the Atonement fast. As it did not follow, they regarded themselves as ill used, and accordingly made complaint. Their feelings approached to those of the Vedic worshippers, who regarded their religious observances as "not merely pleasing the god who was the object of them, but as laying him under a binding obligation, and almost compelling him to grant the requests of the worshipper" ('Religions of the Ancient World,' pp. 143, 144). **Afflicted our soul.** These are the exact words of Lev. xvi. 29, 31, by which the fast of the great Day of Atonement was instituted. **And thou takest no knowledge**; rather, *no notice.* **In the day of your fast ye find pleasure.** Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne render, "ye carry on business," which accords better with the clause which follows. The great Day of Atonement was, like the sabbath, a day on which no work was to be done

(Lev. xvi. 29). The Jews, while priding themselves on their observance of the day, did not really observe it in this particular. **And exact all your labours**; *i.e.* "require of your servants and subordinates all the services that they have to render on other days." Days of religious observance, even under the Law, were always intended to be days of kindly forbearance towards the poor, of the remission of burdens, or even of the actual giving of relief.

Ver. 4.—**Ye fast for strife and debate.** Delitzsch explains, "When fasting, they are doubly irritable and ill tempered; and this leads to quarrelling and strife, even to striking with angry fists." This is quite a possible explanation. Or there may have been two parties, one for, the other against, fasting; and those who practised fasting may have done it, as some preached Christ, "of envy and strife" (Phil. i. 15)—to provoke the opposite side. **Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high**; *i.e.* "ye must not fast as ye do at present, if ye would have your voices heard in heaven." God will not hear the prayer of which such a fast is the accompaniment.

Ver. 5.—**Is it such a fast that I have chosen,** etc.? Do you suppose that such can be the fast commanded by me in the Law—a fast which is expressly called "a day for a man to afflict his soul"? Is afflicting one's soul simply **bowing down** one's **head as a bulrush, and making** one's **couch on sackcloth and ashes**? Surely it is much more than this. (On the employment of "sackcloth and ashes" in fasting, see Esth. iv. 3; Dan. ix. 3; Jonah iii. 6.)

Ver. 6.—**Is not this the fast that I have chosen**? This passage, as Dr. Kay observes, "stands like a homily for the Day of Atonement." Such homilies are found in the uninspired Jewish writings ('Taanith,' ii. 1; 'Nedarim babli,' p. 10, *a*, etc.), and are conceived very much in the same spirit. The Jews call the true fast "the fasting of the heart." **To loose the bands of wickedness.** To set free those whom wicked persons have wrongfully imprisoned or entangled. **To undo the heavy burdens**; literally, *to untie the thongs of the yoke.* The liberation of a man's slaves, or of Jews captive among the heathen (Neh. v. 8), is probably intended. **To let the oppressed** (literally, *the bruised*) **go free.** Remission of debts and restoration of pledges (Neh. x. 31; Ezek. xviii. 7) are, perhaps, the acts pointed at.

Ver. 7.—**Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry**? In the early Christian Church almsgiving was connected with fasting *by law* (Dressel's 'Patr. Apost.,' p. 493). It was also accepted as a moral axiom that "fasting and alms were the wings of prayer." **Cast out**; or, *homeless* (ἀστέγους, LXX.). **That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.** Their "flesh" were not merely their near kindred, but their countrymen generally (see Neh. v. 5).

Ver. 8.—**Then.** When thou hast taken this advice to heart, and adopted it, and made it the rule of thy conduct. Upon such a change in thee, all good things shall follow. Thou shalt have no more to complain of unanswered prayers or covenant promises left in abeyance (see the comment on vers. 2 and 3). **Shall thy light break forth**; *i.e.* thy glorious time shall begin (comp ch. lx. 1). **Thine health**—rather, *thine healing*; the "healing of thy bruise," or thy recovery from the low estate to which thy sins have brought thee down—**shall spring forth speedily**; *i.e.* shall soon manifest itself; and the result will be twofold: (1) thy own **righteousness** will **go before thee**—will be, as it were, thy vanguard; and (2) **The glory of the Lord**; *i.e.* the glory which he will confer upon thee, will follow thee up, and be, as it were, thy rearguard (comp. ch. lii. 12).

Ver. 9.—**If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke** (comp. ver. 6). **The putting forth of the finger.** The pointing of the finger at any one in scorn. **And speaking vanity**; rather, *speaking evil*, or plotting evil, against others.

Ver. 10.—**If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry**; *i.e.* not merely giving him bread, but giving him sympathy and compassion with it. **Then shall thy light rise in obscurity** (comp. Ps. cxii. 4, "Unto the godly there riseth up light in the darkness;" and see above, ver. 8).

Ver. 11.—**The Lord shall guide thee continually**; *i.e.* "direct thee in all thy paths—teach thee the way that thou shouldst walk in." **In drought.** In time of spiritual depression and weariness. **Make fat thy bones**; *i.e.* sustain thy strength. **Thou shalt be like a watered garden** (comp. Jer. xxxi. 12).

Ver. 12.—**They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places.** Thy descendants shall restore all that has fallen into decay in Israel, whether it be cities or customs. They shall restore "breaches" of every kind, and bring back the old paths for thee to walk in. The restoration of the ruined cities of Judah may be glanced at, but is far from exhausting the writer's meaning (comp. ch. lxi. 4).

Vers. 13, 14.—A STRICT OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH ENJOINED. While the fasting of the day only required to be spiritualized, the sabbath observance needed both spiritualizing and increased strictness. From 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21 we learn that the

sabbatical years had been little observed during the later Jewish kingdom; and it would seem from the present passage (comp. Jer. xvii. 21—23) that even the observance of the sabbath itself had been neglected. Not that the neglect was total. The sacrifices proper to the sabbath were duly offered—the "solemn assembly" was duly called and attended (ch. i. 13); but during the rest of the day business flowed in its usual course—the complete sanctification of the entire day was set aside. We find a similar laxity prevalent after the return from the Captivity (Neh. x. 31; xiii. 15, 16).

Ver. 13.—**If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath**; *i.e.* treat it with reverence, as if it were "holy ground" (Exod. iii. 5; Prov. iv. 27). **From doing thy pleasure**; rather, *from doing thy business*—the same expression as in ver. 3. It is by "business," not by pleasure, that the sabbath was polluted both in the time of Jeremiah (xvii. 21—23) and of Nehemiah (x. 31, etc.). **And call the sabbath a delight.** This is the spiritualization of the sabbath—"to call" and feel it "a delight," a real satisfaction to the soul, not a weariness (Amos viii. 5), as it was to many. **And shalt honour him**; rather, *and shalt honour it*; i.e. the sabbath, which is made masculine here, as in ch. lvi. 2. The sabbath was to be honoured by men not pursuing their own ordinary ways, or engaging in their regular business, or even carrying on their ordinary everyday talk. Literally, the command is, not to "speak words;" but no Jews were ever such strict sabbatarians as to understand this as prohibiting *all* speech on the sabbath. Some have held that sabbatical talk should be scanty, limited, restrained as much as possible; but even for this there is no warrant. It is the quality, rather than the quantity, of the words uttered that is of real importance.

Ver. 14.—**Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.** Then shall communion with Jehovah become a real pleasure to thee. The acts of worship shall not be done merely from a sense of duty, because commanded, but because they are congenial to the soul of the worshipper. A right use of the sabbath will help to form in men habits of devotion, which will make religion a joy and a delight to them. **I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth**; *i.e.* "I will give thee a prominent position in the earth, and cause thee to occupy its high places, and bear rule over many nations." Something more than a "taking triumphal possession of Palestine" is evidently pointed at (see Deut. xxxii. 13). **And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.** The world itself was the "heritage of Jacob," since in him and his seed "all the families of the earth were to be blessed" (Gen. xxviii. 14). Israel, having laid aside its formalism, and turned to God sincerely, keeping fast and sabbath as God would have them kept, not in the letter, but in the spirit, would enter upon the promised heritage, and occupy the position originally assigned to it. Israel's rejection of the gospel made the mixed Christian Church the inheritress of the old promises.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3—7.—*Rightful and wrongful fasting need to be carefully distinguished.* Among wrong kinds of fasting may be noticed the following.

I. PURELY FORMAL FASTING IS WRONG. The fasting that consists in mere abstinence from food, without any accompaniment of prayer or meditation or almsgiving, has in it nothing religious, and is an indifferent act, unless it be viewed as in some sort a pious exercise. Viewed in this light, it is a delusion and a snare—an encouragement to men to make all their religion formal, and to trust in mechanical acts as having a power to justify and to save. That which was indifferent in itself becomes wrong through the ill results to which it leads.

II. FASTING FOR OSTENTATION'S SAKE IS STILL MORE WRONG. In the time of our Lord's ministry there were persons among the Jews who, when they fasted, purposely made themselves "of a sad countenance, that they might appear unto men to fast" (Matt. vi. 16). Their sole object was to attract attention, and obtain a reputation for asceticism in religion beyond their contemporaries. They looked to making a gain out of godliness, and were so far successful that our Lord says, "They had their reward." Men accounted them holier than others, and respected them accordingly, whereas their ostentatious fasting deserved no respect.

III. FASTING FOR STRIFE AND DEBATE IS ALSO WRONG. Wherever the practice stirs up "strife and debate," it is for men to ask themselves whether such "strife and debate" are their incentives for maintaining it or no. If they fast for other, sufficient,

reasons, it may well be that there is no call upon them to relinquish the practice, because it calls forth opposition—even violent and bitter opposition. Christ declared that he "came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). Whatever is good is sure to be evil spoken of. But, on the other hand, opposition may be courted, may be the real end and aim of those who head the movement. The Jews in Isaiah's time "fasted for strife and debate;" it is not impossible that Christians may do so now. But if they do, this is certainly not such a fast as is acceptable to the Almighty, or such as will cause the voices of those who keep it to be heard on high.

Rightful fasting—such fasting as both the Old and the New Testaments allow and require—has also certain tolerably distinct characteristics.

I. RIGHTFUL FASTING MUST BE UNOSTENTATIOUS. "Thou, when thou fastest," says our blessed Lord, "anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast." There must be no desire to obtain the praise of men by the observance; there must be no parade of it; so far as possible, it must be done "in secret." Then, and then only, will the "Father, which seeth in secret, reward it openly" (Matt. vi. 17, 18).

II. RIGHTFUL FASTING MUST BE NOT MERELY OUTWARD, BUT ALSO INWARD. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness," etc.? Unless fasting be with a spiritual object and accompanied by distinctly spiritual acts, it is absolutely vain and idle. Its natural spiritual concomitants are (1) repentance (1 Kings xxi. 27; Neh. ix. 1, 2; Joel ii. 12, 13; Jonah ii. 5—10, etc.); (2) prayer (Dan. ix. 3; Joel ii. 17); (3) almsgiving, and other acts of charity and mercy towards our fellow-men (ch. lviii. 5—7). To neglect such acts, and to regard the mere *opus operatum* of fasting as having any spiritual efficacy, is a most dangerous delusion, and one akin to the heresy of Montanus.

Ver. 13.—*Rightful and wrongful keeping of the sabbath need to be distinguished.* I. The more worldly among the Jews were inclined to a mere perfunctory keeping of the sabbath. They shut up men's religious duties on the day within the corners of the Levitical enactments; and considered that, if the legal sacrifices were offered, and the "holy convocation" held and duly attended, the rest of the day might be employed exactly as they pleased. They pursued their secular occupations on the sabbath day with all freedom—bought and sold, carried their corn, trod the wine-press, conveyed commodities from place to place, and engaged in every form of traffic and merchandise (Neh. xiii. 15, 16). This was the lowest theory of sabbath-observance propounded by any, and it received direct and severe condemnation from Jeremiah (xvii. 21—23) and Nehemiah (xiii. 15, 16).

II. A second form of observance added to the Levitical enactments with respect to sacrifices and the "holy convocation," an abstinence during the rest of the day from work of every sort—an abstinence which was sometimes pushed to excess, as when it was interpreted to forbid self-defence in war (1 Macc. ii. 34—38). These religionists were content to remain in a negation, and, so long as they preserved the sabbatical rest unimpaired, were fully satisfied in their consciences. Something of the same spirit, it is to be feared, still pervades certain parts of Christendom. Mere abstinence from work—a negative "folding of the hands"—appears to be thought acceptable to God; and the sabbath is given a morose aspect by the disallowance of occupations which are innocent, which conduce to cheerfulness, and which are in no way at variance with piety.

III. The third and only rightful form of observance, here touched by Isaiah, and more fully taught by our Lord (Matt. xii. 3—13), consists, in the first place, in "making the sabbath a delight." It should be made a delight, both to ourselves and to others. God's people should look forward to their sabbaths as times of refreshment and of "joy in the Lord"—oases in the wilderness of life, glimpses and foretastes of heaven. Music should lend its charm to them, intensifying and elevating devotion; the aid of other arts should be called in; churches should be aglow with floral beauty; preaching should be warm and heart-stirring; and the highest act of Christian worship should be viewed as the crowning perfection of the feast-day. In the next place, our Lord's example should be followed, and his words remembered, "It is lawful *to do good* on the sabbath day." Acts of mercy and loving-kindness to our fellow-men are pointed

out by him as our best employment on the sabbath; it is the special day on which to visit the sick, to clothe the naked, to give our bread to the hungry, to relieve the oppressed, to carry the glad tidings of the gospel to the poor and ignorant. It is also a day part of which may well be devoted to the strengthening of family affection by oral or written communications with relations from whom the business of life commonly separates us, and also for kindly talk with our neighbours and friends. Without in any way secularizing the sabbath, we may give it a cheerful, kindly, friendly aspect, and cause it to be regarded in our families, not as a "dull time," with difficulty to be "got through," but, as it was intended to be, the crown of the week—the special "day which the Lord hath made," to the end that we should "rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. cxviii. 24).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*True and spurious fasting.* Loudly, with all the strength of throat and as with trumpet-voice, the prophet is to cry and denounce the rebellion and the sins of the people.

I. THEIR FORMALITY AND HYPOCRISY. They consult Jehovah daily; they apply to the prophet or the oracle; they offer prayer. They profess to desire to know God's ways, his commands, and his dealings with his people. Just as if they were a holy people, and were not really far in heart from God, they demand of him "judgments of righteousness;" *i.e.* manifestations of his pleasure as the God of the covenant, his approach as the God of justice. They adhered to the forms of religion, but the heart was not in them. Relying on those forms, they were surprised the Divine favour was not vouchsafed to them. "A hypocrite has no true and real delight in the service of God or in his truth; but, at the same time, there may be a great deal of *professed* interest in the ways of God. A great deal of busy and bustling solicitude about the *order* of religious services, the external organization of the Church, the ranks of a clergy, the claims of a liturgy. There may be a great deal of pleasure in theological discussion, in the metaphysics of theology, in the defence of what is deemed orthodoxy. There may be much pleasure in the *music* of devotion, in the pleasant voice of a preacher, in the triumphs of party, the advancement of our sect. But true religion is delight in religion itself—in the service of God as such, and because it is holy. It is pleasure, not even in the triumph of Christianity as a mere party measure, but in God as he is, his holy service and truth" (Barnes).

II. SPURIOUS FASTING. Formal fasting appears to have increased from the time of the Captivity. Another phrase for it was "humbling the soul" (Lev. xvi. 29, 31; xxiii. 27, 32; Numb. xxix. 7; xxx. 13). In connection with this outward observance, they keenly pursue business ends, exacting the full tale of tasks. "Like Shylock, they demand the pound of flesh, at the same time that they may be most precise, punctual, and bigoted in the discharge of the duties of religion. If we desire to keep a fast acceptable to God, it should be such as shall make us kind, mild, benignant; such as shall take effect in the unbinding heavy burdens from the poor, and relaxing the rigidness of the claims we have on others." Moreover, the fasting is connected with strife and contention; and so their prayers cannot rise to the seat of Jehovah (ch. lvii. 15). "Thou hast covered thyself with clouds, so that prayer may not pass through" (Lam. iii. 44).

> "Their words fly up, their thoughts remain below;
> Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

The inclination of the head, the sackcloth and the ashes,—these make not the fast in the eyes of Jehovah. "It is not a mournful expression, a solemn dress, or a thin table that God so much regards. It is the heart, and not the stomach, that he would have empty; and, therefore, if a man carries a luxurious soul in a pining body, or the aspiring mind of a Lucifer on the hanging head of a bulrush, he fasts only to upbraid his Maker, and to disgrace his religion, and to heighten his final reckoning, till he becomes ten times more the son of perdition than those who own their inward love of sin by the open undissembled enmities of a suitable behaviour. Let a man not count himself to have

fasted to any purpose, if by it he has not got ground of his corruption, in some measure supplanted his sin, and estranged his affections from the beloved embraces of sinful objects" (South).

III. THE TRUE FASTING. There was elaborate and merciful legislation for the protection of Hebrew slaves (Exod. xxi. 2; Deut. xv. 12; Lev. xxv. 39); yet it appears to have become a dead letter, which called for severest castigation (Jer. xxxiv. 8, etc.). "To loose the bands of wickedness," to release those borne down by exactions contrary to the Law, to "untie the thongs of the yoke" (to free those detained beyond the legal time), to raise up the "crushed" (in the spirit of him who cherishes the crushed reed, ch. xlii. 3; Cheyne), *this* was the chosen fast of Jehovah. It was "to break bread to the hungry, and to bring miserable outcasts to their home" (cf. Ezek. xviii. 7, 16). It was "to clothe the naked, and not to hide one's-self from one's own flesh." It is known that from time to time, both in the Jewish and the Christian Churches, almsgiving has been exalted into a religion and a morality, instead of remaining the expression and fruit of a pure heart. None the less it may be true that at certain times the duty may stand in the forefront of piety, and the neglect of it leave the reproach of "worse than the infidel" on the conscience. Righteousness is not coincident with almsgiving; but almsgiving, like any other external act, may be perverted into a formalism (as we see from Matt. vi. 1—4). Charity must begin at home. The outcasts (Joel iii. 2—8; Neh. v. 8), and those of the same flesh (Neh. v. 5), are especially those of one's own house and country. "The condition of a truly religious fast is that it be attended with alms and works of charity. Amongst our other emptinesses, the evacuation of the purse is proper to this solemnity, and he that inflicts a thorough penance upon this, stops the fountain of luxury and the opportunities of extravagance. Charity is the grand seasoning of every Christian duty; it gives it a gloss in the sight of God, and a value in the sight of man; and he fasts properly whose fast is the poor man's feast, whose abstinence is another's abundance. God here roundly tells his people what is truly a fast and what is no fast in his esteem—not to abstain from bread, but to deal it to the hungry; "this is properly to fast. Not to wrap ourselves in sackcloth, but to cover and clothe our naked brother; this is to be humbled. Alms have so much the pre-eminence over prayer, that one is a begging of God, the other a lending to him" (South).

IV. PROMISES TO THE OBEDIENT. "Thy light shall break forth as the morning" (cf. Job xi. 17). Like the spreading welcome light of "rosy-fingered dawn," prosperity will come to gladden their hearts. "Thy new flesh shall quickly shoot forth." Old wounds shall be healed, and the vital forces, which have been checked, shall resume their activity. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee." Personal rectitude (ch. i. 27; xxxiii. 5, 6) shall be as a leader, conducting them in the paths of prosperity and peace; and in the rear of the host shall be Jehovah's glory (ch. lii. 12). Here, then, is *joy, vigour, confidence*, all connected with rightness; this rightness found, where alone it can be found, in mind and heart conformed to the Divine will. Prayer will be heard and answered (contrast vers. 2, 4). A God distant and exiled will give place to one so near that a cry will bring his presence and his help. As the last note of despair is, "Where is our God?" the highest point of faith is reached by those who hear him say, "Here I am!" But God would ever be near, were it not for the "thick cloud" of sin between the heart and him. Only let the oppression and the contumely and the defilement of the tongue, reflected in the defilement of the mind, cease, and the better springs of the inner life will rise. When they rise, there will be blessing around one, and other lives will be gladdened; and, when this shall be, then "thy thick darkness shall be as noon;" life shall be a progress under Divine direction; there shall be refreshment, comfort, exhilaration, and restoration of the ruins of the past.—J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The claims of the sabbath.* I. THE HOLINESS OF THE SABBATH. "The prophet regards the fast-days as forms without authority and significance. All the more strict is his view of the claims of the sabbath" (Cheyne). It is emphatically a *consecrated* day, and the foot is to be turned aside from it as if it were holy ground, like that where Moses put the shoes from his feet (Exod. iii. 5). The foot, as instrument of travel, is to be "removed from evil" (Prov. iv. 27), and its "path is to be pondered" (Prov. iv. 29). Selfish, merely human business, is not to be done on that day, which

may be viewed as a part of that great duty of sacrifice which runs through the Law. The day was to be *peculiarly* Jehovah's own. A particular *temperance* and *modesty* of the tongue was suitable to its observance. Falsehood (Hos. x. 4; Job xv. 13) would especially desecrate it. Scripture is especially strong on the *significance of words*. For they *express* the soul, and reflect in their expression influences of good or evil on the soul again. There should be reserve and economy of speech (a lesson disregarded too much in modern times), for an element of sin is certain to find its way into excessive loquacity (Prov. x. 19; Eccles. v. 3). A "tonguey man" almost means the same as a malicious talker (Ps. cxl. 11). The regulation of the tongue may, therefore, in great part, be taken as the measure of spiritual self-control and sobriety, as the expression of the living sacrifice of the heart.

II. THE BLESSING ATTACHED—SPIRITUAL DELIGHT. Joy in Jehovah, the Eternal, is manifested to men in grace, in proportion as they approach him in obedience. "You shall no longer be left to barren ordinances and to unanswered prayers. No one has ever properly observed the sabbath who did not find as a consequence that he had increased pleasure in the existence, character, and service of Jehovah" (cf. Job xxii. 21—26; Ps. xxxvii. 4, for the illustration of the principle involved). *Triumphant possession of the land of promise.* (For the phrase, see Deut. xxxii. 13; cf. Hab. iii. 19; Ps. xviii. 33; Amos iv. 13. For the idea, see ch. lxv. 9; Ezek. xxxiv. 13, 14; xxxvi. 1—12.) The hills and fortresses of Palestine, so greatly beloved by the patriot-hearts of the prophets, shall be recovered by the people, once following the righteous moral lead of Jehovah.—J.

Ver. 2.—*Delight in God.* "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways." Religion is little if it is not delight in God. This is its true touchstone. It is what we *love* that constitutes an abiding test. If we do not feel at heart the blessedness of religion, we may discover that we are only seeking it for selfish safety, or for the world's approval of a respectable name.

I. THE DAILY ORISON. We *seek* that which we desire; and how ingenious is love in finding words of communication and opportunities of intercourse of heart with heart! A look may carry with it prosperity and hope. Prayer is not in *words*, nor, let us remember, is it in *thoughts;* it is what we *desire* that we really pray for. Our wishes are our supplications. What your heart is eager after is the devotion that God sees. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." "They seek me daily." Communion with God is not a cry in danger, or a beseechment in hours of special anxiety and necessity; it is an Enoch-like life—a "walk with God."

II. THE DELIGHTFUL KNOWLEDGE. "Delight to know my ways." 1. *That they may follow God.* 2. *That they may see God in everything.* 3. *That they may please God.* 4. *That they may be prepared to live in him and with him for ever.*—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*Practical godliness.* "As a nation that did righteousness." No word occurs oftener in the Bible than this word "righteousness." It is the granite foundations of God's government. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And it is this which is the salt of a nation. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." There may be much sentimentality in human beings without the cardinal virtues; but, wanting these, all else is meretricious and hollow.

I. THE GLORY OF ISRAEL. They *were not* a large nation, nor were they in the strict sense a military people. But they had this high vantage-ground of influence—the God-given laws of Sinai, and the prophets of the Lord of hosts to counsel and reprove them. But their glory was not simply that they *had* the Law, or *knew* the Law, but that they *did* righteousness. And this was their true guerdon. Whilst they so lived they were safe, honoured, and happy. Their fall was from within. The armies of Rome only overthrew them because the nation's heart was corrupt. The rotten fruit drops—the storm only expedites its fall.

II. THE GLORY OF ANY NATION. This, and this alone, is glory. Not vast fleets and imposing armies, not a full exchequer and extensive colonies, but righteousness. 1. *Equity in jurisprudence.* 2. *Honour in trade.* 3. *Justice to all and for all.* 4. *Purity in morals, or a right government of the passions.* 5. *Fairness to all other nations.*—W. M. S.

Ver. 6.—*A religious fast.* "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" Which? The contrast is seen in the inclusive words from the fourth to the ninth verses. God does not delight in outwardness. The mere mannerism of religion, or the head bowed as a bulrush, with sackcloth and ashes beneath, is hateful to the Most High.

I. FASTING IS TO BE REALLY RELIGIOUS. It is to "loose the bands of wickedness"—to free one's own soul from the last shackles of lust and selfishness, and to aid in liberating the souls of others. Religious effort is to deal directly with character, and not with the countenance; with the habits of evil, and not the ritual of ceremonies.

II. FASTING IS TO BE DEEPLY HUMAN. It is to care for our brethren in the world. 1. *Many are heavily burdened.* Care writes its lines on the anxious brow, and often the heart is grey while the hair is yet black. 2. *Many are oppressed.* Justice is the subject of bribery, and wealth lords it over poverty; moreover, slavery existed then, and has done till recent years, and the war against slavery has come from religious men. 3. *Many are under varied yokes.* Yokes of intemperance and pernicious habit—of selfishness in its worst forms of cruelty to others. 4. *Many are helplessly poor.* Not through crime, or faults of their own, such as indolence and inebriety, but through sudden calamities and severe illnesses. We must feed the hungry and cover the naked. 5. *Many are neglected by their own.* The workhouse has received to its dull shelter those connected with the well-to-do and the well-born; or "relatives" have never been inquired after, sympathized with, or succoured. "And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh."

These words in Isaiah teach us that the ancient Law was not simply legal and ceremonial, and outwardly sacrificial, but social, moral, and religious in the highest degree. Such Law Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil.—W. M. S.

Ver. 8.—*The break of day.* "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning." The hindrances to progress in God's Church are not in Divine limitations, but in human perversions.

I. THE LIGHT IS THERE. We hide it under the bushel of our formalism and worldliness. Divine revelation gives it—yea, keeps it alive; and if we remove the obstacles to its glory, it will burst forth. Many blame religion for the faults and formalities of nominally religious men.

II. THE REVELATION OF THIS LIGHT IS A MORNING. Mornings have often come alike in Jewish and Christian history. Isaiah awakened the Hebrew nation to a new life. Mediævalism with its dark superstitions, the inquisition with its abhorrent cruelties, did not destroy Christianity. What has been well called the "morning of the Reformation" came. Look back now to Savonarola, and you will see what one man can do to herald a better day in darkest times. Then! Not by an accident in history, nor by an arbitrary decree of God; but by obedience to his Word and by the baptism of his Spirit. And beautiful as are all mornings, when the sun touches the clouds with gold, and fills the earth with splendour, and makes dancing sunshine on the sapphire sea, none are so beautiful as the mornings of new moral life for the world.—W. M. S.

Ver. 13.—*The sabbath ideal.* "Call the sabbath a delight." It cannot be a holy day unless it is a happy day. For only souls that joy in God are really devout. Unless religious exercises have a charm for the soul, they are only routine; they are not religious.

I. A SEEMING CONTRADICTION. "Turn away thy foot . . . from doing *thy* pleasure." And again, "Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure." But there is no *real* contradiction. Many things are rightly enough pleasant to us in daily occupation and association; but things right in themselves may be wrong if indulged in under *improper conditions*; and the sabbath is to be holy unto the Lord—and in the Christian dispensation it is called "the Lord's day." This is to dominate everything. Those who seek worldly pleasure upon this day hinder others from fellowship with God, and keep from that constancy of vision on heavenly things by which alone they can be indelibly impressed on the mind and the heart.

II. A SOLEMN OBLIGATION. It is a day that should be made pleasant, not merry nor mirthful, but full of all the highest and best enjoyments. Praise is pleasant—it awakens a remembrance of mercy. Fellowship is pleasant—it nerves the fainting soldier's heart to look at his companions in arms, and it cheers the weary to hear of

"the rest that remaineth." Christian parents should take heed to this. Dulness and moroseness are not religion. Literature is none the less Christian that is well illustrated, and written with all the charm of an attractive style; and the church of God is none the less the house of the Lord and the gate of heaven, that the service is in itself cheerful and bright. There is no memory more potent for good than the remembrance of the happy sabbaths of our childhood. And service for others helps our joy; to call the sabbath a delight, we must be, if possible, givers as well as receivers—like Nehemiah, "cup-bearer of the King," handing the living water to others.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—12.—*Religion: its semblance, its substance, its reward.* I. THE SEMBLANCE OF RELIGION. It argues nothing whatever against religion that there is a great deal of hypocrisy in the world; indeed, the absence would be a more formidable argument than the presence of it. For men imitate that which is most worthy of esteem, and if *nobody pretended* to be religious it would be fair to conclude that religion itself was of very small account. Imitation implies the respect, and indicates the value, which is attached to anything which is copied. It speaks well, therefore, for religion that men more often affect to be religious than they pretend to any other excellency. There may be: 1. *Acts of devotion.* "Seeking God daily"—"Approaching him" in the attitude and engagement of "prayer," whether in the secret chamber, the family circle, or in the house of God. 2. *Consultation of his Word.* "Asking of God the ordinances of justice"—the regular and systematic reading of Scripture. 3. *Special acts of piety.* Like that of fasting, which was not enjoined by Mosaic Law (except on one day in the year); or observing certain particular days as days of humiliation and devotion, or ostentatious deeds of beneficence. Concerning these outward shows of piety, it has to be observed: (1) That, begun in insincerity, they may become positively pleasurable to those who practise them. There are many who always go through religious rites with labour and weariness of spirit; but there are others who find enjoyment in the ceremonies and services in which they engage. They may be said to *delight in them* (ver. 2). Love of the artistic, fondness for distinction, or other earthly considerations, may account for this; but it is also an undeniable fact that many who do not please God with their observances do greatly please themselves. (2) That it is the solemn and urgent duty of the minister of Christ to show the utter insufficiency of these things. He is to "cry aloud, and spare not, to lift up his voice like a trumpet," to show those who pass for God's people that, if they have nothing better to bring to the heart-searching God than hollow phrases, formal services, outward actions which are not animated by inward feeling, they are living in transgression and in sin (ver. 1). He is to insist upon it with utmost earnestness, that only they can worship God acceptably who worship him "in spirit and in truth;" and that if the semblance of piety be divorced from a holy and useful life (ver. 4), it weighs nothing whatever in the balances of heaven (ver. 5). Those who have the form of piety without the substance may consider themselves to be of the number of the faithful (ver. 3); but they are miserably mistaken. God decisively and peremptorily rejects such empty formalities (ver. 5); nay, they are positively offensive in his sight (ch. i. 13—15).

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF RELIGION. The teaching of the text is that real piety is to be found in such fear of God as will manifest itself in doing his holy will in all the relations of human life; such reverence for the Supreme as will constrain men to do what is right and good in all their dealings with their equals and their inferiors; such piety as bears the fruits of: 1. *Peaceableness:* the exact opposite of strife and smiting (ver. 4). 2. *Justice:* loosing the bands of wickedness, letting the oppressed go free, etc. (ver. 6). 3. *Kindness:* feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, etc. (ver. 7); practical recognition of the claims of the suffering humanity which we can pity and can succour (ver. 10). This is "the fast," this is the piety, which God has chosen—that love of God which shows itself in the love of our neighbour (Lev. x. 25, 37; Rom. xii. 20, 21; Jas. i. 27; ii. 14—26).

III. THE REWARD OF RELIGION. It is quite true, profoundly true, that real religion is its own reward. Well does the active servant of Jesus Christ beg to be continued in his holy work, saying—

"And I will ask for no reward,
Except to serve thee still."

But God offers to us, and even *presses on our acceptance,* his ample and generous rewards for our genuine and faithful service. These are, under Christ: 1. *Spiritual illumination* (ver. 8); being made to be the children of light and of the day, walking in the light of Divine truth, receiving the communications of the enlightening Spirit. 2. *Soundness of soul,* wholeness of heart and character—"health" within (ver. 8). 3. *Divine guidance and protection.* (Vers. 8, 11.) 4. *Communion* with the living and present Saviour (ver. 9). 5. *Fruitfulness; ourselves* being as a "watered garden" for beauty and productiveness (ver. 11); and *our work* resulting in moral and spiritual restoration (ver. 12).—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The day of sacred rest.* The institution of the weekly sabbath is certainly one of the "water-marks" of revelation. It is not possible to conceive of anything more wise and beneficent than this provision for our bodily and spiritual well-being. Who can calculate the material or the moral benefit which it has conferred on the human race? Who can estimate the blessing it will have proved to humanity when time has run its course? Whether we regard it in the lower or in the higher aspect of the question, its value is simply inestimable. We may look at—

I. THE GROUND OF ITS OBSERVANCE. The Jews had special reasons for honouring the day. Its observance was part of their statute law (Exod. xx. 8—11). But all mankind have reason enough for giving it a conspicuous place in their custom and their commandment. 1. It has its commencement at the very dawn of human history (Gen. ii. 2, 3). 2. It was inculcated in the most solemn form, and enforced by the weightiest sanctions on the Hebrew people; and although it is not, on that account, binding on us as a Divine enactment, yet the fact that it was made of so much consequence in the judgment of the Divine Legislator, and had so large a part in the training of the healthiest and purest people the world has ever known, is a very strong argument in favour of its perpetuity: we may surely elect to continue that which we are not formally bound to adopt. We find a powerful reason for so doing in the text and in similar passages, where we have the significant fact that: 3. It finds a prominent place in prophetic utterance. Inasmuch as the prophets were the strong and even vehement opponents of ceremonialism, and (as in the previous verses of this chapter) made everything of the moral and the spiritual, their testimony concerning the sabbath day has peculiar value. It points to a Divine intention that it should not pass away with the local, the rudimentary, the temporary, but hold its ground with the abiding and the permanent. 4. It was stated by our Lord to have been "made for man" (Mark ii. 27). 5. In the new form of the "Lord's day," commemorating the crowning work not of creation but of redemption, it was honoured by the apostles of our Lord. We may, therefore, conclude, in the exercise of our reason, that it is the will of Christ that we should observe one day in seven as a day of sacred rest.

II. THE TRUE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE. 1. The spirit of *self-renunciation.* The Hebrew saint was to "turn away his foot from the sabbath, from doing his pleasure on God's holy day;" *i.e.* he was to lay aside his customary labours, and to refrain from ordinary amusements on a day on which God asked for contemplation and worship. As Christians, we come to the conclusion that it is the will of our Saviour that we should give to him our homage, our docility, our sacred zeal; we therefore gladly forego the common engagements and enjoyments of our life, "not doing our own ways," in order that we may do his will and gain his good pleasure. 2. The spirit of *devotion.* The corollary of the cheerful renouncement of our own business is the adoption of God's worship and service as the appropriate engagement of the day. Quitting our home and shunning the mart and the place of amusement, whither should we go but to the house of the Lord, to the field of sacred usefulness? And how can we better spend our time or occupy our powers than in the manly, the lofty, the elevating engagements of devotion and sacred service? Then do we reach our highest mark, and most nearly attain the true standard of our manhood, the richest heritage of our race. Then do we "delight ourselves in the Lord;" then is God what he was to Abraham, and what he will be to us all when we receive the fulness of our inheritance—our "exceeding great Reward." 3. The spirit of *sacred joy.* We shall "call the sabbath a delight," shall *find* it so, and shall do our best to *make* it so—to the children, to the employed, to the lonely and the confined, who can be visited and cheered in the quiet home, in the sick-chamber.

III. ITS LARGE REWARD. 1. In immediate spiritual enjoyment; in the gladness of heart with which the worship of God is anticipated (Ps. cxxii. 1); in the joy of holy fellowship and sacred song; in the happiness of domestic piety. 2. In the continuous spiritual blessedness to which it leads; for a true use of Christian privileges ends in the reconciliation of the soul to God, and in the possession of his abiding favour, in the life-long friendship of Jesus Christ; there is daily, continual "delight in the Lord." 3. In the realization of the kindest promises of God. To Israel was offered the excellency of "riding on the high places of the earth," and being "fed with the heritage of Jacob." To us, if we truly seek God's face until we find his favour, is offered (1) the guidance of an unerring finger and the protection of an almighty arm along all the path of life, whether along higher or lower levels; (2) the exercise of a benign and gracious influence on human hearts—an influence which will live when we are gone; (3) entrance into the heavenly kingdom.—C.

Ver. 2.—*The offence of merely external religiousness.* "And [yet] me they consult daily, and to know my ways they desire: as a nation that hath done righteousness, and hath not forsaken the Law of God, they ask of me judgments of righteousness" (Cheyne). "The words point to the incongruous union, possible in the reign of Manasseh, but hardly possible after the exile, of the formal recognition of Jehovah with an apostate life. Every phrase rings in the tone of an incisive irony, describing each element of a true devotion which the people did *not* possess" (Dean Plumptre). External worship is insufficient, a change of heart is needed; God asks what we *have*, and what we can *do*, only because through these things hearts can find expression.

I. CEREMONIES AND SYMBOLS ARE GOOD. Within due limits. We cannot conceive the sort of religion that may suit angels or pure spirits. Perhaps it has no ritual. But our religion must be that of spirits working through human bodies, and therefore it must have form. For man God instituted or recognized sacrifices. For some men he appointed Judaism. Heart-feeling may be strengthened by expression, but capacity of feeling may be exhausted by expression. There is a measure of truth in the saying that, for many persons, religious truth needs to be set in the picture-teaching of ceremonial. They are not wise who refuse to see value in organization and ordinances.

II. OBEDIENCE AND HEART-SERVICE ARE BETTER. Because the thing expressed must be better than the expression. Ceremony can have no moral value apart from the heart and the will (see Ps. xl. 6—8; li. 16, 17; Prov. xv. 8; ch. i. 11, 12—16; lxvi. 3; Jer. vii. 22, 23; Hos. vi. 6; Amos v. 21—24; Micah vi. 6—8). We should not be able to conceive of God as a moral Being, if we were not sure that he puts obedience *first;* a father does; a king even does.

III. TRUE HEARTS ENDEAVOUR WISELY TO BLEND BOTH. They find out the practical value of well-ordered and well-kept religious habits. Three things occupy serious attention. 1. How to get good religious habits formed. 2. How to keep the forms instinct with life. 3. How to keep the forms within wise limitations. Every man finds out that the "seen" is constantly endeavouring so to satisfy him that he shall cease to care for the "unseen."

IV. IF WE CANNOT HAVE BOTH, WE MUST SACRIFICE THE FORM, NOT THE SPIRIT. There are times when it seems as if one must be sacrificed. The tone of an age may give extraordinary force to ceremonial; *e.g.* an age of decayed religion, such as the time of Christ; an æsthetic age such as ours is. Now it has become our duty to limit ceremonial to the efficient expression of spiritual life and feeling.—R. T.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Selfishness spoiling religious habits.* "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure." That is, you make your religion a mode of pleasing yourselves. You really enjoy your fastings. Two points may be illustrated and enforced. As introductory, it may be shown that externalism is the special temptation of a people who have been cured of idolatry. Pharisaic formalism is the evil that threatens a nation that rebounds from the notion of many gods to the idea of one, spiritual God. "Self" becomes, in a subtle way, the idol of men's worship.

I. SELF-PLEASING IS AN END GAINED IN RELIGIOUS DUTIES. Those who give them-

selves heartily to the religious life do come positively to enjoy it. It is the Divine reward of their devotion that they find personal pleasure in their pious works and ways. What strikes us as a most marked contrast between the older and the new religious life is this—our fathers found their pleasure *in* their religion, while we find our pleasure in anything and everything but our religion. The irksomeness of religious services and religious works is the sure sign that we have little or no pleasure in these things. God does not give us this reward because our hearts and energies are not in such things. A kind of force and fear holds us to a round of engagement; relics of old association and of an old sense of duty, keep us to formal acts of worship; but when the heart is gone out of religious service joy goes too. The lost sense of pleasure is not the worst thing in our spiritual condition, but it may be one of the signs of the worst. Self-pleasure is God's reward—is one of the proper ends of the pious life.

II. SELF-PLEASING MUST NOT BE THE END SOUGHT IN RELIGIOUS DUTIES. We need not dwell on the case of the hypocrite, who purposely seeks ends of his own in making his show of piety. It is more searching to deal with the case of the self-deceived, who mistakes the idea of religion, and thinks himself to be serving God when he is only gratifying himself; and with the case of those who act from divided motives, and are always in danger of making self-pleasing the ruling one. God is to be honoured, obeyed, and served for his own sake alone, no matter what a man may get or lose by his service. It is the sternest reproach of some professed followers of God, that "they feared Jehovah, but served *their own gods;*" it would adapt the expression to modern mistakes if we read it, "They feared the Lord, but lived for ends of self-pleasing." It may be shown that the teachings concerning the *heaven* which is to be obtained through a religious life are too often presented as an encouragement to self-pleasing. Illustrate by the calamity that befell Pliable, in 'Pilgrim's Progress,' who was going on pilgrimage for the sake of what he himself would get by it.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*God's idea of fasting.* It should be noticed, as giving special point to this reference to fasting, that, besides the regular fasts of the Jewish religion, there were, during the Captivity in Babylon, special fasts appointed as days of repentance and prayer for Israel. God complains that these fasts did not say to him exactly what those who fasted intended them to say, because he looked at the whole conduct of the men to see if it was in harmony with the fasting. The important principle is here illustrated that, if a man be right with God, he will be right also with his fellow-men. If a man does not forgive his brother his trespasses, he cannot be in such a state of mind as makes it any use to him for God to forgive his trespasses. If a man is harsh, exacting, violent, in his dealings with his fellow-creatures, God will take no notice of his sad countenance, fasting, and fine pretences of penitence. God is never deceived by the excellent appearance of our Sunday ways. He judges us by the records of *all the* week.

I. GOD'S IDEA OF FASTING IS NOT A FINE OUTWARD SHOW OF HUMILIATION. (Ver. 5.) Bowed head. Starved body. Sackcloth dress. Ashes for a seat. That *looks* fine, and men may be deceived by it, but not God. Compare our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount. "Be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast." "The prophet finds fault with the fasting of the Jews in two respects. 1. Because they did not combine fasting with works of righteousness. 2. Because they held the bodily exercise to be the chief thing." Outward appearances may speak for us to God, only we must take care that they have something sincere and true and worthy to say to him, from our hearts. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments;" "The Lord searcheth the heart."

II. GOD'S IDEA OF FASTING IS SELF-RESTRAINT IN ORDER TO GAIN HIGHER EFFICIENCY FOR SERVICE. And such fasting needs to make no show. The man who fasts in this sense may "anoint his head, wash his face," and look cheerful. The best signs of fasting are the *good works* which we can accomplish, which we gain power, through our self-restraints, to accomplish—loosing bands, freeing the oppressed, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, blessing all. Fasting, in the sense of a refusal of all food, belongs to ceremonial religion and had its origin in Eastern lands. Fasting in its most spiritual form, as personal self-restraint, will-mastery over habits and preferences,

must ever be binding upon all Christians. As explained by an apostle, it is "knowing how to possess the vessel of the body in sanctification and honour."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Conditions of answer to prayer.* Were these men, whose lives were spent for self, but who made a show of seeming to want God, proper persons to receive answers to their prayers? Let the Apostle James answer. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas. iv. 3). God wants signs of right character in those whose petitions he grants; for such character is the only guarantee that what he gives is rightly accepted and rightly used. Here with special reference to the particular sins of the age, we have these conditions laid down. 1. Ceasing from stern and cruel dealings with those who serve us. "Take away the yoke" (see ver. 6). 2. Taunts of those who are recognized as the faithful servants of God, but do not make just the same expression of their piety that we do. "Putting forth the finger;" a gesture of derision. "Indicative of mockery and insolence towards the pious and persisting part of the nation" (Matthew Arnold). 3. Boasting. A spirit of self-satisfaction, which is quite inconsistent with any approach to God with expressions of need and fervent desires. "Speaking vanity." While these evils must be put away, it is made a further condition of answer to prayer, that he who prays shall be positively set upon doing good, caring for the hungry and the afflicted. As the immediate reference is to the prayers offered on the national fast-days, this homily may be made to bear specially upon national days of humiliation, Lenten times, etc. Such times are useful, and are necessary. They are called for by the Divine judgments. But the special danger of them is *insincerity*. The special condition of their acceptance with God is national turning from sin to righteousness and charity. Therefore, at such seasons, the work of God's ministers is to produce due convictions of national sins. Our Lord taught conditions of prayer for his individual disciples, in his sermon on the mount. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Guided, provided, and refreshed.* "Guide thee;" "Satisfy thy soul in drought;" "Make fat thy bones;" "Make thee like a watered garden." These figures are all plain and simple, but the last of them gains point by some knowledge of Eastern sentiments. Van Lennep tells us that, in the East, "almost every house has more or less of a garden adjoining. There is neither system nor regular laying out. Trees are scattered about with little or no plan, and patches for vegetables are laid out as most convenient, onions and cabbages being the universal favourites. But the ornament most prized in a garden, one which all seek to possess if they can possibly afford it, is the marble tank—square, oblong, or octagonal—with a spout in the centre, *always out of order*. They would not give up that spout in the centre for a good deal, although it does not play once in a generation; but they sit there and think how fine it would be to see it work, and it is almost the same as if they *did* see it. These tanks are often very tastefully cut and ornamented. The ground around them is always well smoothed, and fine grass is sown in it, and kept fresh by frequent sprinkling." The immediate reference of the text is to the restoration of the exiles. Their journey they well might fear. Weariness, drought, peril, they could but expect. So the Divine assurances come meeting the three points of their special need. Their need is ours in the journey of life, our journey home to the new Jerusalem.

I. GOD PROMISES HELP FOR ALL THE MOVEMENTS OF LIFE. "Guide thee continually." We are very familiar with journeyings. We are always going to and fro. By land we are constantly within the flange of a wheel of destruction. By sea only a plank or a plate of iron keeps us from foundering. Yet how securely we go! Is it human science or skill that we trust? Nay, God guideth. To every man the life-path is unknown. We have never gone the way heretofore. No matter. God guideth.

II. GOD PROMISES SUPPLY FOR THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE. "Satisfy" thee. Compare "Verily thou shalt be fed." Forty years in the wilderness Israel was fed. For months Elijah was fed. Through the long march the exiles were fed. Manna did not more truly come from God than does our daily supply. None of his people are *left desolate*.

III. GOD PROMISES RELIEF FOR THE WEARINESSES OF LIFE. Such as comes to

drooping flowers in the garden when the soft rains fall. Such as comes to parched travellers when in the desert they find the living, sparkling spring. Who of us cannot recall sweet memories of Divine refreshings, winds of God, waters of life?—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The universal sabbath-law.* "Not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." The peculiarity of the day, the essential thing about the day, is that it is *God's* day, not *ours*. We only keep it aright when we *keep it for God*. We misuse it when we fill it with any ends of our own. The one sabbath-work is a special effort to honour and obey God, and we shall surely find that the one-day effort helps us in establishing and confirming the everyday habit. Do only God's pleasure on the sabbaths, and it will be easy to put God's will and pleasure *first* every day. Importance attached to keeping the sabbath in Babylon, because it was the most prominent thing in which the people publicly witnessed to their separation from idolatry, and allegiance to Jehovah. Faithful observance of it was the test by which the faithful ones were known. Equal importance attaches to the keeping of the sabbath in our day. It is, as much as ever it was, the searching test that reveals all the humble and faithful followers of God. Still a Christian is known by the Sunday test, "Does he seek his own pleasure on God's day?" Henderson well says, "The observance of the sabbath has, in all ages, been found essential to the maintenance and prosperity of spiritual religion." Blackstone says, "A corruption of morals usually follows a profanation of the sabbath." It should be carefully noticed that this prophet, who is so stern against forms and ceremonies in religion, is thus severe in demanding loyalty to the day which is not *ours*, but *God's*. So familiar a subject needs no more than an outline of thought; illustrative material will readily be suggested.

I. WE MUST KEEP THE DAY. As a separate day. Showing its distinctness from other days in the change made in our life-habits and associations. Some illustrations may be taken from our keeping wedding-days or birthdays. At such times our minds are full of some particular persons—the days are kept in their honour. So we should separate Sundays for God.

II. WE SHOULD ENJOY THE DAY. Here is a paradox. We are not to do our own pleasure on the day, but we are to find our pleasure in the day. Sunday should be the brightest day of the week.

III. WE OUGHT TO HONOUR GOD ALL THE DAY. What precisely, in an age, a town, a community, a family, or a life, the best honouring of God is, the preacher must think out and present in his own way.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LIX.

Vers. 1—8.—A GENERAL REBUKE OF ISRAEL FOR ITS MANIFOLD SINS. The command given to the prophet in ch. lviii. 1 to "show God's people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"—partly executed in ch. lviii. 4—7 and 13—is now further carried out by a scathing denunciation of various forms of wickedness, more or less prevalent in Israel, the effect of which has been to separate between Israel and God, to "shorten God's hand" and "make his ears heavy." The passage has many analogies with ch. i. 2—23.

Ver. 1.—**The Lord's hand is not shortened;** *i.e.* God is not less able to help than of old; **his "hand" has lost none of its power. That he does not help is owing to the iniquities of his people, which have separated between him and them (ver. 2). It is the same fact which has made his ear heavy. He cannot hear prayers that are not sincere—not from the heart.**

Ver. 2.—**Have separated**; literally, *have been separating*. The force of the form used is continuous, and implies that Israel had now for a long time been heaping up a barrier between itself and Jehovah. **Your sins have hid his face**; litorally, *your sins have caused his face to be hidden from you*, i.e. "have made him avert it."

Ver. 3.—**Your hands are defiled with blood** (comp. ch. i. 15, 21). (On the "innocent blood" shed by the Jews of the later Judæan kingdom, see 2 Kings xxi. 6, 16; xxiv. 4; xxv. 25; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21; xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6; xxxvi. 16, etc.) It consisted in (1) sacrifices of children to Moloch; (2)

persecution of prophets; and (3) judicial murders, either actual (like that of Naboth, in Israel) or virtual, *i.e.* such perversion of justice as produced general poverty and misery, and tended to shorten men's lives (see the comment on ch. i. 15). **Your lips have spoken lies** (comp. ch. xxxii. 7). The wicked oppressors "devised wicked devices to destroy the poor with *lying* words."

Ver. 4.—**None calleth for justice**; rather, *none preferreth his suit in justice* (so Lowth, Gesenius, Ewald, Knobel, and Mr. Cheyne). "No one," that is, "who engaged in a suit, limited himself to just pleas and honest courses in his prosecution of it." **Nor any pleadeth for truth**; rather, *none pleadeth in truthfulness*. **They trust in vanity**; literally, *in chaos;* i.e. "in a mass of false and vain statements." The whole basis of the dealings between man and man was unsound, corrupt, chaotic. Where truth and plain dealing are set aside, all shortly becomes ruin and confusion. **They conceive mischief**, etc. (comp. Ps. vii. 14).

Ver. 5.—**They hatch cockatrice' eggs.** (On the cockatrice, see the comment upon ch. xi. 8.) The meaning here is that the people gave themselves to brooding on and hatching purposes which were as pernicious and destructive as the eggs of venomous serpents. **And weave the spider's web**; *i.e.* "their purposes were as flimsy and unsubstantial as the web of the spider." **He that eateth**, etc. If a man partake of their plans, he becomes morally as bad as they, and is smitten with spiritual death. If an attempt be made to "crush" and destroy their plans, the only result is the premature birth of a **viper.**

Ver. 6.—**Their webs shall not become garments.** The unsubstantial fabrics which they weave shall not serve them in any way as garments, or be of any real value or utility. Their devices shall not take objective shape in such sort as to afford them "cover" or protection. **Their works** are **works of iniquity**; rather, *works of nothingness*, works that make a mere pretence of being works at all, and are in reality mere shams, impotent and delusive. **And the act of violence is in their hands**; rather, *and it is an act of violence that is in their hands.* Violence creates nothing. At the best, it destroys.

Ver. 7.—**Their feet run to evil.** It is, however, only too true that they have a power to work evil. They cannot construct, their devices fall through, their "spinning" is to no purpose; but they can, in a rough and blind way, do enormous mischief. "Their feet *run* to evil"—rush to it at full speed—brook no delay, but hurry on into act. It is an easy thing to **shed innocent blood**; and those who are conscious of constructive impotence are very apt to seek compensation by doing destructive work, which at least shows that they have a power of some kind. Hence "Reigns of Terror" when revolutions are at the last gasp. The strong expressions with respect to shedding innocent blood, used here and in 2 Kings xxi. 16 and xxiv. 4, seem to imply something like a massacre of the more godly Israelites by the ungodly in Manasseh's time. **Wasting and destruction** (compare the "destruction and misery" of Rom. iii. 16, which is a quotation of the present passage).

Ver. 8.—**The way of peace they know not.** They have no desire for "peace," and neither "seek" it nor "ensue" it (1 Pet. iii. 11). Peace can only be obtained through righteousness (ch. xxxii. 17). There is **no judgment in their goings**; rather, *no justice*—no recognition of other men's rights, no endeavour to observe right in their own acts and proceedings (comp. ver. 4; and see also ch. i. 17, 21, 23; iii. 14, 15, etc.). **They have made them crooked paths** (comp. Prov. ii. 15; x. 9; xxviii. 6). The way that leadeth to life is straight. They have wandered from it, and made for themselves "crooked" paths, which can only lead to destruction. In such paths there neither is nor can be "peace."

Vers. 9—15.—ISRAEL HUMBLY CONFESSES ITS SINS TO GOD. Isaiah, anxious to bring the people to confession and amendment, makes humble confession in their name, joining himself with them, as if he had been a participator in their iniquities.

Ver. 9.—**Therefore**—*i.e.* on account of these sins—**is judgment far from us**; *i.e.* "does God refrain from judging our enemies." **Neither doth justice**—*i.e.* the righting of the wrongs which we suffer at the hands of the heathen—**overtake us.** We are left by God unavenged, and our enemies are left unpunished on account of our many transgressions. **We wait for light.** We look for a bright dawn to succeed the night of our trouble; but we wait in vain—**the obscurity** continues.

Ver. 10.—**We grope for the wall**; rather, *we grope along the wall* (comp. Deut. xxviii. 29; and for the "blindness that had happened unto Israel," see above, ch. xxix. 10, 18; xxxv. 5; xlii. 16, etc.). **We stumble at noonday.** It was not that light was really wanting, but they had no eyes to behold it. We are **in desolate places**; rather, *in dark places* (Vulgate, Rödiger, Kay, Knobel). The word occurs only in this place, and is of doubtful signification.

Ver. 11.—**We roar all like bears**; rather, *we growl.* The verb is used commonly of the "roaring" of the sea (ch. xvii. 12; li. 15; Jer. vi. 23; xxxi. 45; l. 42; li. 55);

but is applied also to the noise made by a dog (Ps. lix. 6, 14). Here it represents the deep murmur of discontent, which alternates with the mournful tones of Israel's despondency—the latter being compared to the melancholy cooing of the dove (see ch. xxxviii. 14). **We look for judgment, but there is none**, etc. The same complaint as in ver. 9, clause 1.

Ver. 12.—**Our transgressions are multiplied before thee**; *i.e.* they are very numerous; and they come "before God," so as to attract his attention and call for his animadversion. **Our sins testify against us**; *i.e.* "rise up against us as witnesses, whose evidence we cannot disprove, and have not even the face to dispute." **Our transgressions are with us**—*i.e.* "constantly haunt us"—**and as for our iniquities, we know them**; *i.e.* we are aware of them, we acknowledge them, we have them continually in our memories. It is one of the most certain phenomena of consciousness that grievous sins, deadly sins, haunt the mind, and cannot in this life be wiped out from the memory.

Ver. 13.—An enumeration of special sins. First, sins of the heart. **Transgressing and lying against the Lord**; or rather, *treason and unfaithfulness to Jehovah* (Cheyne); followed by **departing away from God**, or the secret act of apostasy. Next, sins of the tongue: **Speaking oppression and revolt**; or, *oppression and wrong*—the "wrong," probably, of false accusation (comp. Deut. xix. 16); and, lastly, **conceiving and uttering . . . words of falsehood** generally.

Ver. 14.—**Judgment is turned away backward.** In conclusion, the crying sin of perversion of justice is admitted with much amplification. (1) Right judgment is exactly inverted—the innocent are condemned, the guilty acquitted. (2) **Justice standeth afar off**—too far off to be able to hear those who make appeal to it. (3) **Truth is fallen in the street**; *i.e.* false witness prevails over true in the courts of justice. (4) **Equity cannot enter**—is not admitted inside the courts, but waits without.

Ver. 15.—**Yea, truth faileth.** Truth itself is altogether gone, is missing, not forthcoming. "Terras Astræa reliquit." This is the worst of all. For truth is the basis of the social fabric, the groundwork of all morality. Once let there be no regard for truth in a state, no discredit attaching to lying, and all virtue is undermined, all soundness is vanished—nothing remains but "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (ch. i. 6). **He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.** Evil-doers prosper. The man who "eschews evil," and declines to employ (as others do) the weapons of **fraud and violence**, simply gives himself over as a prey to those who are less scrupulous than himself.

Vers. 15—21.—A PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE TO OPPRESSED ISRAEL. The godly in Israel were suffering a double oppression: (1) at the hand of their ungodly brethren; (2) at the hand of the heathen. The prophet promises a deliverance from both. The deliverance will be followed by the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, which will continue for ever.

Ver. 15.—**And the Lord saw it.** The division of the verses here requires alteration. The opening clause of ver. 15 belongs to what precedes; the second clause to what follows. "The Lord saw" that condition of things in Israel which is described in vers. 3—15; and it **displeased him**; literally, *it was evil in his eyes*, especially in that there was **no judgment.** Justice was not done between man and man; no one thought of pronouncing just judgments. The circumstances were such as to invite a Divine interposition.

Ver. 16.—**He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor**; *i.e.* God looked for some champion of the oppressed to arise; it was to be expected under the circumstances. But, alas! "there was no man." None stood up to resist the unrighteous and protect the innocent; much less did any stand up to deliver Israel from its heathen adversaries. When it is said that God "wondered" at no champion appearing, we must understand the expression as an anthropomorphism. **Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him.** As there was no human champion, it became necessary that God should arise in his own Person, and show himself. "His arm" and "his righteousness" were enough; no human aid was needed, or could have added anything to the resistless strength of his might (comp. ch. lxiii. 5).

Ver. 17.—**He put on righteousness as a breastplate.** The Isaian anthropomorphism is far less gross than the Homeric. The gods in Homer put on actual armour, and take sword and shield. Jehovah arms himself for the battle in a way that is manifestly metaphoric. He puts on a "Divine panoply"—righteousness as his breastplate, salvation as his helmet, vengeance for garments, and zeal, or jealousy, for a cloak. He takes no offensive weapons—"the out-breathing of his Spirit (ver. 19) is enough" (Kay).

Ver. 18.—**According to their deeds**; rather, *according to their deserts* (comp. Ps. xxviii. 4, *ad fin.*). **He will repay.** The ordinary future here, and in the remainder of the prophecy, replaces the "perfect of prophetic certitude," which has been employed in

vers. 16, 17. **Fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies.** God's "adversaries" are those of his own household—his people, the ungodly Israelites; his "enemies" are the heathen that oppress his people (comp. ch. i. 24, which is very similar). **To the islands**; *i.e.* the maritime lands, which, under Assyria, and afterwards under Babylon, took part in the oppression of his people.

Ver. 19.—**So shall they fear**; rather, *and they shall fear*. The result of the triumphant exhibition of God's might will be a conversion of the Gentiles, who will flock in both from the west—the quarter of "the islands"—and from the east, to do reverence to the **name** and to the **glory of the Lord**. **When the enemy shall come in** (rather, *come on*) **like a flood**; literally, *like the river*; i.e. the Euphrates (comp. ch. viii. 7, "The Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of *the river*, strong and many, even the King of Assyria and all his glory," etc.). When this shall be the case, then the **Spirit of the Lord**—hypostasized or nearly so—**shall lift up a standard against him** (comp. ch. x. 18; Zech. ix. 16), and easily vanquish him. The metaphor of "lifting a standard" for making an armed resistance is common in Isaiah (v. 26; xiii. 2; xviii. 3; xxxi. 9, etc.).

Ver. 20.—**And the Redeemer shall come to Zion**; rather, *and there shall come a Redeemer for Zion, and for those who turn*, etc. When the "adversaries" and the "enemies" shall have been punished, repentant Israel shall be saved by the coming of Messiah. As usual, the prophet does not note, or perhaps see, intervals of time, but blends events of various periods into one glorious vision of triumphant deliverance, redemption, and prolonged spiritual life in the Redeemer's kingdom.

Ver. 21.—**As for me**; literally, *and I*. The prophet begins with one construction, and then checks himself, and introduces another. **This is my covenant** (comp. Jer. xxxi. 31—34; and see the comment on ch. lv. 3). The new covenant involved the giving of God's Spirit to his people (Joel ii. 28); and this Spirit, it is here promised, shall not depart from God's people while time endures. The Spirit will be accompanied with certain "words" which will be put into the Church's mouth; and these words will remain unchanged and pass on from mouth to mouth, age after age, for ever. The "words" intended are probably those of the entire Bible—"all God's revelations" (Cheyne)—which the Church will maintain as inspired truth through all ages. **Upon thee**; *i.e.* upon Israel. The change of number and person ("with them . . . upon thee") is not unusual in Isaiah (i. 29; xxxii. 2; xlix. 5; lxii. 11, 12, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—8.—*The unsatisfactoriness of sinful courses.* "What *fruit* had ye then in those things whereof ye now are ashamed?" asks the apostle of those whom he had converted from a life of sin to a life of righteousness (Rom. vi. 21). What good did the life of sin seem to do you? Of course, if the life of sin had no pleasures at all to offer, it would have no attractiveness, and would not be led by any. But what, after all, are the attractions, compared with the counterbalancing disadvantages?

I. THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE SLIGHT, EVEN WHILE THEY LAST. No doubt there is a gratification in the satisfaction of every desire, in the venting of every passion, in the full indulgence of every lust and appetite. There is a pleasure also in the mere indulgence of self-will, the setting aside of every restraint, and the determination to be free and do exactly what we choose. But put all these things together; and to what do they amount? What is their value? Is the game worth the candle? Are not the pleasures themselves always mixed with pains, which detract from them? Do they not generally involve as their consequences worse pains, so that mere selfishness should make us decide to decline the pleasures? Does not conscience offer a continual protest against the life of sin? and is not that protest painful—often severely painful? Again, are not those who lead a life of sin, even while they lead it, always more or less ashamed of it? And is not that shame a very bitter feeling? Is not the disapproval of the life by friends and relatives, especially the nearest, who should be the dearest, a very substantial set-off against any balance of pleasure that might otherwise remain? Do the wicked ever "know peace"? Can they ever calmly review their lives, and derive from the review any feeling of satisfaction? Can they even boast in all their life of a moment's perfect restfulness, content, calm, quiet, sense of ease?

II. THE PLEASURES OF SIN ARE FLEETING; THEY DIE OUT AS TIME GOES ON. The

great pleasure-seekers have always acknowledged that the end of all indulgence is satiety. The cry of the sensualist is for "a new pleasure;" but the cry is vain. New pleasures are not forthcoming. Sensualists tread the same weary round over and over again, with less of satisfaction each time it is traversed, and with a growing feeling that they are slaves, compelled to grind perpetually on the same futile treadmill. Almost every passion dies out after a time. If any one remains, it is avarice, which reduces its victim to the most miserable condition possible.

III. THE PLEASURES OF SIN SEPARATE FROM GOD. If God is, as even the heathen acknowledged, the supreme good; and if man's highest good is, as some of them also allowed, communion with him,—then anything whatsoever that separates from him is weighted with a disadvantage which must necessarily overbalance all possible good that it can possess. Were the pleasures of sin ten thousand times greater than they are, and were they absolutely permanent, instead of being, as they are, fleeting and evanescent, the single fact, here mentioned by Isaiah (ver. 2), that they erect a barrier between man and God, should render them utterly unsatisfactory to a reasonable being. To be cut off from God is to be cut off from the source of all joy and peace and happiness; it is to be shut out from light, to lose contact with the Life which sustains all other life, and to be left to our own miserable selves for the remainder of our existence. Nothing could possibly be a compensation to man for such losses.

Vers. 14, 15.—*Truth the foundation of morality.* Surprise is sometimes expressed at there being no distinct prohibition of all lying in the ten commandments. "False witness" alone is forbidden. But the reason may be that truth is assumed as too fundamentally necessary for any one to suppose that it could possibly be dispensed with. Similarly, piety is assumed as a duty in the commandments, where men are not bidden to worship God, but warned against worshipping more than one God, and against worshipping him in an improper way. Truth throughout Scripture appears as a quality assumed to be possessed by men, rather than as a virtue which they are to be exhorted to "put on." It lies, in fact, at the root of all real goodness.

I. TRUTH LIES AT THE ROOT OF JUSTICE. The administration of justice consists primarily in a series of efforts to find out the truth. There is always a question before the court, and the first question is one of fact, "Has the thing charged been done or no?" What is the truth of the matter? When this has been decided, if decided on the affirmative side, then a second question arises, "What is the degree of the guilt?" It is essential for the judge to have the most earnest desire to discover the truth, and the highest power of eliciting the truth. Nor is this all. To every one concerned in a cause—whether prosecutor, defendant, witness, counsel, or attorney—the sole object *ought* to be the discovery of the truth. The importance of veracity in the witnesses is universally admitted; but veracity is really incumbent on all concerned. A prisoner who knows himself guilty would do best to confess his guilt. It is no real benefit to him to be acquitted unless he is innocent. Truth ought to govern all the utterances of counsel, who are not entitled to make any suggestions but such as they think may be true. Chicanery, quibbles, special pleading, are unworthy of those who take part in the administration of justice and exercise what is really a sacred function. The first requisite of all those who bear part in the solemn work of "doing justice" is that they should be "men of truth" (Exod. xviii. 21).

II. TRUTH LIES AT THE ROOT OF KINDNESS. The desire to be kind is independent of truth; but the moment that the desire has to pass into action, considerations of truth come in. Am I prompted to praise a person? But if I praise him when he is deserving of blame, I am doing him the greatest unkindness. If I even overpraise him when he deserves praise, I am doing him an unkindness to a certain extent—an unkindness and a wrong. I am helping him to content himself with a low standard of goodness. Again, suppose that I am prompted to relieve a person who appears to me poor and distressed. To decide aright whether I ought to relieve him at all, and, if so, to what extent, I require a true knowledge of his circumstances. I do him an injury if I allow him to impose upon me. I do him an injury if I repress efforts that he would otherwise have made to help himself. In all the kindly acts that we seek to do to others there is always room for, and generally much need of, careful consideration of facts, discovery of the exactly true state of the case, before we allow ourselves to follow our impulses.

Otherwise we may make great blunders, and, while striving to be kind, be guilty of many an unkindness.

III. TRUTH LIES AT THE ROOT OF PIETY. Piety is a feeling of love and reverence towards some being, or beings, whom we feel to be superior to ourselves, and believe to afford us help and protection. It is impossible to say that many of the heathen, many even of the grossest idolaters, were not, in a certain sense, pious. But for piety to attain its full proportions, and to be the virtue that it was intended to be, it needs to rest upon a basis of truth. We need to have true conceptions of the nature of that which is the object of our love and reverence. Until we conceive of that "eternal something outside us that makes for righteousness" as One, as a Person, as the Creator of all things, as omnipotent, as omniscient, as beneficent, and as perfectly good, we cannot have the feelings towards him that we ought to have, or worship him acceptably. True piety is the worship of the true God. The votaries of false religions possess only a semblance of piety—a dwarfed and cramped, sometimes a distorted, imitation of it.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The Church indefectible.* The Church of God, being a body of men and women, each one of whom is weak, fallible, and liable to fall from the truth, ay, even to apostasy, must, by the nature of things, be *of itself* and *in itself* defectible. A weakness which attaches to all the individuals of a body must attach to the body which those individuals make up. The Church, therefore, is not, *per se*, indefectible. If indefectible in fact, it can only be so by the will of God, and can only be by us known to be so if God had declared to us his will. But this has been done—

I. GOD DECLARED BY THE PSALMISTS AND THE PROPHETS THAT HE WOULD SET UP ON EARTH AN IMPERISHABLE KINGDOM, CITY, OR COMMUNITY OF MEN. A promise to this effect was first given to David. God said to him, by the mouth of Nathan, "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom *for ever*" (2 Sam. vii. 12, 13); and again, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established *for ever* before thee: thy throne shall be established *for ever*" (2 Sam. vii. 16). Hence David himself spake of "the city of the Lord of hosts, which God would establish *for ever*" (Ps. xlviii. 8). And Ethan the Ezrahite spoke of the promise as a "covenant" to which God had "sworn:" "His seed shall endure *for ever*, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established *for ever* as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Ps. lxxxix. 34—37). Isaiah's declarations as to a coming kingdom are to the same effect. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. . . . of the increase of his government and peace *there shall be no end*, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice *from henceforth even for ever*" (ch. ix. 6, 7). And the declaration of the present chapter: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words that I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed . . . *from henceforth and for ever.*"

II. GOD ATTACHED THESE PROMISES, THROUGH THE DECLARATIONS OF HIS SON, TO THE PARTICULAR COMMUNITY WHICH HE CALLED HIS CHURCH. "Thou art Peter," said our blessed Lord, "and upon this rock I will build *my Church*; and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt. xvi. 18); "Go, . . . teach all nations," our Lord said again, "and, lo, I am with you alway, *even unto the end of the world*" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). The apostles are confident, therefore, that the Church will always continue. St. Paul, in his directions concerning the Eucharist, declares that, through their partaking of it, Christians "do show the Lord's death *till he come*" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And he speaks of the members of the Church who are living at the last day as "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). St. John traces the fortunes of the Church from his own time to the consummation of all things, and finds a remnant of faithful ones upon the earth to the last, who give testimony for Jesus (Rev. ii.—xxi.). Christians are therefore justified in believing that the Church of Christ is practically, if not ideally, indefectible—that in point of fact, it will never fail, but will continue to the end of the world Christ's great witness upon earth, testifying to his Godhead, to his redeeming love, and to the sufficiency of his one sacrifice.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The separation of the soul from God.* Why in the hour of need is there no deliverance? Why are prayers for aid unanswered? A theory might obtain, or an objection might be raised, that Divine power was not sufficient, that the Divine sensibility was dulled. And yet this cannot be. The simplest knowledge of what God is must contradict an assumption so foolish. There must be another explanation; and that, the conscience says, is to be found on the human side of the relation.

I. THE CHANNEL OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION CLOSED. Only to the upright does Jehovah show himself upright, only pure to the pure. There is a state of the soul in which men see God, because his face is therein reflected; but those addressed have long been "belying their professions by their acts, and thus precluding an answer to their prayers" (ch. lviii. 2—4). The face is "the self-manifesting side of the Divine nature" (cf. ch. lxiii. 9; i. 12; xl. 10). Where that is not given, there must be darkness in the mind, and bitterness in the heart.

II. SINFUL OBSTACLES TO BE REMOVED. *The defilement of the hands.* With the guilt of blood. But probably this stands, by a strong figure, for sin in general. The lips are lying, and the tongue depraved. Here the organs of the body, ministers of the mind, express and set forth the state of the latter. There is a certain correspondence between cleanliness of the person and truthfulness and honesty of the soul. And it is just this which is wanting. Society is resting on a foundation of chaos. Men weave their schemes, vain and brittle as spiders' webs, or hatch policies pernicious as the eggs of basilisks. They tread with swiftness the paths of mischief; their thoughts are full of hate and destruction. They ignore the way of peace and the track of justice, and follow crooked paths of their own (Prov. x. 9; xxviii. 18; ii. 15). It is a picture of extreme social demoralization.

III. PENITENCE AND CONFESSION OF SINS. The prophet speaks in the name of the people. And here all the true elements of repentance and confession may be found. 1. *The connection of sin with Divine disfavour.* The first thing is to see that the curse does not "causeless come;" the next to fix upon the true cause. It is *not* because of want of will or want of power in God (ver. 12). They were entitled to expect his help, according to the covenant, but not apart from *conditions* on their side to be fulfilled. If, then, the judicial interference of Jehovah on their behalf was not witnessed, the cause must lie in the breach of those conditions—in "our sins." 2. *Human darkness and bewilderment without God.* "Jehovah shall be thy Light and thy Salvation." That light withdrawn,—what can there be groping and stumbling in the thick darkness? (Deut. xxviii. 29). How extreme the contrast of the "way which Jehovah knows," of the "path of the just, shining to the perfect day;" and the "knowing not whither he goeth," the "staggering as at noonday," the groping and stumbling of the man God-abandoned and left to himself. 3. *Human sorrow and despair without God.* Compared to the growling or moaning of beast or bird. Men long to have their own will and way, and find that to be "lords of themselves" is a "heritage of woe." Sooner or later they must find that their passionate autonomy means "rebellion" before God and in their own consciousness. And peace cannot be where they *know* that they are thus "kicking against the goads." The passage strongly shows how a violated conscience must be a tormenting conscience. God will not let us sin and forget. "As for our iniquities, we know them." 4. *Human shame and self-contempt without God.* It is contempt that "pierces through the shell of the tortoise;" above all, one's own contempt. The worst is when we look into the mirror held up, not by hand of enemy or critic, but by our own, and see the lineaments of the traitor, the expression of the infidel at heart, the base attitude of the deserter and backslider from the Holy One, the downcast mien of the convicted liar. There has been no truth, no rectitude, no justice. These, as fair spirits, have been banished from a polluted earth. And if one would live an innocent life, he is but game for any rude spoiler. In all this there is the deepest sense of the evil of sin, and of the need of humiliation. It is felt that humiliation cannot remove the evil, unless it first remove the sin. Misery is the natural effect of iniquity; and he that seeks to rid himself of the one before he is freed from the other would hinder the stream before he has stopped the fountain. "'Rend your

hearts, and not your garments.' If the heart be not torn off from sin, to rend only the garment further provokes God, and makes the breach wider. There is no religious duty attains its end, but when it weakens our sin." True fasting draws down, as here seen, the pity and invites the help of the Almighty.—J.

Vers. 15—21.—*Jehovah as Champion of the people.* I. HE IS THE INTERESTED SPECTATOR OF HUMAN AFFAIRS. He "considers in his dwelling-place" (ch. xviii. 4). He "causes his ear to hear"—to judge the fatherless and oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress (Ps. x. 18). He is not like the gods of the Epicureans, "sitting apart, careless of mankind." He is a God who can *feel* pleasure in goodness and the *good*, *displeasure* in the prevalence of wrong and injustice. To doubt it is to doubt of the existence of God himself.

II. HE TAKES UPON HIMSELF THE CAUSE OF THE OPPRESSED. He saw that there was "no man," no champion, and was "stupefied," or in "consternation" (cf. Jer. xiv. 9), that none was at hand to interpose in battle on behalf of his own. He therefore armed himself with sword and bow, with coat of mail and helmet, and the garments of zeal and vengeance. A great world-struggle is coming on, in which he will inflict retribution upon his foes.

III. THE REVERENCE OF THE NATIONS FOR HIM. The Gentiles who are spared are imagined as hastening from their distant abodes in tremulous anxiety to meet Jehovah. His Name (cf. Deut. xxviii. 58; Micah vi. 9; Neh. i. 11; Ps. lxxxvi. 11; cii. 15) shall be universally feared. His advance will be like that of a rushing stream, driven by the might of the wind, and so as a *Goêl* he will come to Zion, and to all the obedient—those that have "turned from rebellion." The effect of his coming will be the turning of men from their sins, and only to such regenerate ones will he come.

IV. HIS COVENANT. He makes solemn promises to men conditional on their compliance with his terms. To the repentant his Spirit will be imparted, as a continuous gift. His words, or revelations, shall be in their mouth, therefore in their minds and hearts, for ever—flowing on, a holy stream of tradition, from generation to generation (cf. Deut. vii. 9; iv. 37; v. 29; Ps. lxxxix. 24—36; Jer. xxxii. 39, 40). The majority of religious people are descendants of those who were the friends of God. A large proportion of American piety has descended from the Pilgrim Fathers. Barnes says "I am acquainted with the descendants of John Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary's reign, of the tenth and eleventh generations. With a single exception, the eldest son in the family has been a clergyman—some of them eminently distinguished for learning and piety."—J.

Ver. 1.—*The Divine ability.* "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." We note here something that awakens surprise. Behold!" Let Israel know *where* her help lies. There has been *wrong looking*, viz. to self.

I. GOD STILL WORKS IN THE WORLD. It is "his hand." He "formed" us, and he "redeems" us.

II. WE MAY MAKE MISTAKES CONCERNING HUMAN HISTORY. His "hand is not shortened." It can always reach to every length, and raise from every depth. The future must be, therefore, in ourselves.

III. SALVATION IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE ON EARTH. 1. *In all forms of sin.* 2. *In all degrees of sin.* 3. *In all depths of distress and despair, human as well as spiritual.*—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*Alienation from God.* "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Here is the secret. We can resist God's arm. Until the "iniquities" be confessed, deplored, and forsaken, there can be no salvation. God is ready to forgive; but are we ready to be forgiven? God has provided a Saviour; but it may be true of us, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Man is not a heart only; he is a will. And here lies our condemnation, not that we are not sometimes ashamed and even sorry, but that we will not repent, return, and believe.

I. THE TERM GIVEN TO SIN. "Iniquities;" that is, "inequities." Read the fourth verse, "None calleth for justice;" and the sixth verse, "The act of violence is in their hands." Unless we are willing to forgive and love and do justice to our brother, it is

idle to talk about turning to God. Such religion is a sentiment, not a salvation. Then there are "inequities" in relation to God. We have been: 1. *Unjust to his government.* 2. *We have robbed him of ourselves.* 3. *We have aided the forces of rebellion.* 4. *We have, in one word, done iniquity.*

II. THE DISTANCE CREATED BY SIN. The separation is moral. He is near to us—close, indeed, to us as the air we breathe. But we are at opposite poles of the moral universe. 1. *Separated in nature.* We are not renewed in his image. 2. *Separated in purpose.* Our will is set against his will. All separations are painful. We see them in the family and in the nation. Wars and feuds abound on every side. So we are alienated from the life of God. Christ, and he alone, can break down the middle wall of partition, and through faith in him we may be reconciled by one Spirit unto the Father.—W. M. S.

Ver. 16.—*Salvation—not in man.* "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." It *seemed* a dark hour for the world. Evidently a dead nation cannot arise of itself, any more than a dead man. It is a time of *wonderment.* Great men often arise for great occasions; but there is *no man,* that is, no *mere man,* equal to this occasion. But—

I. "GOD IS HIS OWN INTERPRETER." He makes plain his own mysteries alike in providence and in redemption. There is silence everywhere, that he himself may be heard. There is no other hand, that his own may be made bare before the nations.

II. GOD IS THE WORLD'S ONLY SAVIOUR AND INTERCESSOR. In the Person of his Son, he fulfils all the evangelic strains of Isaiah. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." 1. *It is still wonderful.* "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!" "Behold the Lamb of God!" Angels cannot see into the depths of such a mystery as this. 2. *It is true as wonderful.* "His arm brought salvation." Look and see. Christianity can be tested as a history as well as a prophecy. When we see that dark degraded Roman world, with its lust and licence, its cruelties and pageantries, its very worship turned to aids to vice, and then read, "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified," we exclaim, "What hath God wrought?"—W. M. S.

Ver. 19.—*The successful standard.* "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The standard is highly prized in war. On it are engraven the names of special victories and the fields of old renowned. It is the last disgrace to lose the standard, and in many a foray and fierce campaign men have fallen in heaps around the standard-bearer. Think—

I. OF THE VICTORIES ENGRAVEN ON THE STANDARD OF THE LORD. Of truth over error; righteousness over injustice; purity over lust; God over mammon.

II. OF THE SPECIAL SEASONS IN WHICH INIQUITY COMES IN LIKE A FLOOD. Times such as those of the profligate Stuarts, when the sabbath was desecrated and debasing plays were acted. Times when the pride of priestcraft and power drove out the faithful from the land. Times when the Bible itself was put under a ban, and the flood-gates of evil were left open. Nothing then withstood, and nothing will ever withstand, the tides of sin, but the Word of God. Utility, expediency, propriety,—these are but thin "withes" that the giant snaps; these are but gossamer gates through which the torrent roars. Nothing is strong but the Spirit of the Lord working in us and with us.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The true and the false account of Divine inactivity.* How comes it to pass that the people of the Lord are in such distress? How do we account for the fact that the cause of Christ makes such slow progress or even shows symptoms of decline and failure? Where is the Lord God of Israel? Is the Spirit of God present in the midst of the Churches?

I. THE APPARENTLY INEXHAUSTIBLE FORCES AT OUR COMMAND. For our resources we have: 1. The fulness of Divine pity. The ear of God is open to the cry of destitution, of pain, of sorrow, of spiritual yearning. His heart of tenderness is touched by the miseries and necessities of his children. 2. The almightiness of Divine power. The "right hand of the Lord" is on all the springs and forces of the universe; he can compel all

things to serve him, to minister to his people and to establish his kingdom. 3. The perfectness of Divine wisdom. Who shall measure "the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God"?

II. THE POVERTY OF SPIRITUAL RESULTS. In how many instances have we occasion to be profoundly discontented with the condition of things, spiritually considered! It is so in regard to: 1. *Individual character.* Considering the resources at command, men do not make the progress in spiritual growth, in moral attainment, or in excellency of behaviour, which might be expected of them; they remain where they were, or move backward and forward, making no substantial progress toward "the mark [goal] which is set before them." 2. *Christian Churches.* Taking into account the number of privileges which are theirs, and the variety of opportunities which are within reach, there is a very considerable proportion of Churches compelled to acknowledge retrogression rather than advancement, defeat rather than success. 3. *Missionary operations.* After all that has been done through the centuries, by all societies of Christian men, how much land "remains to be possessed"!

III. THE FALSE AND THE TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE MATTER. It is not Divine negligence that explains our position. It is not that God's hand is shortened or that his ear is heavy; it is not that his power is diminished or that his pity has failed in the very smallest degree. He abideth faithful and omnipotent. We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves. It is sin that has come between our praying lip and his hearing ear between our pressing need and his opened hand. 1. *Refusal of his righteousness* makes our prayer ineffectual, his interposition impossible. If we "regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear us;" *i.e.* if we decline to enter his service, if we "will not have him to reign" over us, if we stubbornly and haughtily reject the salvation which he offers us in Jesus Christ (Rom. x. 3), we take an attitude in which we have no right to expect any answer to our petitions. The first thing, the only right and acceptable thing, for one that has not yet returned to God in self-surrender, is to "arise and go to the Father" in penitent submission; *then* he may call, and the Lord will answer. 2. *Special sins* may prove a stumbling-block; some are specified in the following verses—cruel violence, falsehood, litigiousness. We are expressly told in the later revelation that some particular sins are absolutely inconsistent with personal piety, and therefore with the efficacy of prayer—impurity (Eph. v. 5); strife (Gal. v. 20); drunkenness; lying (Rev. xxi. 8). 3. *The absence of essential Christian graces* will account for the non-intervention of God on behalf of a Christian Church: of *unity* (Ps. cxxxiii. 3); of *faith* (Heb. xi. 6; Matt. xiii. 58); of *zeal* (Rev. ii. 4; iii. 15, 16); of *fidelity* to the truth (Rev. ii. 14). The true account of our failure is not in Divine indifference, but in human shortcoming.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Webs that will not make garments.* It is the virtue of a garment that *it covers.* The ideas of covering and of atoning were very closely allied in Hebrew thought. The prophet intimates that there were webs of their own spinning which would never hide their sin from the sight of God. Such are there now. We look at—

I. THE SOUL'S SUPREME NECESSITY. The presence of sin is the sternest of all facts; the mark which it has made on our manhood is by far the deepest and darkest of any; all others are mere touches, mere scratches in comparison. This is true of the individual as well as of the community. *The* thing that we have done, more serious and of greater consequence than any other, is that we have sinned against the Lord and come beneath his condemnation. What we most urgently want is a covering for our soul. Our naked and guilty soul imperatively and sorely needs that under which it may appear before God without shame and shrinking, and take its place, in this world or in any other, among the pure, the holy, the righteous. The question is—What is that garment which will cover the sinful human soul?

II. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE PROVISION WHICH SOME MEN ARE MAKING. Many are providing for themselves that which is utterly inadequate; they are spinning webs—poor, thin, gossamer productions—which "will not become garments" available for this purpose. There is: 1. The web of Christian profession. Some find comfort and complacency of soul in the fact that they are acknowledged members of a Church, ancient, or catholic, or established, or scriptural. Desirable, in many ways, as is an avowal of attachment to Christ, it is not a thing in which to put any trust; a man may be a

member of the most scriptural Church, and yet be destitute of that which is vital and essential. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly," etc. Christian profession is a poor thing for a soul to hide in; it is no true refuge for the human heart; it is a "web that will not make a garment." 2. The web of ceremony and ordinance. Many have an undefined but strong confidence in having passed through Christian ceremonies (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), or in having been constant in attendance on Divine worship, or in having taken on their lips apostolic and evangelical language; but to trust in these things as garments of salvation is to put "confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 1): they may exist without any faith or love prompting and vitalizing them. 3. The web of correct behaviour—abstinence from impurity, inebriety, untruthfulness, trickery, profanity. This is altogether and in every way desirable, and it may be eminently praiseworthy from a human standpoint; but it will not atone for the supreme omission—the failure to respond to a heavenly Father's love, to subject the will to the will of the Creator, to dedicate the life to the service of God. It, too, is a web that will not make a garment with which to cover a sinful soul.

III. THE ONE GARMENT THAT SUFFICES. What did Christ mean by that "wedding garment" without which the guest might not sit down to the marriage-feast (Matt. xxii. 11)? May it not have been the abounding mercy of God unto eternal life, received through faith in a Divine Saviour (Rom. v. 1; viii. 1; Phil. iii. 7—9)? Men will be just with God, their sins will be covered and hidden for evermore, when, in the spirit of penitence and faith, they accept the Saviour of mankind as the Lord in whom they hide and to whom they yield themselves in glad surrender.—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The goal of guilt.* A course of conduct or a principle of action is rightly judged by the issue to which it tends. All *is* well that ends well, and all is ill that ends ill. If we look far enough and deep enough in our estimate of consequences, we shall always find that the goal of guilt is wretchedness and ruin. It ends in—

I. A SENSE OF WRONG. The nation feels that "judgment and justice" are lacking and the enemy is triumphant; the individual feels that he is injured, that his rights are withheld from him, and he goes on his way dispirited and complaining.

II. DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT. "We wait for light, and behold obscurity," etc. Men who seek not their refuge and their portion in God and in his service are always subject to a profound dissatisfaction. Life does not yield the good they crave. They look for success, and behold failure; for joy, and behold weariness, heartache, *ennui*; for sweet communion, and behold isolation and loneliness; for laughter, and behold disgust.

III. AGGRAVATED BLINDNESS. "We grope . . . like the blind . . . we stumble at noonday," etc. It is one of the saddest consequences of sin that the *power of spiritual perception* continually *lessens*; the "eyesight" of the soul becomes weaker and weaker. Great truths are less clearly apprehended. Confusion takes the place of distinctness, until at length good is mistaken for evil, and evil for good: "the light that is in us becomes darkness;" the very organ of spiritual understanding misleads us. And the aggravating circumstance is that this failure of the soul's sight takes place "at noonday," when others are walking and rejoicing in the light of the Lord.

IV. DEATHFULNESS. "In desolate places [or perhaps rather, 'in luxuriant fields,'] we are as the dead." The thought of Christ and of his apostles is that to live in selfishness, in ungodly pleasure, is death in life. To exist apart from God; to be severed from him in thought and feeling, in speech and act; to be utterly regardless of his will and then defiantly antagonistic to his cause;—this is death indeed, and it is consummated in the death which is eternal.—C.

Vers. 15—17.—*Human hopelessness and Divine redemption.* This vivid picture of the nation's demoralization, and of its incapacity to produce a citizen who could regenerate and reform, may appropriately suggest—

I. THE HOPELESS CONDITION OF THE HUMAN RACE UNDER THE LONG TYRANNY OF SIN. Man had fallen so far that there was not the smallest prospect of redemption from anything he could originate. The all-seeing eye of God rested on "no man, no intercessor." *Reformer* there might be, but *Redeemer* there was none. No human arm could uplift a sin-slain and fallen race from its degradation and ruin. Hence came—

II. THE REDEEMING POWER OF ALMIGHTY GOD. "It displeased the Lord;" the

iniquity of the world pained, grieved, distressed, his pure and pitiful heart. And his compassion found fitting utterance in redemption. "His arm brought salvation." The redemption of the world by Jesus Christ was indeed a *work wrought;* it was a putting forth of Divine power; it was the mighty act of God's righteous "arm." The work of the strong brute is to carry great weights, of the human giant to deal mighty blows, of the trained intellect to solve subtle problems or make intricate calculations; but the work of the holy and merciful Spirit of God is by self-sacrifice to redeem and to restore. Here is the exercise of the truest, noblest, most beneficent power. In comparison with this all other power is weakness itself.

III. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DIVINE REDEEMER. 1. A sense of *perfect rectitude.* "His righteousness, it sustained him." It was much, it was everything to the aspersed and incriminated Saviour to know that he was absolutely right in the sight of the holy Father. 2. *Compassion.* "The helmet of salvation." 3. *Holy indignation.* "He put on the garments of vengeance." Hatred of sin is quite as indispensable to a Saviour as pity for its victim (*vide* Matt. xxiii.). 4. *Consecration.* "Clad with zeal as a cloak;" with that utter and entire devotedness which led him to drink quite up that bitter cup which the Father placed in his hands.—C.

Ver. 21.—*The hope of the race.* Wherein shall we find the true hope of the human race? It would be but a sorry prospect if man had nothing better to build upon than the results of physical science, or political economy, or mental and moral philosophy. These are helpful handmaids, but they have shown themselves inefficient regenerators of mankind. We build our hope ultimately on—

I. THE FULFILMENT OF THE DIVINE PROMISE. God has "covenanted" or promised to do great things for us. Our hope is in him: it *was* in his Divine pity, unpledged, unexpressed. It *is* in his promise to befriend, to illumine, to renew. The world went utterly wrong, and in the greatness of his compassion he interposed with a marvellous redemption. The Church became utterly corrupt, and in the fulness of his faithfulness he did not desert it, but cleansed and raised it.

II. THE PLANTING OF DIVINE TRUTH. We may have a good hope for mankind if "*God's words* are in the mouth" of men. Not enactments on the statute-book, nor institutions in society, nor the sword in the magistrate's hand, but *God's truth in the mind,* is the source of strength, the criterion of advancement, and the condition of security. When God's thoughts are precious (Ps. cxxxix. 17), and God's words are loved, the people are in the way of wisdom and of life.

III. THE OUTPOURING OF HIS SPIRIT. "My Spirit is upon thee." The indwelling, illuminating, transforming Spirit will make all holy truth effectual and mighty.

IV. THE TRANSMISSION OF GODLINESS FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. "Nor out of the mouth of thy seed," etc. The "promise is to us and to our children." Far more than to evangelistic efforts or missionary labours do we look to the upgrowing in godly homes of a devout and holy generation. The future of the world is in the hands of Christian fathers and mothers! Let them be what they should be, and their sons and daughters will strengthen the cause of God and fulfil the hope of mankind.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Misconceptions of the Divine delay.* This is a plea with the murmurers, who doubtingly asked—Where are the signs of the fulfilment of these great Divine promises? Things looked black and hopeless right up to the time of Cyrus. The Lord appeared to be delaying his coming, and it was easy for unbelievers to say that God delayed because "his hand was too short to deliver, and his ear too heavy to hear." Keble renders the text thus—

"Wake, arm Divine! awake,
Eye of the only Wise!
Now for thy glory's sake,
Saviour and God, arise,
And may thine ear, that sealed seems,
In pity mark our mournful themes!

"Thus in her lonely hour
Thy Church is fain to cry

As if thy love and power
Were vanish'd from her sky;
Yet God is there, and at his side
He triumphs who for sinners died."

It may suffice to answer the murmurers who remind us of the Divine delayings, and would have us misunderstand them, and join them in doubtings of the Divine power or the Divine good will, that there are high and gracious ends served by this particular method of Divine dealing. These things at least we can see—

I. IT INCREASES OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD. It teaches us that we have not just to "ask and have," but "ask and have" in accordance with God's will, in dependence on God's wisdom, and in agreement with God's time and way. We should never learn that, if we were not sometimes made *to wait*. We teach our children to trust us by making them *wait* until we think best.

II. IT ENHANCES THE VALUE OF THE EXPECTED BLESSING. What we wait long for becomes increasingly valuable in our eyes. What is obtained easily and at once is sure to be under-estimated. The value of a gift very constantly depends on the *moral preparation* of those who receive it; and delay is a cultivator of moral preparation.

III. IT PRODUCES A MORE EARNEST WATCHFULNESS AND MORE BELIEVING PRAYERFULNESS FOR THE DESIRED BLESSING. It does, if we regard the delay aright. It does not, if we persist in misconceiving the purpose of the delay. Then delay will weary us, and we shall leave off to watch and be sober. Delay may be borne wisely and cheerfully when we recognize it as only the hush, the stillness, the breathlessness that ushers in the glorious showers of Divine awakening and Divine comforting.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Sin-clouds between us and God.* In a former homily it has been shown how, in judgment, and in order to awaken us to a sense of our sin, God may pass a cloud across between us and him, hiding from us his smiling face, and leaving us in the dark and the chill. Now we see how, in our heedlessness and wilfulness, we may put clouds, even little clouds, into our own sky, and hide his face. The reference of the text is to the doubting ones, the unfaithful ones, in Babylon, who let their own sinfulness spoil their vision, and either hide God from them or distort their view of him. The prophet reminds them that they had put the clouds, and in reminding them thus he calls on them to put the clouds away. These are our two divisions.

I. MEN PUT THE SIN-CLOUDS BETWEEN THEM AND GOD. 1. They may be very *small clouds*, yet suffice to hide. Often a cloud no bigger than a hand will keep the light and warmth from us. Illustration: David Rittenhouse, of Pennsylvania, was a great astronomer. He was skilful in measuring the size of planets, and determining the position of the stars. But he found that, such was the distance of the stars, a silk thread stretched across the glass of his telescope would entirely cover a star; and, moreover, that a silk fibre, however small, placed upon the same glass, would cover so much of the heavens that the star, if a small one and near the pole, would remain obscured behind that silk fibre several seconds. So small faults, secret sins, little doubtings, can become effective fibres, dark clouds, obscuring veils, that hide the "face." "Little foxes spoil the grapes." The psalmist puts a passion of holy feeling into his prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." 2. They may be very *big clouds*, and mean long hiding and deep misery for us under the darkness, and in the chill. Illustrate from David's open and shameless iniquity. It was right that "his bones should wax old through his roaring all the day long," while the black storm-clouds of passion, and its consequences, hid away his God. We cannot negligently sin, and hope to keep the smile; if we openly and wilfully sin we shall not even care to keep the smile, but we shall gladly put our clouds across, and hide the "face."

II. MEN MUST PUT AWAY THE SIN-CLOUDS THAT ARE BETWEEN THEM AND GOD. And there is only one way of doing this. Men must put away the sins that make the clouds. God will not burst through such clouds. He will not dispel such clouds, until men turn from their iniquities, their big or little sins; but then he will breathe on the cloud, as the hot Eastern sun breathes on the clouds of morning, and they shall fade away from the sky, and we shall see the face, and live in that heaven which is the "shining of the face upon us."—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Sin in thoughts.* "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity."

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF A MAN'S THOUGHTS. A man is as his thoughts. This is the fact and truth on which we may dwell. Any one who would truly judge his fellow-man must know his secrets and judge his thoughts. Therefore man's judgment of his fellow-man is always imperfect and uncertain. God alone can judge perfectly, because he is the "Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." There is an impression resting on the minds of many religious persons that they have no control over the suggestions that are made to their minds, and no responsibility for the contents of their thoughts, only for the cherishing of the thought and dwelling upon it, and letting it take shape in action; or, as the Apostle James puts it, only when "lust is allowed to conceive, and bring forth sin." This, however, is true only within very narrow limits, and it is altogether healthier for us to accept a large measure of responsibility, even for the contents of our minds; for only then shall we be likely to watch over what goes in as over what goes out. The importance that attaches to our thoughts may be seen: 1. In our observation of men. We misjudge because we cannot read thoughts. 2. In the experiences of friendship. We trust our friend more than outsiders can do, because, in some measure, we do know his thoughts. 3. In view of the heart-searching claims of God, who desires "truth in the inward parts." Sin does not consist in mere act; it really lies at the back of the action—in the thought, the intention, and the motive that inspire it. 4. In consideration of the work of Divine redemption; which is really a heart-regeneration, a purifying of the very springs of thought and feeling. It seeks out the fountains and cleanses them.

II. THE CONTROL A MAN MAY HAVE OVER HIS THOUGHTS. 1. He has control over the materials of thought. Thought is really the comparison, selection, and association of the actual contents of our minds, under the guidance of our wills. All that has impressed us during our lives, by the eye, the ear, or the feeling, has passed into our mental treasury. Then we may take some care as to what goes in. We need not go into scenes or read books which will leave behind bad impressions. 2. We have control over the processes of thought. We can deliberately choose to think about evil things; we can start such thoughts, we can dwell on them, we can follow them on their foul way, we can collect from our associations things that match them. And, in a similar way, we can dwell upon and encourage the good. If our will is a renewed and sanctified will, then we shall find it may gain presidency over our thoughts, so that we may choose and follow only that which is good.—R. T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Salvation by God through man.* This text contains, in part, the confession of social iniquity. "Truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil is accounted mad. There is no judgment"—that is, no social righteousness, no sense of the "right" manifestly ruling in the common relations of life. God looked down upon this degenerate and hopeless condition. He knew how far the evil spread, until the whole people was corrupted, and there was no man able to plead against the prevailing evil; no days-man to stand up for righteousness and truth; no intercessor to check the on-coming judgments, and plead for their withdrawal—none such as Moses, or as Aaron, or as Phinehas. As no human intercessor could be found among the exiles, God himself wrought salvation; "his arm brought salvation unto him." The point suggested is this: Social and moral evils, being but inadequately dealt with by man, demand Divine intervention; but the Divine operations for redemption from evil are committed to men, as agents, to apply and carry out.

I. MAN CANNOT SAVE MAN. In every age the experiment has been tried. In every form of the trial it has proved a failure. There have been a great variety of religions in the world; they were all just this—man trying to save man. Great teachers and reformers have appeared—they were men trying to save man. There have been philosophical, and moral, and educational, and scientific, and ceremonial, and artistic systems, but no one of them was ever anything more than this—man trying to save man. The issue of nineteenth-century humanity schemes will exactly repeat the old story; it has been proved, over and over again, until we wonder that any one should be foolish enough to try a fresh experiment, that man cannot save man.

II. GOD ALONE CAN SAVE MAN. This is stating the truth again, with an important addition. It is entirely a question between man saving himself, and God saving him.

There is no third party to the question. And God can save man. He has always been finding out man's extremity, and making it his gracious opportunity; ever saving tribes, saving cities, saving societies, saving families, saving individuals. God, the Redeemer, is the name for God that is blazoned on the history of every age and clime. "God can save man" is the great truth written in the large record of the whole human race. Spared for four thousand years that he might try to save himself, man learned at last to put away the schemes in which he had trusted, and then, when the fulness of the times had come, God sent forth his Son, and called his name Jesus Immanuel, because he was to be in the world, "God himself saving men from their sins."

III. GOD ONLY SAVES MAN BY MAN. One of the most difficult truths for which to get men's acceptance is the truth that man's salvation is a moral miracle, for the accomplishment of which man is made the agent. God's salvation for moral beings is not a display of august force, as is his correction of disorder in his world of created *things;* it is the exertion of moral power upon them through moral influences and moral agents. The great deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage was manifestly God's redemption, altogether God's; and yet even in that case God only saved man by man. He found an instrument and agent by whom to carry out his purposes. The man Moses is prominent throughout the whole scene, and yet he never stands before God; he is only the agent. Illustrate further by the salvation from Babylon. In that case too a man was found. Cyrus was the Divine agent. The law is working in all the society around us. God is in the midst of men, saving still. But he is only saving men through human agencies. Social and moral evils cannot be mastered by merely human forces, since man cannot, of himself, reach those deeper religious evils that lie at the root of the social ones. God is saving men. This is the glory of our present-day life, with all its seeming failures and oppressive burdens and amazing self-will. He is saving men, and we are to be his witnesses, co-workers together with him. As we preach Christ to men, we have no power to save men; but as we lift Christ up in sight of men, we become God's agents, and through our words of faith and persuasion God moves and sways careless hearts, and wins sinners unto himself. This is our honour, our trust, our sacred burden. God would save this country, but he will only save it by us—by the Christian people in it. We must prophesy and preach to these dry bones, and then only will the breath of Heaven give them life. We must spend the strength of our manhood in giving, preaching, visiting, pleading, and then only will the ends of the land see the salvation of the Lord.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The standard of the Spirit.* Cheyne's translation is, "For he shall come like a rushing stream, which the breath of Jehovah driveth." The prophet regards the impending deliverance of the Jews as an act in the great drama of the world-judgment. Henderson translates, "The breath of Jehovah shall raise a standard against him;" and he treats the passage as prophetic of the resistance offered to the evil schemes of the enemies of the gospel. Probably the historical figure in the mind of the prophet, which gave the form to his expression, was the check given to Sennacherib, in his schemes against Jerusalem, by the plague-breath of Jehovah, which destroyed his host. Cheyne's translation is supported by the Revised Version, and the person referred to appears to be Cyrus, the deliverer, regarded as urged to his work by Jehovah. These two historical references suggest different ways of applying the figure.

I. THE FIGURE OF JEHOVAH'S BREATH. The same Hebrew word means "breath," "wind," "spirit." Distinguish between the anthropomorphic figures of the Lord's hand or arm, and the anthropopathic figures of the Lord's "anger" or "repentance." Distinguish between the "arm" or "hand," which indicates God's active working in the sphere of things, and his "breath," as his secret working on the springs of life and motive. Sometime God works openly, and all can see his doings. But even more frequently he silently works at the heart of things, and only men of faith can trace his doings.

II. THE FIGURE OF THE BREATH AS A RESISTANCE. Take the allusion to Sennacherib as illustration. Show how in life we constantly meet with difficulties that seem insoluble, and enemies that cannot be overcome. And yet presently the difficulties go out of the way, and the enemies can proceed no further. There are no evident reasons for these things, in any *circumstances* that we can observe. All that we can say is, "The

Spirit of the Lord has lifted up a standard against them." Further illustrate from the way in which the plans of the Apostle Paul and his companions were blocked. "They assayed to go into Bithynia, but the *Spirit suffered them not.*" We seldom feel as we ought how graciously God helps us by shutting doors which we fain would enter.

III. THE FIGURE OF THE BREATH AS AN IMPULSE. Take the allusion to Cyrus; and further illustrate from the impulse given to Philip to go and join the eunuch of Queen Candace. Open souls are ready and willing to be moved by the indwelling breath or spirit. Such open souls surely prove what it is to be led into all truth, strengthened for all duty, and sanctified through all fellowships.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The gospel-covenant.* The recipient of this covenant is the spiritual Israel. The old Jewish covenant is to provide figures that may help us to understand the spiritual covenant which we make with God and God makes with us, through Jesus Christ, the covenant-Negotiator. Here God's side of covenant-pledge is that he will always be the inner life and inspiration of his people. And it is assumed that his people's covenant-pledge is that they hold themselves as fully consecrated unto him, and in all holy and earnest activities seek to serve him.

I. THE NEW COVENANT ON GOD'S SIDE. Compare the pledge in the older Jewish covenant—preservation of *bodily* life, with all that this might demand of providing, guiding, and preserving—everything needed for the life that now is. In the new covenant the pledge is of preservation of that Divine life, spiritual life, which in us has been divinely quickened, with all that this higher life may demand of sustenance, guidance, protection, and inspiration. God will be sure to supply all the needs of our soul-life, and put his Spirit in us and keep his Spirit with us, to be the life of our life, our security, our guarantee, our sanctification. Cramer says, "Does the Spirit of God remain? then also does his Word; does the Word remain? then preachers also remain; do preachers remain? then also hearers do; do hearers remain? then also remain believers; and therefore the Christian Church remains also." Too seldom do we take the comforting and strengthening assurance that our God is actually under pledge to us to carry on to its completion the work of grace in us which he has begun. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Matthew Henry says, "In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his Word and Spirit to his Church and people throughout all generations." Dean Plumptre says, "The new covenant is to involve the gift of the Spirit, that writes the law of God inwardly in the heart, as distinct from the Law, which is thought of as outside the conscience, doing its work as an accuser and a judge."

II. THE NEW COVENANT ON MAN'S SIDE. Find what is the spiritual counterpart of the old Jewish covenant-conditions on man's side. Then he pledged loyalty to Jehovah, strict and prompt obedience to the will of Jehovah. The answering spiritual pledge may be found in Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."—R. T.

SECTION VII. THE GLORIES OF THE RESTORED JERUSALEM (CH. LX.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LX.

Vers. 1—22.—A SONG OF TRIUMPH UPON GLORIFIED ZION. This is rather a detached poem than an integral portion of a book. It is complete in itself, and but slightly connected, either with what precedes or with what follows. Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne regard it as a "counterpart" to the magnificent ode in ch. xlvii., which describes the fall and ruin of Babylon. It is composed of five stanzas, of nearly equal length: (1) vers. 1—4; (2) vers. 5—9; (3) vers. 10—14; (4) vers. 15—18; and (5) vers. 19—22.

Vers. 1—4.—*The first stanza.* Zion's brightness and numbers.

Ver. 1.—Arise, shine. The subject of the address does not distinctly appear until

ver. 14, where it is found to be "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Zion has long been prostrate in the dust from the prophet's standpoint, and covered with thick darkness. Now she is bidden to "arise" and "shine forth as the day." **For thy light is come.** Zion cannot shine with her own light, for she has no light of her own, having preferred to "walk in darkness" (ch. lix. 9). But she may reflect the radiance which streams from the Person of Jehovah, whose **glory is risen upon** her. "In thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

Ver. 2.—**For, behold, the darkness shall covor the earth.** As in Egypt a "thick darkness" covered the whole land at the word of Moses (Exod. x. 22), while still "the children of Israel had light in their dwellings," so now the world and "the nations" of the world lay in a deep obscurity, into which scarcely a ray of light penetrated, while on Israel there dawned a glory which streamed from the throne of God, and at once transfigured her, and gave her the appearance of an angel of the Most High. In the radiance of this light she was to stand up and show herself, and then great results would follow.

Ver. 3.—**The Gentiles shall come to thy light.** Plunged in darkness themselves (ver. 2), the Gentiles shall be astonished and attracted by Israel's radiance, and shall draw near to it and seek to partake of it. Among them shall come even their "kings," drawn by the brightness of the glory (comp. ch. xlix. 23).

Ver. 4.—**Lift up thine eyes** (see ch. xlix. 18). **Thy sons . . . thy daughters.** Not so much Jews of the dispersion, as Gentiles, who will become thy adopted "sons" and "daughters." **Shall be nursed at thy side;** rather, *shall be carried on thy side.* Oriental mothers often carry a small child on their hip, with the arm round it to prevent its falling off.

Vers. 5—9.—*The second stanza.* Zion's wealth.

Ver. 5.—**Thine heart shall fear;** rather, *shall throb;* "beat with excitement." **Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee;** *i.e.* the maritime commerce, which has hitherto enriched other nations, shall be turned thy way and be at thy disposal. **The forces of the Gentiles;** rather, *the riches of the Gentiles*—as in ch. viii. 4; x. 14; xxx. 6; lxi. 6. Details of the riches follow in vers. 6—9.

Ver. 6.—**The multitude of camels;** rather, *a multitude*—a *continual stream of caravans* (Kay). These would be composed of merchants from **Midian and Ephah,** and would bring goods from **Sheba.** The Midianite caravans of camels are mentioned as early as the time of Jacob, when they carried "spicery and balm and myrrh" from the land of Gilead into Egypt (Gen. xxxvii. 25, 28, 36). Ephah is a sub-tribe of Midian (Gen. xxv. 4). These nomads would visit the distant Sheba, in Happy Arabia, for purposes of trade, and would procure there **gold and incense,** which they would convey to Palestine. The "Sheba" intended is doubtless that whose queen visited Solomon, and brought with her gold in abundance, and "of spices very great store, and precious stones" (1 Kings x. 10). The Egyptians appear to have called the kingdom of the Shebaim (Sabæans) "Punt," and to have traded with it from a very early time, especially for frankincense ('Records of the Past,' vol. x. pp. 14—19; Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. pp. 132—134, 221—224). **The dromedaries;** rather, *the young camels,* or *the camel colts.* **All they from Sheba shall come;** rather, *they* (i.e. the camels of Midian and Ephah) *shall come all together from Sheba.*

Ver. 7.—**Kedar . . . Nebaioth.** Arab tribes, like the Midianites and Sabæans. (With respect to Kedar, see the comment on ch. xxi. 15.) "Nebaioth" stands for the tribe called by the Greeks and Romans the "Nabatæans," and by the Assyrians the "Nabaiti," who were one of the most powerful in the peninsula. About B.C. 645 Nathan, their king, warred with Asshur-bani-pal (Smith's 'Hist. of Asshur-bani-pal,' pp. 256—298). During the Maccabee period we find the Nabatæans in alliance with the Jews, and giving them some valuable assistance (1 Macc. v. 25; ix. 35). The locality of the Nabatæans was northern Arabia, or the tract lying between the Elanitic Gulf and the Lower Euphrates. The wealth of the Nabatæans and the Kedarenes was in their flocks and herds; and this wealth, it is prophesied, they will place at the disposal of Israel. **Mine altar . . . the house of my glory.** The renovated Zion contains a glorious temple, and the temple has in it an altar, to which the sheep and rams are brought—not, however, to be offered in sacrifice, but to be presented to God and become a part of the wealth of the Church.

Ver. 8.—**Who are these,** etc.? The prophet beholds the waters of the Mediterranean Sea covered with numerous ships, whose sails remind him of white clouds moving across the blue expanse of heaven, and again of doves wending their way homewards to their accustomed dove-cotes. The "windows" of the dove-cotes are the openings through which the birds pass into the towers where they breed.

Ver. 9.—**Surely the isles shall wait for me.** The "isles," or maritime countries of the West, have long waited for a Redeemer

(ch. xli. 1; xlii. 4; xlix. 1; li. 5, etc.). They shall send their sons, and their gifts, in ships, which will come **from far**, and cover the Mediterranean (see the preceding verse). **The ships of Tarshish.** Either ships belonging to the people of Tartessus, in Spain, who had a widely extended commerce in ancient times (Herod., i. 163; iv. 152; 1 Kings x. 22; Ezek. xxvii. 12; Jonah i. 3; etc.), or ships of a peculiar class, such as were considered suitable for the long and dangerous voyage to the distant Western port (see the comment on ch. ii. 16). **To bring thy sons from far** (see the comment on ver. 4). **Unto the Name of the Lord; *i.e.*** "to the place where the Lord has set his Name" (comp. ch. xviii. 7).

Vers. 10—14.—*The third stanza.* Zion's reconstruction.

Ver. 10.—**The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls.** Cyrus aided in the supply of timber for the construction of the second temple (Ezra iii. 7). Artaxerxes Longimanus sanctioned the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. i. 3; ii. 5—8). The passage has, however, a meaning beyond the literal one. "Strangers" of all kinds, Greeks, and Romans, and Syrians, and Africans, and Gauls, and Spaniards, and others, assisted in building and enlarging the walls of the Church as it spread over the world, set up its bulwarks in the Creeds, and fenced it round about with various decrees and canons. **Their kings shall minister unto thee** (see the comment on ver. 3). Among ministrant kings may be mentioned Cyrus, Darius the son of Hystaspes, Artaxerxes Longimanus, Alexander the Great, Constantine, Theodosius, Charlemagne, St. Louis, etc. **I had mercy on thee.** A preterit of prophetic certitude. Mr. Cheyne translates, "I will have compassion upon thee."

Ver. 11.—**Thy gates shall be open continually.** That all who seek salvation may have free access at all times. There is no fear of enemies entering, since war has ceased (ch. ii. 4; xi. 9, etc.). **The forces of the Gentiles;** rather, *the wealth of the Gentiles*, as in ver. 5. That **their kings** may be **brought;** *i.e.* forced to come by their subjects, who know that their own prosperity is involved in complete submission to the Church established in Zion, and therefore compel their kings to come and render their homage in person.

Ver. 12.—**The nation . . . that will not serve thee shall perish.** God's curse shall be upon them; they shall wither and decay for lack of the Divine favour and of the graces which God dispenses to mankind through his Church (comp. Zech. xiv. 17—19).

Ver. 13.—**The glory of Lebanon shall come** (comp. ch. xxxv. 2; xli. 19). Considered as imagery, the representation is that the barren hills which stand about Jerusalem shall, in the new state of things, be decked with tall and beautiful forest trees, all the sylvan scenery of Lebanon being transported to Southern Palestine, so as to encompass the city of God with a garden as delightful as that of Eden. The spiritual meaning is that graces of all kinds shall abound in and around the holy city, and shall make it beautiful and glorious. **The fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together** (comp. ch. xli. 19, where the same words occur in the same order; and, for the trees intended, see the comment on that passage). **To beautify the place of my sanctuary.** Not with "avenues of cedars and plane trees leading up to it" (Delitzsch), which was a style of ornamentation quite unknown to the Hebrews; but with groves, and thickets, and sylvan glades, and wooded slopes all around it, as round the Syrian temples in the Lebanon. **The place of my feet.** The Jewish temple, as the special place of God's presence upon earth, was frequently termed "God's footstool" (1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Ps. xcix. 5; cxxxii. 7; Lam. ii. 1). He that towers above the heavens had there set his foot. The metaphor is transferred to the renovated Zion.

Ver. 14.—**The sons** (*i.e.* descendants) **also of them that afflicted thee;** *i.e.* of the various nations that at different times oppressed and afflicted Israel—as Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, etc. **Shall come bending unto thee.** Bowing themselves down to the new Israel—the Israel of God—as the eleven sheaves bowed themselves down to Joseph's sheaf (Gen. xxxvii. 7). **At the soles of thy feet** (comp. ch. xlix. 23). **Shall call thee, The city of the Lord.** Hitherto her enemies had bestowed on Jerusalem disparaging names, as "Forsaken," or "Desolate" (ch. lxii. 4). Now they will substitute for such names titles of honour, such as "City of Jehovah," "Zion of Israel's Holy One."

Vers. 15—18.—*The fourth stanza.* Zion's prosperity.

Ver. 15.—**Thou hast been forsaken and hated** (comp. ch. liv. 7; lxii. 4). Zion has been a wife repudiated for her adulteries, "forsaken" by her husband, and the object of his just "hate." **So that no man went through** thee. The mixed metaphor is awkward, but readily intelligible. Zion is at once a city and a wife. As a wife, she is "hated and forsaken," as a city, no man goes through her. **An eternal excellency** (comp. ch. lix. 21, and see the Homiletics on the passage).

Ver. 16.—**Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles** (comp. Deut. xxxiii. 19). As a

child at the mother's breast, thou shalt obtain kindly nourishment through the means of the Gentiles, who acknowledge thee for their superior, and place all their means at thy disposal (*supra*, vers. 5—11). Among these, the most liberal, and the most prompt to render aid, will be their kings (see the comment on ver. 10). **Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour.** This clause is repeated from ch. xlix. 26. It is a phrase containing in it a mysterious depth of promise.

Ver. 17.—**For brass I will bring gold**; rather, *for copper*. "Brass" was an alloy little known to the Oriental nations. The general idea is that the glorious age of Solomon would return (1 Kings x. 21, 27), and Zion be as resplendent and as wealthy as in his time. The material splendour is, no doubt, throughout the whole description, typical in the main of spiritual glories and excellences. **I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.** "Peace" and "righteousness" are here personified; and the declaration is that they shall bear rule in the community whereof the prophet is speaking (comp. ch. xxxii. 16, 17).

Ver. 18.—**Violence shall no more be heard in thy land** (comp. ch. ii. 4; xi. 6—9; xxxv. 9). The entire cessation of war and violence is one of the most characteristic features of the "last times," when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks. "The Prince of Peace" shall ultimately establish peace. It is not surprising that men of earnest religious feeling should have thought, at various times, that they saw the actual commencement of the reign of peace upon earth, so distinctly promised, so earnestly longed for, so necessary for the happiness of mankind. But to a calm and dispassionate observer the nineteenth century seems scarcely more advanced upon the road which leads to this desirable end than the first. **Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.** The true wall of the city will be the "salvation" of which God assures it, and the true gates will be the "praise," or renown, which it has among the nations of the earth (comp. ch. xxvi. 1).

Vers. 19—22.—*The fifth stanza.* Zion's crowning glories.

Ver. 19.—**The sun shall be no more thy light by day.** Here Isaiah anticipates one of the most sublime thoughts in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, viz. that the heavenly Jerusalem, illuminated perpetually by the radiance of the Divine Presence, shall need neither light of the sun by day, nor of the moon by night, but shall be sufficiently illumined by the direct and primary light which streams down upon it from God himself. Whether the sun and moon will continue to exist or not is beyond the prophet's ken—he makes no announcement on the subject; sufficient for him that the redeemed bask perpetually in a Divine radiance shed upon them by the "Father of lights" (see Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5). The germ of the idea appears in the earlier prophecies (ch. xxiv. 23). **For brightness**; rather, *for illumination*. **The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light.** God is "the Father of lights" (Jas. i. 17)—"the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). All other light is but his shadow and his reflex—his creature (Gen. i. 3)—therefore perishable, not to be reckoned on for continuance (Ps. cii. 26; Heb. i. 11). But God abides; therefore his light will abide. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). **And thy God thy glory** (comp. Zech. ii. 5). God will not only be the Light of the Church, but her "Glory" and boast. As the Shechinah was the glory of the first, so "the eternal unchangeable light of Jehovah, with its peaceful gentleness and perfect purity" (Delitzsch), will be the glory of the final temple.

Ver. 20.—**Thy sun . . . thy moon.** That which is to thee instead of sun and moon—Jehovah's brightness. **The days of thy mourning shall be ended.** Till the new Jerusalem descends from heaven (Rev. xxi. 2), and Christ reigns personally over his people (Rev. xxii. 5), the Church is always, more or less, in a state of mourning. The Bridegroom is away (Matt. ix. 15); his light shines upon his Church only by snatches; his Church feels itself unworthy of him—cold, unloving, stained with sin. Fasting, weeping, and mourning befit such a state of things. But in the final condition of the redeemed their mourning shall be ended, "sorrow and sighing shall have fled away" (ch. xxxv. 10); God shall have "wiped away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. xxi. 4); "There shall be no more death" (Rev. xxi. 4); "no more curse" (Rev. xxii. 3); "neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). The days of mourning shall be ended.

Ver. 21.—**Thy people also** shall be all **righteous.** Here the prophet touches the root of the matter. Pain and sorrow are the fruit of sin. Once let sin disappear, and sorrow goes with it. It is the foundation of all the glory and all the happiness of the redeemed in their Lord's final kingdom, that they are cleansed from all defilement of sin, and "are as the angels" (Mark xii. 25). **They shall inherit the land**; rather, *the earth*—the "new heavens and new earth" of ch. lxv. 17; lxvi. 22. **The branch of my planting**; rather, *a sprout of my planting*; i.e. a sprout which I have planted.

Ver. 22.—**A little one**; *i.e.* the "little flock" of our Lord's own time on earth (Luke xii. 32), will become **a strong nation**—a countless multitude (Rev. vii. 9). **In his time**; rather, *in its time*, when the time fixed in God's counsels for the final establishment of Christ's kingdom arrives.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—*The characteristics of the final Church of the Redeemer.* Isaiah's teaching on this subject divides itself under three heads.

I. THE CHURCH SHALL BE RADIANT WITH A LIGHT DERIVED FROM HER LORD. The radiance spoken of (vers. 1—3) is a radiance of moral and spiritual goodness. The absolute moral perfection of the Son of man can, of course, be but faintly and feebly imitated by his followers. Still, they are bound to imitate him; for he "left them an example, that they should follow his steps" (1 Pet. ii. 21). And they are helped in their imitation by their Lord himself, who infuses into them of his own righteousness, and gives them "grace for grace" (John i. 16). And the result is that ultimately they, even in this life, more or less bear his image and are made like to him. "We all," says St. Paul, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). And the resemblance will be greater hereafter. For in their final state they will be cleansed from all stain of sin.

II. THE CHURCH SHALL BE A GREAT NATION, A VAST COMMUNITY, WHICH SHALL FILL THE NEW EARTH AND NEW HEAVENS. The "little one" was to "become a thousand," and the "small one a strong nation" (ver. 22). The Gentiles from every quarter were to flock in (vers. 3, 4, 14), and haste to the brightness of Zion's rising. Distinctions of race were to be abolished, and Zion's gates were to stand open always, to receive all comers (ver. 11). The result was to be a vast influx; and in the ultimate kingdom of the Redeemer would be contained people from every nation under heaven. Besides the mystical hundred and forty-four thousand, representative of the twelve tribes of Israel, St. John saw in the apocalyptic vision "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, which stood before the throne, and before the Lamb" in the heavenly kingdom, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. vii. 9).

III. THE CHURCH SHALL CEASE TO HAVE ENEMIES OR SUFFER VIOLENCE, AND SHALL ENJOY EVERLASTING PEACE. When the pit has closed on the ungodly, and Satan has been bound and shut up, and her sins have not only been forgiven, but purged away (ch. i. 25), then the Church will find herself kept in perfect peace, with no trouble either from within or from without, with no enemy to vex her, with no faults to mourn (ver. 20), with no temptations against which to struggle. Rest and peace are main objects of human desire; only the peace, to be satisfactory, must be a prolonged quiet energy, instinct with consciousness and life. Such an energy is the reverential and loving adoration which the blessed souls render continually to their present God, as they cast their crowns before his throne, and cry, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 10). The Divine presence will be a perpetually present joy, contenting those who live in it, and causing them to feel an eternal peaceful delight.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The rebuilding of the temple.* I. THE DAWN OF THE NEW DAY. Zion lying like a prostrate woman on the ground, is bidden to arise, because the glory of her God has dawned upon her. And this in contrast to the thick darkness enwrapping the earth in general. This darkness means alienation from God. As the Israelites had light in their dwellings when thick darkness was on the land of Egypt, so again now. Israel is the "central and mediatorial people." Here a community of God; yonder a world exiled from God. The contrast continues, and ever must continue. "We are of God; the whole world lieth in the evil one." The glory of the pure Church is nothing

but a reflection from the Eternal. He is a Sun to enlighten the understanding, open the eyes of the mind, thrill the heart with love. When through the faithlessness of the Church that splendour fades from her, there are no conversions, there is little interest in religion. When it reappears, nations set forth to that light, kings to the brilliance of that dawn.

II. THE RETURN FROM EXILE AND INFLUX OF WEALTH. Here the prophet exults in the contemplation of Arabian wealth flowing into the holy city. Their gifts are viewed as religious, as sacrificial,—consecrated to God. "The wealth of the heathen world shall be consecrated to the service of the Church. In part this has been the case. No small part of the great wealth of the Roman empire flowed into the Christian Church. The time will come when the wealth of India and China, and of Africa, and of the entire world, shall be devoted to the service of God."

III. THE NEW JERUSALEM. The walls shall be raised by the willing hands of strangers, probably the converted heathen, whose kings shall become servants of Zion; an endless stream of caravans shall flow through the open gates. And "eager to minister to Israel, the far-off nations force their reluctant chiefs to join them." For the very existence of these nations must depend on their organic connection with Israel. The Prophet Zechariah significantly declares that the nations who refuse to come up to Jerusalem to worship shall not enjoy the blessing of rain (xiv. 17, 18), which means they must perish, and their land become desolate. Whatever is said of the territory is said of the nation. To Zion, thus effulgent in her revived glory, shall be attracted also the beauty of natural products—the splendour of the trees of Lebanon, that the courts of the temple and the whole city may be decorated in honour of Jehovah. The oppressors, once so hated and feared, will come in the attitude of crouching suppliants, and they will call the city, "City of Jehovah, Zion of the Holy One of Israel." This magnificent picture may be construed: 1. As a picture of the *ideal Church* in relation to mankind. True, in this imperfect state, the prophecy can be but imperfectly realized. The glorious Church, without spot or blemish, remains the dream of lofty prophets and apostles. But without such dreams religious life must become despondent and dreary, flat and sad. While we listen to such oracles, translate them into song and set them to music, we purify and uplift our hearts. *Sursum corda!* We rise a little nearer to heaven, or bring heaven a little nearer to earth. 2. As a picture of *heaven*. There stands the heavenly temple; thither a vast multitude has congregated; and there a vast fund of spiritual riches has accumulated. Prophecy and religious poetry in general are but illusory enchantments unless they point to a reality in that state unseen.—J.

Vers. 15—22.—*The favour of Jehovah to his people.* Zion is again imagined as the bride of Jehovah. No more is she to be "hated," *i.e.* neglected (Gen. xxix. 31; Deut. xxi. 15), like one less beloved. No more are her streets to be deserted of passengers. She is to be made an "everlasting pride, the delight of successive generations." The kings of the earth are to be tender over her, and she is to be enriched by the resources of the nations.

I. JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR AND THE RULER. (Repeated from ch. xlix. 26.) Happy the people whose God is Jehovah, the "Hero of Jacob"! Every image of *temporal riches and prosperity*, such as the gold of Solomon's palace, or the silver common as stones, and the cedars as sycamores (1 Kings x. 21, 27), may but faintly shadow forth the splendour of the city under the true and eternal King. Better still, the politics will be those of peace. By a figure of speech, peace itself and righteousness are said to govern the city. And so spiritual shall be the sources of its strength, "it shall need no walls nor gates; for Jehovah shall be a constant source of salvation, and of a renown which shall keep all foes at a distance" (ch. xxvi. 1; xxxiii. 21). Nothing less than righteousness prevailing in every department of Church and state can satisfy that ideal which has been revealed to us, and which our souls thirst to see realized. Violence is to cease. "The pure gospel of the Redeemer has never originated a single war of invasion, nor produced a scene of bloodshed or prompted to strife. Let us look forward to a time when the mad passions of kings and nations will be subdued, and wars only be known among the sad and disgraceful records of the past."

II. THE ETERNAL SPLENDOUR OF THE CITY OF GOD. Jehovah himself, and no

material luminaries, shall enlighten it (ch. xxx. 26; cf. Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5). All the wonders of the natural world must pale and turn lustreless before the effulgence of moral beauty. The glory of the Church is its great Head—his Name, attributes, laws, and protecting care. Not so much wealth, talent, numbers, influence, but the character of her sovereign Lord, is her boast. The Church shall enjoy a *perpetual* existence, living through all changes and surviving all revolutions. Discipline and sorrow shall one day have done their work, and the people shall "all be righteous." They will possess the land, will inherit all that God has done for its welfare, will enter into all his plans and purposes, enjoy the fruit of his agelong spiritual husbandry. And from this state of things fresh lustre will ever be reflected upon his holy Name. There would be immense increase by accessions from the Gentile world. Nor will there be unnecessary delay. The lesson is to *wait, pray,* and *toil* until the day dawn—till,

> "Crowned with light, imperial Salem rise,
> Exalt her towering head, and lift her eyes!"

"He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). These inspired visions have deep relation to the truth; if they be not translated into fact in our time, we may be translated to the sphere where they are realities.—J.

Ver. 1.—*The blessed dawn.* "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The original reads, "Be enlightened; for thy light cometh." For it does not follow that all are enlightened to whom the light comes. There must be a receptive and a reflecting power in us.

I. OPPORTUNITIES ARE NOT ENOUGH. These come to nations and to men; but we must arise, and shake ourselves from slumber and indifference. Israel is to live as a witness for God. We are not to be as the *vortex* swallowing up all heavenly privileges; but a *fountain,* to send them abroad. A lighthouse is not for our own vessels, but for the merchandise of the world. The light shines *there* in Israel that the Gentiles may come to the brightness of its rising. Light is come. What an advent! How valueless is all else in creation without *light!* 1. *The light of a new morning of national life.* 2. *The light of an evangelical prophet, like Isaiah, who sees not only Israel's ruin, but Israel's remedy too.*

II. HUMAN ENDEAVOURS ARE NOT ENOUGH. Isaiah does not say, "*I* have come." He does not point to the medium, but to the light itself. "The glory of the Lord." This is seen to be such: 1. *By its unique character.* There is no light like the light of inspiration. 2. *By its glorious influence.* It brings safe guidance, sure prosperity, and spiritual peace.—W. M. S.

Ver. 15.—*A promise to Israel.* "I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." God's estimate of honour is the only real and permanent one. Nations have sought other excellences. The Egyptians excelled in architecture; the Greeks in art and beauty; the Romans in government and military prowess. The Jew was to excel in righteousness and religion.

I. GOD'S IDEAL IS IMMORTAL. "An eternal excellency." 1. *Military empire passes from kingdom to kingdom.* 2. *Taste changes alike in art and architecture.* But the moral law is eternal.

II. THE CONTRAST IS COMPLETE. The "*forsaken*" shall have arise among them One who shall fulfil the words of the sixteenth verse, "Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." The "*hated*" shall find and feel the tender love of God; for (ver. 10) "In my favour have I had mercy on thee." Scorn and contumely, what are they when the heart glows with the love of God, and the character wins his everlasting favour?—W. M. S.

Ver. 20.—*Eternal day.* "Thy sun shall no more go down," etc. We are told in the preceding verse who this sun is. *It is God.* As the Light of the soul, he shall live for ever. We speak of sun and moon, not only as they exist in nature, but figuratively, as symbolic of joy and gladness to the human heart. Many things are in this sense lights to us here, but their glory is often *dimmed,* often *eclipsed* in darkness; but hereafter "the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting Light, and thy God thy Glory." *Night*

is indispensable to *nature* here. Its dews and darkness answer numberless purposes of good in the wide creation. And must we not say that the gloom and mystery of life have all a meaning, a Divine intent? and that the spirit of the probationer for eternity is perfected in it? To have all sunshine in a world so stained with sin would argue that God thinks lightly of evil. It is not so. This life of ours has much of gloom; but all its darkness, directly or indirectly, springs from sin. The eclipse is caused by the selfishness of man coming between God and the soul. Will God always cause us to endure so much of darkness? No. But we must wait his *time*. We must wait his *place*. We may put off our black dress and dress in bridal robes when, as our text says, "the days of our mourning shall be ended." Light is beautiful. "Surely light is sweet." Think how many golden harvest-fields the all-ripening sun has looked down upon; how many scenes of blest content its rays have rested on. Many of our frames of mind are materially affected by the merry sunshine. The sun not only ripens the corn, it gladdens the heart. But there is a sunshine of the soul not at all connected with this. There are joys which nothing outward can bestow or remove. Yes; there are many miserable hearts on the brightest days. The sunshine cannot replace the smile of a vanished face. Likewise there are many glad hearts on the gloomiest days. Nothing can steal from them the blessedness of being loved and doing good. I would remark, however, that—

I. THE SUNSHINE OF LIFE IS UNCERTAIN. Do dark days come *suddenly* on mariners in distant seas, in other zones? So imperceptibly comes sorrow to human hearts. We have no control over the landscape and the heart. Its fairest scenes may be darkened in an hour! Imagine a belated traveller seeing the sun go down. This is so! What sad intelligence may come! What unbidden conjecture may arise! What surmise! What thought may come forth from the chambers of memory! What spoken words—what sad scenes may quench the light of joy and gladness in the human countenance! Yes; you have marked this; perhaps your own words may have produced it. How many can bear evidence of this! They will be ready to echo my words when I say, "Let us be very thankful for so much bright sunshine as we have, for the joys which are the rewards and accompaniments of Christian life." Yes; "they will bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp, with the psaltery;" they will be glad, but they will rejoice with trembling, for they "know not what a day," etc.

II. THE SUNSHINE OF LIFE IS MUCH DEPENDENT ON THE STATE OF OUR SOULS. We may be surrounded by the sweetest natural and the holiest moral associations, and yet sometimes be very sad. It may be at home, or even in the sanctuary of God. A little pebble placed near the eye will intercept the light of the sun; and a little object may keep away from us the smile of God and the sweet sanction of our own conscience. We feel discontented with ourselves, that, having a cross so near to go to, we should yet bear the burden of so many sins; that, having a Friend so near, we should let him share so few of our sorrows. But the cause of this is the explanation of our sadness: we so often love the sins we cherish; we so often forsake the Friend we should make our own. As it is with a sermon, so it is with all the aspects of life, so much hangs on the state of our own soul. But look up higher. The souls that listened where you do, trod the same earth, wept the same tears as you do,—they are sad nevermore, for the state of their souls is purer than the purest lake which reflects the overhanging hills; so pure that they consciously and clearly bear the image of him who knew no sin.

III. THE SUNSHINE OF HEAVEN WILL BE SOFT AS WELL AS BRIGHT. It is likened to the *moon* as well as to the *sun*. Heaven is not only pictured to us by the symbols of the waving palms, and the majestic multitude, and the thrilling anthem, and the reverberating choir, and the glad hosannah! No; there will be soft moonlight as well as sunlight. Much and most of our happiness here is not of the outwardly buoyant and ecstatic character. It is calm and peaceful joy which you crave no vivid image for. This one suits it though—the moonlight. Yes; how many voyagers has it lent its soft light to guide amongst the breakers! How many travellers, imperilled by the way, has it kept in safety from the precipice and the watercourse! How many will sing of the beauty as well as the safety it gives! Never did the sleeping city stand out in such calm and stately grandeur. Never did the overhanging worlds glow with a serener or a steadier beauty. We cannot always bear the gaze of the sun; but ask the Indian missionary, and he will tell you the sweet loveliness of the moon. It is a type, then,

as I think, of a calmer joy; the blessedness of a being who, no longer vexed with anger, hate, or jealousy, no more burdened with pride, or prejudice, or selfishness, sees and enjoys God in all around and all within him. Who—what shall disturb this joy? "Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself."

IV. THE SUNSHINE OF HEAVEN WILL BE COMMON TO ALL CHRISTIANS. Some of us here to-day may be for a time walking in darkness, whilst some are rejoicing in the light. There sits the sad widower, and there the joyful husband; there the pensive widow, there the glad wife; there the fatherless orphan, there the fond child. Yea, and deeper are the differences. There is one who, by the grace of God, has just conquered some besetting sin; beside him, one who still indulges it. There, one whose commerce with the court of heaven is small; and there, one who, like Enoch, walks with God. There, one who pitches his tabernacle with the open door towards the cross; there, one who has his tent open towards the world. Here are different phases of human experience, different states of physical health, and different degrees of the spiritual life. Consequently the sunshine of one is not the sunshine of all. In heaven it will be common. I do not say all will have the same degree of blessedness. I believe they will not. But all will be at rest. There will be no such difference as between sorrow and joy. All will be happy up to the measure of their being; all will participate in a joy of which the sublimest foretastings on earth are but the faintest shadows. Mark, then, the language. "*Thy* sun shall *no* more go down." It belongs to thee. We are not *of* the night, as we are *in* the night.

V. THE SUNSHINE OF HEAVEN SHALL NEVER REST ON GRAVES. "The days of thy mourning shall be ended." I have often thought on the brightest days of the many new tombs which the sun's light falls on. But a few days since, closed eyes rejoiced in the light as well as mine. Ah! and there are eyes looking *on* the world which looked on it with them; scenes of sea and land, hill and vale, forest and flood, which photographed themselves on both hearts alike. One is now a clod of the valley. Much of the description of heaven, to inspirit our hearts, rests in what there is *not* there. And there are no more graves. There is no new tomb for Joseph in the garden of the better country. We shall hear no lamentation for the dead there—"Rachel weeping for her children, because they are not." We shall never, as did the disciples, stand with Jesus at the grave there. No voice will ever say, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" "Lazarus, come forth!" No; there are no graves, neither in the sea nor in the rock; for "the days of thy mourning shall be ended."—W. M. S.

Ver. 20.—*Departed grief.* "The days of thy mourning shall be ended." What a glorious perspective there is in these words! In the fairest skies we are accustomed to expect some clouds to start up from the bed of the sea, or to come suddenly across the blue firmament heralded by some fleecy outrider. Nor do we expect perpetuity of joy in human life. Life is ever the subject of risk and danger. We never part without uncertainty as to meeting again; we never know but our day of glory may set in tears. There comes, too, in time, to us all that "last glance of love which becomes the sharpest pang of sorrow."

I. NIGHT. On earth our experience is often that of mourning. We are sorrowful. 1. *Over the ravages of sin in ourselves and in the world.* 2. *Over the contrast between our ideals and our imperfections.* 3. *Over the influences of mutability and mortality.* 4. *Over the weakness of our faith and the coldness of our love to Christ.*

II. MORNING. "Ended." Some things end *for a time only.* We are liable to them again. Fear returns. Disaffection of friends, awhile ago removed, recommences once more. Pain eased gives place to after-anguish. Friend after friend departs. After one victory over temptation comes another and a fiercer conflict. "Mourning ended." Why? God is our everlasting "Light;" for: 1. *We are all righteous.* (Ver. 21.) The new nature is perfected in those who have the new name; there is no sorrow where there is no sin. 2. *We are all at home.* "They shall inherit the land for ever." At last the craving for rest is satisfied. At last what we have so long sought *here* we shall find there. All here mocks us with a sense of change, disruption, and death. *There* "thy sun shall no more go down."—W. M. S.

Ver. 22.—*Multiplication.* "A little one shall become a thousand," etc. This

is a Divine rebuke of our estimates. We look at outward magnitudes; God looks at that which has inward extension in itself.

I. THIS IS TRUE HISTORICALLY. Israel found it so. The Pilgrim Fathers found it so. And many Churches have found it so, where there has been loving co-operation and personal consecration. Look how the despised mission work in India grew to a mighty force, despite the satirical review of Jefferies. Look how the native schools, with their slender beginnings, have grown to millions of disciples.

II. THIS IS TRUE CONDITIONALLY. God must be with us! "I the Lord will hasten it." "It is to be in his time." There is no promise to the "little one," whatever skill, energy, or endeavour there may be—only God is with them. When we are on the side of truth, we are on the side of conquest. When we are waiting in disappointed moods, God is hastening on the sure foundation, which he is laying. When we are fascinated with the meretricious glory of the world, we see it laid low and Christ's kingdom established on its ruins.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—22.—*The Church triumphant.* With other eyes than ours the Jews must have read these glowing words. They saw in them a fascinating picture of a triumphant people; they saw the Jerusalem of their knowledge and of their love made strong and glorious in some coming time. Their patriotic hopes were kindled and must have been raised to a white heat of intensity as they dwelt on the gladdening, transporting promise. In the midst of surrounding darkness covering the whole earth (ver. 2), Zion shines forth with a light which proceeds from nothing less than the Divine Presence itself (vers. 1, 2). Attracted by its radiant beams, her exiled sons and daughters return from the strange lands whither they have gone into captivity, while from every quarter the wealth of Gentile nations flows to her feet. She trembles for very joy, her heart expands with the fulness of its emotion, as she welcomes her children to her heart, as she receives these treasures into her gates (vers. 4—6). The produce of other lands is laid on the altar of Jehovah, and brightens the lustre of that glorious house (ver. 7). Precious tribute is brought from distant coasts (ver. 9), and they who once contemptuously humiliated her, now build up the walls of her strength and find their safety in her service (vers. 10—12, 14). In place of saddest desolation and signs of Divine departure shall be proofs of national supremacy and the recovered favour of the Lord (vers. 15, 16). The excellences of earlier days will be eclipsed by the future splendour; the rude arm of force shall give place to the gentle hand of righteousness; the salvation of Jehovah shall surround the city; and songs of praise shall be on the lips of the citizens (vers. 17, 18). The light of noon in all its radiance is but a picture of the glory which will rest upon her in the abiding presence of Jehovah; and joy, rectitude, and enlargement will be her blessed portion (vers. 20—22). There may be intervening days before this is realized; but when the hour is reached for it to come, the Lord will hasten its arrival. But "God fulfils himself in many ways;" he redeems his promises to us otherwise than we hope and even confidently expect. Jerusalem has never attained, and is not likely to realize, the prosperity and power here depicted; in some other way than that of national glory must we look for the fulfilment of this brilliant vision. We shall find it in the triumph of the Church of Christ, of the "Israel of God," which the Divine Redeemer has lived and died to establish. The features of this "golden age," as thus realized, are indicated in the text; they are—

I. THE EXALTATION OF THE DIVINE. Its glory will be manifestly the "glory of the Lord" (vers. 1, 2). And everything is to work for the exaltation of Christ (vers. 20, 21). Whatever does not aim at this or make for this is alien, intrusive, harmful.

II. THE POSSESSION OF VITAL PRINCIPLES. (Ver. 12.) All that opposes itself to those truths and principles of which the Church of Christ is the exponent and depository will fail and perish.

III. PERFECT ACCESSIBILITY. (Ver. 11.) Its gates are never to be shut. The Church which is exclusive, the Christian society which is repelling, the minister or messenger of Christ who is forbidding, the message which does not welcome the wandering, bears on the face of it a decisive condemnation.

IV. TRIUMPH OVER ITS BITTEREST ENEMIES. (Vers. 10, 14, 15.) Those who smote

and scorned shall acknowledge its heavenly origin, and their lips shall utter the redeeming truth; their own hands shall build the walls of Zion.

V. THE INCOMING OF THE REMOTEST. (Vers. 6, 8, 9.) 1. *Those most distant in space.* They shall seek entrance who come from furthest latitudes, whose language, laws, customs, are most strange. 2. *Those most distant in spirit*—they who have been farthest from God, dwelling in the thickest and grossest darkness with which the land has been covered (ver. 2).

VI. LAYING ALL THINGS UNDER TRIBUTE. Not only the glory of nature (ver. 13), but also the greatness of mankind (ver. 16); fairest and finest fruits of the field, and the proudest products of society, shall minister to its strength and promote its cause.

VII. SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KINGDOM AND GLORY OF CHRIST. (Ver. 7.) As the flocks and herds of Kedar and Nabathea would add something, by their novelty and peculiarity, to the glories of the temple; so will the especial characteristics of Christian converts, of the Englishman, of the Italian, of the Indian, of the Chinaman, etc., contribute to the glories of the Church: so will "the imagination of the East, the passion of the South, the vigour of the North, and the enterprise of the West," bring their own tribute to the glory of Christ.

VIII. THE PREVALENCE OF PEACE. (Vers. 17, 18.)

IX. THE REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Vers. 17, 21.)

X. EVER-ENLARGING PROSPERITY. (Vers. 17, 22.)

The special lessons to be learnt from this description of the Church triumphant are: 1. That in all matters pertaining to the kingdom of God, it is *his glory* that should be sedulously kept in view. 2. That the Church of Christ must expect to prove *an attractive power* in the midst of encompassing evil. 3. That it must address itself to the restoration and acquisition of those that seem *least likely* to be gained. 4. That each community should consider what is the *particular contribution* it can bring to adorn the doctrine and strengthen the cause of its Master. 5. That the Church should be *incessantly active* in its holy mission. 6. That it should take care that *moral and spiritual excellency* marks it course as well as numerical growth and the brilliancy of its conquests. 7. That it must maintain the attitude of *devout expectancy* and holy gratitude, remembering that all its strength and hope are in "the Lord, its Saviour and its Redeemer."—C.

Ver. 1.—*The call to shine if we have light; or, the duty of doing as well as knowing.* Our first response to God is the reception of his light; but the second is the giving forth of that light. We read this truth and duty in its Christian phases, and urge it by the use of Christian persuasions. Our Lord made very much of the connection between knowing and doing, profession and practice. His disciples must be salt, that savours something or somebody; light, that shines forth on somebody. See the parables of the ten talents, the husbandmen, the sower and the seed, and the barren fig-tree. God always looks for fitting signs and expressions wherever there is *life*. See the direct teachings of Christ. "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth* them;" "He that *doeth* the will . . . the same is my brother;" "Yea, blessed are they that hear the Word, and *do* it." This union of doing with professing is necessary: 1. To satisfy us of the reality of our own piety. Illustrate from the seed—if there is life in it, that life will show itself to the light. Men expect to see religion influencing conduct. We expect this in others. Others expect it in us. They look for our *shining* if we profess to have received God's light. No excellence of creed can excuse unsubdued tempers, unrestrained habits, indifference to the welfare of others, and silence concerning what we have tasted and handled and felt of the Word of life. We must test ourselves if we would be assured of our own vitality. No breath, no life. No shining, no light. 2. To prove the truth of Christianity. It makes great pretensions. How shall it support and prove them? Only by living examples. Experiment tests everything, and constantly fresh experiments are needed. After all argument and evidence are exhausted, we ought to be able to say, "See what Christianity has done: the demon-possessed, the blind, the lame, the drunken, the strong-tempered, the selfish, are changed, and now they *shine*." Then, if we would offer to the men around us the best plea for Christianity, we must just *shine*. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." 3. To extend the work of the Light-bringer, the Redeemer. Christian living is the supreme persuasion. Men may resist

eloquence, reasoning, force,—they cannot resist *the power of godliness;* it is like the influence of heaven; it is like the testimony of the dawning day, which men must heed. Jerusalem of old—Jerusalem spiritualized as the modern Church—may well be bidden to "put on the beautiful garments" of godly living, and "arise and shine." —R. T.

Ver. 7.—*God's presence the glory of God's house.* "I will glorify the house of my glory" (comp. Hag. ii. 7—8; Mal. iii. 1). Rendered literally, the sentence would read, "My house of beauty will I beautify." Foreshadowings of this spiritual truth are found in God's presence making the charm of the Eden-home; God's presence abiding as a glory between the cherubim in the holy of holies; and God's presence coming in the symbol of the descending cloud on Solomon's temple. It was the great glory of Herod's restored temple, that the God-Man walked and worshipped and taught within its courts. It is the exceeding great glory of the Church, the spiritual temple, that God the Spirit comes to it, dwells in it, is the inspiration of it, and glorifies it. There is no glory in a shrine without the Deity. The sunshine, streaming through the windows of the old cathedral, fills the whole place with wondrous and solemnizing lights and shades; and the sunshine of the Divine presence fills the heart and the sanctuary with the only true glory and beauty and joy. "The Church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him."

I. WE OUGHT TO GLORIFY GOD'S HOUSE. One idea of the text is that the restored temple at Jerusalem would be honoured by abundant supplies of sacrifices. That old way of worshipping has given place to spiritual forms, such as prayer and praise and instruction; then we should give the best possible attention to these, that in so doing we may honour God's house. The best song, the best gifts, the best architecture, all should be devoted to the glorifying of God's house. And the best, most regular, most reverent, attendance at public worship may be our way of honouring God. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord." That is the way to glorify God for his goodness.

II. GOD ALONE CAN TRULY GLORIFY GOD'S HOUSE. If he is not present, accepting the worship, inspiring the worship, and sanctifying the worship, then it is all vain show, empty form, deluding ceremony. Write up "*Ichabod*," for the "glory is departed." God's presence is known in the enduement of his ministers with righteousness, and in the making of his chosen people joyful.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Open gospel-gates.* "Thy gates also shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night." Compare the picture of the new Jerusalem, in Rev. xxi. 25, "And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it." The figure is taken from a country in which the cities were defended by walls and gates, and these gates were closed at night. Closed gates represented the old limitation and exclusiveness of Judaism. Open gates suggest the fulness and freeness of the gospel provision and the gospel offer. "Here the open gates have their special reason assigned—to admit the ever in-streaming world, with its offerings and homage." "The words of the text imply a state of peace, in which there would be no danger of attack; and the constant stream of pilgrims, with their offerings, entering by night as well as by day."

I. OPEN GATES ARE A PROCLAMATION OF PEACE. The Church does not want to hurt anybody, so it feels no fear of anybody wanting to hurt it. Illustrate from the open country of America; it can keep its gates open, because it does not want to injure or take advantage of any other nation, and so it is unable to conceive of other nations wanting to injure it. George Macdonald has, in 'Thomas Wingfold, Curate,' a very curious, but very striking, conception of a heaven of sweetest peace, where there is no money to create greed, and where everybody wants to serve his neighbour, and nobody wants to injure his neighbour. That place can keep its gate open; and so can Christ's Church. Even in some parts of our country, people's doors are never locked. It is a delightful sign of peaceful living.

II. OPEN GATES ARE AN INVITATION TO ENTER. Illustrate by the silent, yet powerful, call of the open church doors on the sabbath day. We hear them singing to us and saying—

"Come in, come in,
Eternal glory thou may'st win!"

The gospel's "whosoever will" is Divine persuasion. It gives us confidence; we all can come under that "whosoever."

III. OPEN GATES ARE AN ASSURANCE OF WELCOME AND PROVISION. There is something inside the temple, inside the city, which thus boldly dares to open its doors. There must be a "feast of fat things, . . . of wines on the lees well refined." Illustrate from our Lord's parable of the gospel-feast. He would not open thus wide his doors if the oxen were not killed and the fatlings ready. Unfold what precious and all-satisfying things for souls the Lord Jesus has provided, and plead that, whether it be morning-time of life, noontime, evening, or night, the gates are open, and we may *enter now*.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The condition of national prosperity.* "Every nation shall fall unless it serves the Lord, the righteous God, the God of Israel, through whom alone is salvation. The figure of serving Israel means serving the God of Israel" (Matthew Arnold). Foerster remarks that "the Roman pontiffs abuse this oracle of the prophet to establish their tyranny over monarchs. In particular, it is recorded of Pius IV., that at the time of his election he caused a coin to be struck, on one side of which was his own image, adorned with a triple crown, and on the other these words of the prophet were inscribed." Barnes gives suggestions for the historical illustration of the passage: "The idea of the verse is that no nation can flourish and long continue that does not obey the Law of God, or where the true religion does not prevail, and the worship of the true God is not maintained. History is full of affecting illustrations of this. The ancient republics and kingdoms fell because they had not the true religion. The kingdoms of Babylon, Assyria, Macedonia, and Egypt; the Roman empire, and all the ancient monarchies and republics, soon fell to ruin because they had not the salutary restraints of the true religion, and because they lacked the protection of the true God. France cast off the government of God in the first Revolution, and was drenched in blood. It is a maxim of universal truth that the nation which does not admit the influence of the laws and the government of God must be destroyed. No empire is strong enough to wage successful war with the great Jehovah; and, sooner or later, notwithstanding all that human policy can do, corruption, sensuality, luxury, pride, and far-spreading vice will expose a nation to the displeasure of God, and bring down the heavy arm of his vengeance." The precise form in which this subject is dealt with must depend on the standpoint of the preacher. It is better, therefore, only to give the lines in which thoughts, arguments, and persuasions may run. The conditions of national prosperity are—

I. BELIEF IN GOD. Atheism never has built up, and never can build up, a stable nation. An atheistic nation is like a wall of loose stones. There is nothing to bind it into a unity of strength.

II. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD. From different points of view the absolute necessity for some public and authorized testimony of the national faith may be urged.

III. OBEDIENCE TO GOD. By the recognition of his Law as the absolute standard of national righteousness, the final court of appeal.

IV. REFERENCE TO GOD. In all times of national perplexity or peril. "Righteousness exalteth a nation," but righteousness is this—trying to *know* God's will, and trying to *do* it.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Glorifying the second temple.* There are no records of such overwhelming manifestations of the Divine glory at the dedication of the second temple as were granted when Solomon consecrated the first. And yet its glory was to be higher than any reached in the experiences of Solomon's temple. There was to be a spiritual presence of God, which was to be realized by the help of the human presence of Christ.

I. EVIDENCES OF THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. Or signs of the spiritual presence and spiritual power of God in his Church. 1. Quickening of religious life;

or conversions. 2. Renewals of religious life; or sanctification. 3. Enlargement of religious feelings. This, however, may be spurious, or it may be sound. 4. Reconsecration to religious work.

II. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE FULFILMENTS OF THIS PROMISE DEPEND. Our moral attitudes. We must be *set* for the blessing. The Church that would have the spiritual presence of God must be (1) maintaining the Christian spirit; (2) living the Christian life; (3) upholding the Christian worship; (4) working the Christian work. Then there is much preparing and fitting work for us to do, if God is to "make the place of his feet glorious" where we unite in his worship.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—"*The Mighty One of Jacob.*" "And thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." It is singular and significant that Jehovah should here be so closely identified with Jacob, and not, as usual, with the three great patriarchs. We are to get our ideas of him as a Saviour and Redeemer precisely from what he was to Jacob, and what he did for Jacob. Now, the striking thing in the life of Jacob is that he had much more trouble with *himself* than with his *circumstances*. The cursory view might make much of the changeableness and the hardships of Jacob's checkered life; but he easily mastered his circumstances. The deeper view sees throughout the career a constant struggle with the *bad self*, which never gets more than a partial victory, until life draws near to its close, and then the hero of a thousand fights with the bad self is enabled to speak of "the angel that redeemed me from all evil." That angel the prophet suggestively calls the "Mighty One of Jacob." This, then, is our point. The glory of God our Redeemer is that he can redeem us from *our bad selves*. Show what is meant by and included in the "bad self."

I. THE STRUGGLE WITH THE BAD SELF IS A SECRET STRUGGLE. We do not talk about it. We do not put forth any signs of it. Men think our earthly troubles are our great troubles, but the truth is that no cry goes forth from us with such intensity of passion as the cry which no fellow-creature hears, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Nobody knows how hard we are trying to put away the "old man with his corruptions."

II. THE STRUGGLE WITH THE BAD SELF IS A HOPELESS STRUGGLE. It is if we carry it on in our own strength. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" What Jacob-like man or woman ever yet sang a victory-song over his own giant self, and praised the weapons and the skill that gained the triumph? Jacobs that try to get quit of the bad self in their own strength end in the dust, under giant Self's foot.

III. THE STRUGGLE WITH THE BAD SELF IS JUST THE STRUGGLE IN WHICH WE MAY HAVE, AND SHOULD REJOICE TO HAVE, A DIVINE HELPER. He, the "Mighty One of Jacob," has access to souls, and influence on souls. He "strengtheneth us with strength in the soul." He will not cease his gracious working until his people are "all glorious within." Of this we may be sure, in this we may have supreme consolation—over the secret inner strife of our souls, the Lord, the Saviour, the Redeemer, graciously presides. —R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Our everlasting Light.* Contrasts are suggested with brief days that darken into night, and cloudy days that hide the sunshining. It passes our comprehension, indeed, but it kindles our imagination, to conceive of a day that knows no ending, and a sunrising that never reaches its meridian. Yet we often feel as if we wanted life to be all sunshine; it shall be when we are altogether good. While we are encompassed with infirmities, and must be under discipline, God cannot be to us an "everlasting Light;" there must be clouds coming betwixt, which our fearing, trembling souls fashion into his forms. In the white heavens, white souls need no sun and no moon to shine upon them, for the glory of God doth lighten them. But this is ideal glory, and the question for us is—How near can we get to it now?

I. FOR US GOD MAY BE THE LIGHT OF THE MATERIAL WORLD. To let ourselves be so engrossed with business affairs that there is no room for God in thought, or heart, or life, is to lose the everlasting light—to be unable to see God in common everyday things. It is hardly conceivable that any man could wish to have this fair earth with its vales

and hills, without the gilding beautifying sunshine. O poor earth, dull and dead, like sunless winter in Arctic climes! And yet thousands are willing to have this earth of material relationships without the sunshine of God. Exactly what men want, but do not know that they want, is God their everlasting Light. Common life, with him, is lived in the sunshine.

II. FOR US GOD MAY BE THE LIGHT OF THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD. In our day he is only allowed to shine intermittently in *this* world, and there are many who would blot him out of this sky if they could. Others, who would not go so far as that, would gladly make a thick, foggy atmosphere of their own wisdom, through which he can only shine dimly. We shall never get the full glory of the treasures of the intellectual world until we let the revealing rays of the "everlasting light" fall everywhere upon them.

III. FOR US GOD MAY BE THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. Indeed, there is no light at all in the spiritual world if he does not shine. And the one thing above all others which they crave after who dwell in that spiritual world is the full, constant, unshaded, glowing, life-renewing power of the everlasting Light.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*The heaven of universal righteousness.* "Thy people also shall be all righteous." "There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side of heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be 'all righteous,' that is, they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption among them; the spirit of just men shall there be made perfect" (Matthew Henry). Universal righteousness includes the following things.

I. THAT EVERY MAN HAS WON HIS OWN WILL WHOLLY FOR GOD.

II. THAT EVERY MAN HAS WON HIS OWN LIFE AND CONDUCT FOR GOD.

III. THAT EVERY MAN HAS WON HIS OWN RELATIONSHIPS FOR GOD.

IV. THAT EVERY MAN HAS WON ALL HIS OWN SURROUNDINGS FOR GOD.

No picture of a material heaven can be so inspiring to us as this sublime picture of a moral state, in which everybody tries to do the right, and finds triumphant grace given to him for the doing.—R. T.

SECTION VIII. SOLILOQUY OF THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, WHO PROMISES GLORY AND PROSPERITY TO JERUSALEM (CH. LXI., LXII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXI.

VERS. 1—3.—THE MISSION OF THE SERVANT OF THE LORD. The words of our Lord in Luke iv. 21, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," preclude the application of this passage to any other than the Lord himself. It is simply astonishing that some Christian commentators (Ewald, Hitzig, Knobel) have not seen the force of this argument, but, with the Jews, imagine the prophet to be speaking of his own ministry. It is contrary to the entire spirit of Isaiah's writings so to glorify himself, and specially unsuitable that, after having brought forward with such emphasis the Person of "the Servant" (ch. xlii. 1—8; xlix. 1—12; l. 4—9; lii. 13—15; liii. 1—12), he should proceed to take his place, and to "ascribe to himself those very same official attributes which he has already set forth as characteristic features in his portrait of the predicted One" (Delitzsch). Hence most recent commentators, whatever their school of thought, have acquiesced in the patristic interpretation, which regarded the Servant of Jehovah as here speaking of himself.

Ver. 1.—**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me**; literally, *the Spirit of the Lord Jehovah (Adonai Jehovah) is upon me.* The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and one manuscript omit *adonai.* In the original announcement of "the Servant" it was stated that God had "put his Spirit upon him" (ch. xlii. 1). The sanctification of our Lord's human nature by the Holy Spirit is very explicitly taught in the Gospels (Matt. i. 20; iii. 16; iv. 1, etc.; Mark i. 10, 12; Luke i. 35; ii. 40; iii. 22; iv. 1, 14, 18—21, etc.; John i. 32, 33; iii. 34, etc.). **The Lord hath anointed me.** The "anointing" of Jesus was that sanctification of his human nature by the Holy Spirit, which commenced in the womb of the blessed Virgin (Luke i. 35), which continued

as he grew to manhood (Luke ii. 40, 52), which was openly manifested at his baptism, and never ceased till he took his body and soul with him into heaven. Of this spiritual anointing, all material unction, whether under the Law (Lev. viii. 10—12, 30; 1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 13; 1 Kings i. 39; xix. 15, 16, etc.) or under the gospel (Mark vi. 13; Jas. v. 14), was symbolical or typical. **To preach good tidings** (comp. ch. xl. 9; xli. 27; lii. 7; and Nah. i. 15). **Unto the meek** (see Matt. v. 5; xi. 29; and comp. ch. xi. 4; xxix. 19). **To bind up the broken-hearted** (comp. Ps. cxlvii. 3, where this is declared to be the office of Jehovah himself). "Binding up" is an ordinary expression in Isaiah's writings for "healing" (see ch. i. 6; iii. 7; xxx. 26). **To proclaim liberty to the captives.** This was one of the special offices of "the Servant" (see ch. xlii. 7). The "captivity" intended is doubtless that of sin. **And the opening of the prison to** them that **are bound.** St. Luke, following the Septuagint, has, "and recovering of sight to the blind." It is thought by some that the original Hebrew text has been corrupted. Others regard the Septuagint rendering as a paraphrase.

Ver. 2.—**To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.** An "acceptable year," or "year of acceptance," is a space of time during which God would be pleased to accept such as repented and turned to him. It is, of course, not intended to limit the space to a "year." The space is rather the term of our sojourn here below. **The day of vengeance.** The "day" of vengeance is contrasted with the "year" of acceptance, to indicate God's long-suffering and patience towards sinners (comp. ch. xxxiv. 8; and see also Exod. xx. 5, 6). **To comfort all that mourn;** *i.e.* all who "sorrow after a godly sort" (2 Cor. vii. 11)—all who mourn their transgressions and shortcomings, their "sins, negligences, and ignorances," with a hearty desire to be rid of them, and to serve God truly in the future.

Ver. 3.—**To appoint . . . to give.** The latter expression is a correction of the former, which was not wide enough. Messiah is sent to give to the godly mourners (1) **beauty for ashes;** or "a *crown* for ashes," *i.e.* a crown of glory in lieu of the ashes of repentance which it was customary to sprinkle upon the head; (2) **the oil of joy for mourning;** or the anointing of the Spirit in lieu of that plenteousness of tears which naturally belonged to mourners; and (3) **the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,** or a glad heart inclined to praise God, in lieu of a heavy one inclined to despair. Christian experience witnesses to the abundant accomplishment of all these purposes. **That they might be called trees of righteousness;** literally, *oaks of righteousness,* or strong and enduring plants in the garden of God, planted by him, in order that through them **he might be glorified.** Nothing gives so much glory to God as the proved righteousness of his saints. **The planting of the Lord;** *i.e.* "which he has planted" and caused to grow, and rendered righteous. The righteousness, though it is their own, an indwelling quality, has nevertheless come from him (comp. ch. lx. 21).

Vers. 4—9.—GOD'S PURPOSE OF DEALING GRACIOUSLY WITH ISRAEL. Having proclaimed the objects of his own mission, "the Servant" proceeds to declare God's gracious purposes towards Israel. Taking the Captivity period for his standpoint, he promises, first, the restoration of the cities of Judah (ver. 4), and then a flourishing time in which Jews and Gentiles shall dwell together in one community peacefully and gloriously, Israel having a certain pre-eminence (vers. 5—9).

Ver. 4.—**They shall build the old wastes.** (On the "waste" condition, not of Jerusalem only, but of the cities of Judah generally, see ch. xliv. 26; xlix. 8, 19; lxiv. 10, 11, etc.) The first step in the recovery of Israel from the misery of the Captivity would be a return to Palestine, and a general restoration of the ruined towns. It was a ruin of "many generations," having commenced, probably, with the invasion of Pharaoh-Necho in B.C. 608, and being continued till the edict of Cyrus (B.C. 538).

Ver. 5.—**Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks** (comp. ch. xiv. 1, 2; xlv. 14; lx. 10). The Gentiles who join themselves with the Jews, and form with them one community, are constantly represented in the writings of Isaiah as occupying a subordinate position. In the New Testament, Jew and Gentile are put upon a par. Is the explanation that Isaiah assumes that the Jews generally will accept the gospel, and therefore, to some extent, retain their privileges in the new community, whereas, in fact, they rejected the gospel, and so lost their natural position (see Rom. xi. 7—20)? Or does Isaiah look onward to a later date? And is there to be a restoration of "Israel according to the flesh" upon their conversion, and a reinstatement of them in a position of privilege? Such a condition of things seems glanced at in Rom. xi. 23—29, and in Rev. vii. 4—9; xiv. 1. **The sons of the alien** shall be **your ploughmen and your vinedressers.** Not so much compelled, like the Gibeonites (Josh. ix. 21—27), to perform menial offices, as undertaking them voluntarily out of good will.

Ver. 6.—**But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord.** By the covenant made at Sinai,

Israel was to be "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6). Had they risen to the height of their calling when our Lord and his disciples offered them salvation before offering it to the Gentiles, they might have "been in the midst of the heathen who had entered into the congregation of Jehovah and become the people of God, what the Aaronites formerly were in the midst of Israel itself" (Delitzsch). Will they ever now obtain this position? **Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles** (comp. ch. lx. 5—9 and 16). The Gentiles, when they came in, would freely offer to the Church of their substance.

Ver. 7.—**For your shame** ye shall have **double.** Instead of the shame and confusion of face which were the portion of Israel during the Captivity (see ch. li. 7, 23; liv. 4; Dan. ix. 7, 8, etc.), they should after their restoration to Palestine "have double" their former glory and double their former territory. An increase of territory had been already prophesied (ch. xlix. 18—21)—an increase which, however, was not so much an extension of the bounds of Palestine as a spread of the Church over the whole earth (comp. Zech. ix. 12). For **confusion**; rather, *as for disgrace.* So far from feeling disgraced, they will **rejoice**, or exult, **in their portion**; *i.e.* in the territory assigned them. It will be ample; and their life in it will be one of **everlasting joy.** The speaker passes on in his thought to the time of the "new heavens and the new earth," which he regards as continuous with that of Israel's return.

Ver. 8.—**For I the Lord love judgment.** Either "the Servant" here identifies himself with Jehovah, or he cites a declaration of Jehovah which he has authority to announce. Jehovah will restore the Israelites to their land because he "loves judgment" (equivalent to "justice") and hates injustice. The Babylonian conquest, though a judgment sent by him, is, so far as the Babylonians are concerned, a wrong and a "robbery." **I hate robbery for burnt offering**; rather, *I hate robbery with wickedness* (comp. Job v. 16; Ps. lviii. 3; lxiv. 7; xcii. 16). The transplantation of nations was a gross abuse of the rights of conquest. **I will direct their work in truth**; rather, *I will give them their recompense faithfully.* As they have been wronged, they shall be righted; they shall be faithfully and exactly compensated for what they have suffered. Nay, more—over and above this, God will give them the blessing of an "everlasting covenant" (comp. ch. lv. 3).

Ver. 9.—**Their seed shall be known**; or, *shall be illustrious* (Lowth), *renowned* (Cheyne). A halo of renown still, in the eyes of many, attaches to Jewish descent. **Among the people**; rather, *among the peoples.* **The seed** which **the Lord hath blessed**; rather, *a seed.* The blessing has passed in the main to "the Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

Vers. 10, 11.—JERUSALEM ACCEPTS THE PROMISES, AND GLORIES IN JEHOVAH. So the Targum and Rosenmüller. Others think that "the Servant" is still speaking, or that Isaiah speaks in the name of the people. To us the exposition of the Targum appears the most satisfactory. It is in the manner of Isaiah suddenly to introduce a new speaker.

Ver. 10.—**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord** (comp. Hab. iii. 18). The promises made were such as naturally to call forth on the part of Israel the most heartfelt joy and rejoicing—including, as they did, restoration, rule over the Gentiles, a universal priesthood, a wide territory, "everlasting joy," a high renown, and an "everlasting covenant." **He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation** (comp. ch. lix. 17 and lxi. 3). The metaphor occurs also in the Psalms (lxxi. 6; cix. 18). God clothes Israel with "righteousness" derived from himself (ch. liv. 17, *ad fin.*), and then with its natural consequence—"salvation." The result is to make Israel **as a bridegroom** who **decketh** himself with a priestly crown, **and as a bride** who **adorneth** herself **with her jewels.** That bridegrooms ordinarily wore crowns appears from the Mishna.

Ver. 11.—**As the garden**; rather, *as a garden.* The Hebrew is without the article. **Righteousness and praise.** The essential result of righteousness is "salvation" (see ver. 20); its accidental result is "praise" or "renown." Men cannot but recognize the benefits which flow to themselves from goodness in others; and a perfectly righteous nation would attract to itself universal praise (comp. Zeph. iii. 20, "I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord").

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The purposes of Messiah's mission.* We are not to suppose that the prophet unfolds to us in the present passage the *whole* purpose of God in sending his Son into the world. Such logical exactness is alien to the spirit of prophecy, and especially

unsuited to the rhetorical tone which everywhere characterizes Isaiah. Still, as the subject is one of transcendent interest, and as our Lord himself cites the passage as descriptive of his mission, it may be useful to note how many, and what purposes, it sets before us as included in the counsels of the Father, and intended to be realized by Christ's coming. They seem to be some nine or ten.

I. THE PREACHING OF GOOD TIDINGS. Christ "came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17). The angels who announced his birth intimated that it was a subject for joy and rejoicing—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke ii. 14). His forerunner declared it to be the object of his coming, "that all flesh should see the salvation of God" (Luke iii. 6). He himself came with "gracious words" (Luke iv. 22), and called men into his kingdom. Hence from a very early date his message to man was known as the *gospel*, i.e. "the good tidings." What could be better tidings than the announcement of free pardon on repentance, of salvation, of atonement, of deliverance from sin, of a Comforter to support, and sustain, and cleanse the heart, and give men peace and joy in believing? Man, lost without him, was by him sought and saved, and brought out of darkness and misery into light and happiness.

II. THE HEALING OF THE BROKEN-HEARTED. By "the broken-hearted" seem to be meant, not so much those whom misfortune and calamity have afflicted and reduced to despondency, as those who are deeply grieved on account of their sins. Among the objects of Christ's coming was the healing, or restoring to health, of such persons. He "healed the broken in heart, and bound up their wounds" (Ps. cxlvii. 3). He made atonement for their sins, and thus secured them forgiveness; he assured them of God's mercy and readiness to pardon; he bade them "come to him," and promised to "give them rest" (Matt. xi. 28). Through his actions and his teaching all the contrite in all ages have their wounds bound up; are strengthened, sustained, and comforted; obtain, even in this life, a "peace that passeth all understanding."

III. THE GIVING OF LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES. "The captives" are the servants of sin—the unfortunates whom Satan has made his prisoners, and compels to labour in his service. Christ came to "proclaim" to them "liberty," to make them an offer of release. "Christ Jesus," St. Paul tells us, "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). He himself declared, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix. 13). It is one of his greatest glories that he delivers men "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). He offers to do this for all; but unless his offer is accepted he can do nothing. Men must not only be sinners, but must pass into the class of repentant sinners, before he can aid them. Then, however, his aid is effectual. All the bonds of sin may be struck off; the service of Satan may be renounced and quitted; and the captives have only thenceforth to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free" (Gal. v. 1).

IV. THE GIVING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND. (See Luke iv. 18.) Our Lord, when on earth, gave recovery of sight, in the most literal sense, to several persons who were literally blind (Matt. ix. 30; Mark viii. 23; x. 52; Luke vii. 21; John ix. 7). But this is scarcely the "giving of sight" which was one of the main purposes of his coming. He came to open the eyes of men's understandings, to give them spiritual intelligence and spiritual insight, to enable them to discern between right and wrong, between good and evil. Men at the time were so far gone from original righteousness, that they were to a large extent blind to moral distinctions—"put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness" (ch. v. 20), were "vain in their imaginations," and had "their foolish hearts darkened" (Rom. i. 21). Christ dispelled this spiritual darkness. He taught a pure and broad morality, which re-established moral distinctions in the general conscience, and at the same time, through his Spirit, he gave to each individual Christian an inward light, which man did not possess before, by which he might direct his paths.

V. THE PROCLAIMING OF A TIME OF ACCEPTANCE. Christ proclaimed a "time of acceptance" in various ways. To the Jews generally the three years of his ministry formed "the acceptable time," during which, if they had received him (John i. 11), they would have maintained their position as a nation, and have held pre-eminence in the Church of Christ. To individuals who heard him the "time of acceptance" was

that between such hearing and a hardening of the heart consequent on the rejection of his gracious message. To mankind at large the "time of acceptance" is the time of their sojourn here below, during which it is always possible for them to repent and turn to him, unless perchance they have been guilty of the "sin against the Holy Ghost." Such sin is probably still possible; but it may be hoped that few have committed it, and that the apostle's declaration, which he made to all his converts (2 Cor. vi. 2), may still be repeated to professing Christians generally, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

VI. THE PROCLAIMING OF A DAY OF VENGEANCE. It was among the purposes of our Lord's coming that he should "proclaim a day of vengeance." 1. To the nation of the Jews, which by rejecting him caused its own rejection from the position assigned it under the first covenant, and was delivered up for punishment to the Romans. This he did by a number of remarkable prophecies (*e.g.* the following: Matt. xxi. 40—43; xxiv. 4—28; Luke xiii. 34, 35; xxi. 20—22), which announced that Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and that there was to be "great wrath upon the people" (Luke xxi. 23). 2. To the enemies of God universally. The general day of vengeance upon God's enemies is that "last day," which our Lord announced so often, when he "will come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead" (see Matt. vii. 22, 23; xxiv. 29—31; xxv. 31—46; xxvi. 64, etc.). Then all his enemies will be "put under his feet." Then will be fulfilled the apocalyptic vision, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 12—15).

VII. THE COMFORTING OF MOURNERS. It was indicative of the tenderness of Jesus, that in his life on earth he had ever such great compassion for mourners. In his sermon on the mount he assigned to them the second Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4). Thrice only in his ministry does he seem to have come across actual death, and then each time he had such pity on those who mourned their dead, that he worked miracles on their behalf, and comforted them by raising their lost ones to life again (Mark v. 22—42; Luke vii. 12—15; John xi. 32—44). After his resurrection, he hastened to comfort the women who mourned him, by special appearances to them (Matt. xxviii. 9; Mark xvi. 9). These, however, were but samples of his power and of his good will. Through the long ages that have elapsed since he founded his Church, mourners have ever found in him a true and potent Comforter. Through him it is that Christians "sorrow not as they that have no hope" (1 Thess. iv. 13); through him that they have resignation, and are able to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord;" through him that they look to receive their dead again raised to life (Heb. xi. 35), and to be joined with them in a land where there is no parting.

VIII. THE CROWNING OF THE SAINTS IN BLISS. "Henceforth," said St. Paul, as he approached the end of his life, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8). We shall receive, says St. James, "the crown of life" (Jas. i. 12). "When the chief Shepherd shall appear," says St. Peter, "ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. v. 4). Such crowns were seen by the beloved disciple as worn by the elders in the heavenly region (Rev. iv. 4), and were promised to all who should remain "faithful unto death" (Rev. ii. 10) by him that is "Faithful and True" (Rev. xix. 11). A part of the intention of Christ's mission was to purify to himself a people to whom such crowns might without unfitness be awarded in his heavenly kingdom. The term "crown" is, no doubt, a metaphor; but it signifies some definite and positive degree of glory, having a substantial value, and forming a proper object of the Christian's desire.

IX. THE ANOINTING THEM WITH THE OIL OF JOY. Christ himself was to be "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Ps. xlv. 7). His mission on earth was, in part, to extend the blessing of this anointing to his disciples. The "oil of gladness,"

whatever else it may mean, cannot but primarily symbolize the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is called by St. John an "unction from the Holy One" (1 John ii. 20), and which was, in fact, the unction wherewith Christ himself was anointed (see the comment on ver. 1). To give the Holy Spirit to Christians was a very main object of his coming. The Spirit was essential to the sanctification of Christians; and he must "send the Spirit," and he could not send him until he himself was first "glorified" (John vii. 39; xvi. 7). St. Luke tells us how soon after his ascension the Spirit was given (Acts ii. 4—33); and our Lord promised that, after he once came, he would abide with the Church "for ever" (John xiv. 16). Of all the immediate consequences of our Lord's mission the gift of the Spirit was perhaps the most precious, embracing as it did regeneration, sanctification, comfort, strength, gladness.

X. THE CAUSING THEM TO BE CALLED, AND THEREFORE TO BE, RIGHTEOUS. All the other objects had this final end in view. The good tidings were preached, and the broken-hearted healed, and the captives set free, and the dull of sight given moral discernment, and the acceptable time proclaimed, and the day of vengeance threatened, and the mourners comforted, and the crowns of glory promised, and the Holy Spirit given, in order that "oaks of righteousness" might be planted in the garden of the Lord—that men might burst the bonds of sin, and become righteous, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). Christ "gave himself for us," says St. Paul, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). This was the principal object of our Lord's coming—to "save men from their sins." Other objects were rather means to ends. This was the great end. Christianity is a success just so far forth as it weans man from sin, and creates and maintains in the world a "company of faithful men," who deserve to "be called oaks of righteousness," who persistently and determinately "eschew evil and do good," who lead holy lives, who "shine like lights in the world," "adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 10).

Vers. 10, 11.—*Rejoicing in the Lord.* "Rejoice in the Lord alway," says the apostle: "and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). It reflects shame on Christians that their religion should appear, so much as it does, to those without as a religion of gloom and melancholy. In Scripture true religion wears a wholly different aspect. Faithful Israel rejoices constantly in the Lord, is perpetually joyful in its God. The Book of Psalms is one almost continuous jubilation. The worship of David, of Solomon, of Hezekiah, of the Old Testament saints generally, is a glad worship (2 Sam. vi. 12; 1 Chron. xxix. 9—22; 2 Chron. v. 2—13; xxix. 20—36; xxx. 21—26, etc.). In the Gospels we find Christ's coming on earth the immediate occasion of canticles of praise (Luke i. 46—55, 68—79; ii. 14, 29—32). The apostolic practice is delivered to us in the following words: "They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat *with gladness* and singleness of heart, *praising* God, and having favour with all the people" (Acts ii. 46, 47). And such gladness and rejoicing will certainly appear to be reasonable, if we consider—

I. THE CAUSES THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE FOR SUCH REJOICING. 1. *In the past.* The whole scheme of redemption is a thing to be joyful and thankful for, including as it does atonement, forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal of the Divine image in man, revelation of saving truth, assisting grace, etc. The bringing *them* within the scheme, so as to make its blessings *theirs*, is a ground for special thankfulness and joy, since the privilege has been granted to them without being deserved by any merit of their own, and has not been taken from them despite their subsequent demerits. The granting of a written revelation, and the preservation of that precious deposit in purity, is another special ground for rejoicing; as also is the institution and continuation of the Church to the present day as an organized corporate body. 2. *In the present.* Christians have abundant ground for rejoicing in God's goodness to them individually—in his providential care of them, in the patience and long-suffering which he has shown towards their shortcomings, in their enjoyment of Christian privileges, and in the many other temporal and spiritual blessings vouchsafed to them. 3. *In the future.* They have an imperishable hope, a confident expectation of eternal life through the merits of Christ, an assurance of an inheritance that is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them" (1 Pet. i. 4).

II. THE RESULTS THAT NATURALLY FLOW FROM SUCH REJOICING. 1. Such rejoicing is good for Christians themselves. It makes them realize their blessings and their privileges, and take as it were a firmer hold on them. It helps them to make light of the small trials and hindrances that more or less beset every one, and that, if dwelt upon exclusively, may be magnified until they assume very undue proportions. It actually increases the feeling of joy, and so the feeling of happiness, for every active principle within us is strengthened by being exercised. 2. Such rejoicing has a beneficial effect on others. It attracts them to Christianity in the same degree that a gloomy presentation of the Christian religion repels them. It wakes responsive echoes in their hearts. It stirs up latent and undefined longings in their souls. It leads sometimes to inquiry and conversion. 3. Such rejoicing is, further, for the glory of God. God wills that his saints should praise him and rejoice in him. Such rejoicing sets forth his power and his goodness. It is a proclamation to angels and to men that "the Lord is good, and that his mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi. 1). It is borne through the empyrean, and enters into the courts of heaven, and wakes angelic sympathies and intensifies angelic devotions. It is an offering of a sweet savour to God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Message of grace to Zion.* I. THE ANOINTING OF THE MESSENGER. Under the Law, the priests were anointed (Exod. xxix. 7; Lev. vii. 36), and also the kings (1 Sam. ix. 16; x. 1; xvi. 13). It was the sign of appointment to a high office or commission from God. Hence, by a figure, it is applied to the appointment of Elisha to the prophetic office (1 Kings xix. 16), and to the designation of Cyrus as the instrument of the purpose of Jehovah. Similarly, in 1 John ii. 20, the use is figurative. The idea is that of *consecrated dedication* (cf. Ps. xlv. 7; Heb. i. 9).

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE ANOINTING. 1. That he may *evangelize*, or preach the gospel. To whom? To those who need *good tidings*—the afflicted, the distressed and needy, the poor (Luke iv. 18), or those borne down by long captivity or other calamity (cf. Matt. xi. 5). 2. To *bind up the broken-hearted.* In temporal or spiritual reference, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Ps. cxlvii. 3). And this by the proclamation of liberty. The sound of the words would remind of the great "year of jubilee" (Lev. xxv. 10; cf. Ezek. xlvi. 17; Jer. xxxiv. 8). If nothing is said in the law of jubilee about the release of prisoners or the remission of debts, all the associations of the time led to its being spoken of as a symbol of manumission, emancipation, and so of universal joy. 3. To *proclaim a time of grace and of retribution.* A "year" of mercy, a "day" only of vengeance. Punishment descends to the third and fourth generation, but mercy to the thousandth (Exod. xx. 5, 6; cf. Deut. vii. 9). But the coming or deliverance must ever mean also the coming in destruction (cf. Matt. xxv. 31—46; 2 Thess. i. 7—10). 4. To *comfort mourners.* Especially those of Zion. But an application of evangelical promises must be equally large with human need, human receptivity, human willingness, human power to receive, *i.e.* faith. Upon such the "coronet" is to be placed instead of ashes; the associations of the wedding (ver. 10) are to replace those of the funeral (2 Sam. xiii. 19), the nuptial song the former lamentation. Instead of the "failing spirit," described under the image of a wick burning out, or of dimness, or faintness (ch. xlii. 3; 1 Sam. iii. 2; Lev. xiii. 39), there will be the "mantle of renown." In the Orient, especially, the apparel expresses the mood of the mind. See an illustration in Jud. x. 3, 4: she "put on her garments of gladness, wherewith she was clad during the life of Manasses her husband." 5. To produce *a vigorous and beautiful life.* Men shall call them "oaks of righteousness, the plantation of Jehovah for showing himself glorious" (cf. on the *simile*, Ps. xcii. 12—14, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," etc.; i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8). A mystic plantation under the care of the Divine Gardener (cf. Matt. xv. 13). The exiles will return, will "build up the ruins of antiquity, and raise up the desolations of the forefathers, and renew the ruined cities. As ruins suggest all the pathos of the decay of families and nations, so does the act of rebuilding remind of that ever-recreative energy which lies in the religious heart of mankind, and which breaks forth afresh after every epoch of calamity. Strangers are to feed their flocks, aliens are to be their ploughmen

and vinedressers, and all classes are to partake in the Messianic blessings. The people of Israel themselves will be called the "priests of Jehovah." For the priests, as a class only, represented the idea of Israel, as a nation consecrated to the service of the Eternal, destined to perform a holy ministry to the rest of mankind. Men will take hold of the skirts of the Jew (Zech. viii. 23). There will be compensation, double compensation, in the possession of the land in increased fertility and with enlarged boundaries.

III. THE CONFIRMATION OF JEHOVAH. 1. *The principle of justice and compensation.* He "hates things torn away unjustly," and will compensate his people for their past sufferings. How grand and all-consoling that truth of compensation! "All things are moral. That soul which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law. We feel its inspiration; yonder in history we can see its fatal strength." "It is in the world, and the world was made by it. Justice is not postponed. A perfect equity adjusts its balance in all parts of life. The dice of God are always loaded. Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty. What we call retribution is the universal necessity by which the whole appears wherever a part appears" (Emerson). 2. *The everlasting covenant.* (Ch. lv. 3.) Part of the condition of that covenant is the securing of an illustrious position for Israel among the nations; to be "known" is to be honoured, as in Ps. lxvii. 2; lxxvi. 1; lxxix. 10. The time shall come in a larger sense, when the friends of the lowly and despised Nazarene shall be regarded as the favoured of the Lord; instead of being persecuted and despised, the whole earth shall regard them with confidence and esteem. Providence throws a veil of obscurity over its deepest designs, and the seed of glorious futures lies slumbering in the rough husk until the appointed time for its germination and growth.—J.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Spiritual joy in the Eternal.* We may regard the city as the speaker, and the city may typify the Church.

I. HER CLOTHING. As garments are for protection and ornament, so it may stand as a figure of a community arrayed in the strength and righteousness of Jehovah. And so the Church still sings—

> "Jesus, thy robe of righteousness
> My beauty is, my glorious dress."

There is an allusion to the dress of the bridegroom and of the priest; for at one time the bridegroom wore a crown, and the priest wore a mitre, with the plate or crown of gold in front of it (Exod. xxix. 6). Such portions of the dress mark out the wearer in his sacred character and in his solemn functions. They are not for mere ornament. The Church, the saints in general, are designated as a "royal priesthood," to offer praise and prayer continually.

II. NATURE'S PARABLE OF SPIRITUAL JOY. (Cf. ch. xlii. 9; xliii. 19; xlv. 8; lv. 10, 11; lviii. 11.) The joy with which we see the earth becoming all "one emerald" with the new verdure of spring; the burgeoning of the trees, the disclosure of the rudiments of future leaves and flowers, is in a sense prophetic of some analogous process in the spiritual world. For self-fulfilling is the power of the Divine Word. And even when the aspect of Church and state is most dark and depressing, life is stirring, seeds of better development are germinating, and events are being set in motion which shall stir men up to praise Israel and the God of Israel.—J.

Ver. 1.—*The coming Saviour.* "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," etc. These words are specially memorable as being those which the Saviour read in the synagogue at Nazareth. We have had it described to us "with its pillared portico of Grecian architecture, with its seats on one side for the men; on the other, behind a lattice, are seated the women, shrouded in their long veils." When the lesson from the Pentateuch was over, Jesus ascended the steps of the desk, and the *chazzan*, or clerk, "drew aside the silk curtain of the painted ark, which contained the sacred manuscripts," and from the roll of the Prophet Isaiah, either read the lesson for the day, or chose the portion himself. We can scarcely read these words here without

thinking of him *there*, the whole congregation standing up to listen to him. The words contain—

I. THE MESSIANIC GRANDEUR OF CHRIST. Anointed of the Father. No mere prophet or teacher, but *the* Holy One of Israel. This prophecy, written some seven hundred years before, and thus attested by the Saviour as written concerning himself, gives Divine testimony to the ancient inspiration.

II. THE MESSIANIC WORK OF CHRIST. 1. *It was a proclamation.* "Good tidings." Think of the iron power of Rome; the selfishness of the rich; the pride of the patrician; the helplessness of the slave; the hopelessness of the philosopher. Christ came to the *meek*, not the *mighty*. 2. *It was a consolation.* "To bind up the broken-hearted." To heal by the touch of his sympathy, and to save by the power of his cross. 3. *It was a deliverance.* "To proclaim liberty to the captives," etc. Sin had woven its silken cords into iron bands. Men were slaves of lust and habit. The prison was opened; and the fetters which they could not shake off Christ struck from their souls.—W. M. S.

Ver. 3.—*Comfort and cheer.* "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion," etc. There is a triple exchange spoken of in these words, which ought to quicken thought.

I. CHARACTER. "Beauty for ashes." The penitent is uplifted from the dust. Instead of standing before God in sad confession, with all the stains of sin upon his heart and the liturgy of woe upon his lips, he has new life. The beauty of the Lord is given to him—there is transformation.

II. EMOTION. "The oil of joy for mourning." No longer looking at the dark side of personal history and personal prospect. The very countenance is anointed with fresh oil—a type of what has taken place within the man. Because you cannot force joy, nor can you pretend it. Nature sets herself against all forgeries. Such joy as a godly man experiences can only come from the good treasure of his heart.

III. EXPRESSION. "The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The outward life is all so different. As God is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment, so the Easterns understood the garment of light to be the expression of the man himself, even as we now look to the habiliments of the mourner as testifying to his grief. The spirit of heaviness is distressing. It is not a thankful spirit, nor a hopeful spirit, nor an inspiring spirit. But the garment of praise is like the melody of the temple choir; like the music of the river; like the "lark that sings at heaven's gate." "Awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake right early."—W. M. S.

Ver. 4.—*Restoration.* "They shall build the old wastes." All waste is wicked. It is so in war. Even taken at its lowest estimate, think of the ruin of glorious temples, and exquisite sculptures, and works of art,—all ground to dust, as Mr. Ruskin says, by mere human rage. Florence, and many of the Southern cities, have been the war-fields of Europe. What waste! There genius toiled; there multitudes, in sweat of brow, built the aqueduct and decorated the capitol; and there, from time to time, the rude hand of the despoiler has come. History has made record of victories and glorified conquerors, and some minstrel has caught the infection and sung the lay of the wasters. What a satire on man! Why smile at the child who builds houses for the sea to smite down? Man builds, and then with the waves of maddened war-lust dashes to pieces his own best works. So it is. The history of Europe has been, in this sense, a history of waste, and instead of the glorious works of Phidias to gaze upon, we have broken arms, fractured columns. In devastated districts we dig for relics. This is only the *material* side of the waste of war. I say all waste is wicked. And I have to speak of human hearts and lives. Much more precious these than sculptured column or lofty fane. Yes; do not let us forget that the words of Christ refer to life present as well as life to come. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?"

I. ALL LIVES WERE DESIGNED TO HAVE A DIVINE IDEAL IN THEM. We cannot understand the "why" of creation at all apart from that. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29). They have, in fact, invented many ideals for themselves, and have wasted in these inventions the fine God-created faculties of their souls. If the

end is missed all is missed. If the column does not stand erect and uphold the building, it is nothing to me that you decorate it *when on the ground.* That is not its place, its use; it is a pillar or nothing. So man was made in this highest end to glorify God; and his life is blighted—if it is rich in cultivation, elevated in taste, artistic in style, comprehensive in erudition, useful in applied mechanics—if he does not glorify God. Our Saviour said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." 1. *Lives are blighted, if certain seasons of spring and seed-time, which cannot return, pass idly by.* Men may be saved; for the precious blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin, even in old age. But they cannot bear the fruit of a spiritual manhood, or of a Christian childhood. 2. *Lives are blighted, if not filled with the power of immortality.* However noble and glorious they may appear, their fruits wither; there is no deep soil; the roots do not strike into the eternal life. 3. *Lives are blighted, if not influential as good soil to be used for harvests.* Man does not live for the mere enjoyment and admiration of spiritual beauty in hours of meditation. There must be fruit in the tree for *others to gather.* It *is* disappointing in the autumn to lift the leaves and find no rich bloom of purple fruit. "Abide in me." "So," says Christ, "shall ye bear much fruit."

II. ALL WASTING OF LIFE IS TRACEABLE. What to? Well, you can trace the blight to something in the atmosphere, something at the root, or some confinement from the free breath of heaven. So you can trace human waste and moral waste. 1. *Sometimes it comes from absence of faith.* There has been energy or heroic determination to conquer evil, to pursue the good, but this has been mere *doing*, not *being*; men need faith to win Christ; to have him in them, the Hope of glory. "If a man abide not *in me*, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." 2. *Sometimes it comes from absence of love.* It is love that makes the other graces grow and bring forth fruit. Love is warmth and life when inspired by Christ. Let me say also that I wanted to speak of lives in a human sense blighted, and there are some such. Why? Because love is absent; they are treated coldly, contemptuously, cruelly; the fire of love, at first damped, has now died out in their hearts; they know, they feel it is. Mated to coarseness and rudeness, with the first thin superficial refinement and tenderness all worn away, they find life worse than a blank—it is a bitter, bitter bondage to the selfishness and tyranny of others. Poor heart! God help thee wherever thou art. Love *can* bear much and hope on. But when love's ashes are white, life is blighted indeed. 3. *Sometimes it comes from indifference.* Let it alone. That is enough. Leave religion to take care of itself. Then, like the best garden, it soon becomes desolate.

III. WASTED LIVES ARE REPARABLE ONLY BY REDEMPTION. In the body there is a kind of self-healing after sickness. Not so with the soul; *that* requires a Divine Physician. 1. *Christ does more than forgive.* He renews and restores. Perhaps you desire now that God should restore unto you the joy of salvation. You are *sad* about your own fruitlessness. So little peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then, just as spring—sweet spring—comes in time, and the tender herb appears, and Nature puts on her new garment of beauty, rejoicing to have her incense-cup filled again by the hand of the Most High, so you desire that new graces should spring forth. Christ can make you abound with life through the abundant grace which he is waiting to bestow. 2. *Christ does more than teach.* He will live in you. The fruit is not yours, but Christ's. He is the Vine, we are the branches. A closer union with him is what we need. If we seek to be grafted into the true Vine, then, and then only, shall we bring forth fruit in our season. Christ is sometimes called the great Teacher. So he is! All his teaching is that of the infinite mind. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What, then, is his *first* teaching? Believe on me! Then we become one with him, and our character has life in it. 3. *Christ does more even than commence this life.* He completes it. He carries it on to perfection. So that we, sinful and weak as we are, are made perfect in every good work. Waste, then, is not to be mourned over only; it is to be restored. The satirist speaks scornfully of evil when seen and lived out. The optimist says all is the best possible in the best of worlds, could we but understand all. The Christian says, "No; evil is here, and evil is not of God." And then by the aid of the Holy Ghost he seeks to have the old man crucified with Christ, and to live unto God. May renewal come to us all! May blight and waste give place to life and fruit!—W. M. S.

Ver. 10.—*Fulness of joy.* "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." This does not certainly *seem* like the case with the anchorite and the ascetic and the hermit. A religion that fails in the direction of felicity would seem to lose claim, at all events, to be considered a true ideal of the gospel. Mediævalism rejoiced in pictures of the saints, who could not fairly be said to have an aureole of gladness about their heads.

I. THERE ARE GREAT REASONS FOR REJOICING. 1. *God has forgiven and forgotten our sin.* He has blotted it out of his book of remembrance. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation." 2. *God has made us one with himself.* The highest pleasures are those of fellowship with mind. To know the author is more than to read the book; to know the heart of a beautiful nature is to discover a greater world than Columbus did. What, then, is it to walk as Enoch did with God, and to know him whom to know is life eternal! Here we have introduced the relation of bride and bridegroom—so condescending is the love of Christ.

II. THERE ARE GREAT DEPTHS OF REJOICING. "My soul." Joy may be superficial. It is idle to deny the fact that there are pleasures which have their root in the passions, or in the imagination, or in the accumulative faculty. But all these joys have their reactions, their limitations, their exhaustions. But spiritual joy is connected with the soul, and as such it is (1) ever capable of increase; (2) never liable to exhaustion; (3) and immortal in its sphere of development. At God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The beneficent mission.* These words are undeniably Messianic; that is their secondary, if not their primary, import. Of the mission of Christ they remind us—

I. THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS SENT OF GOD. Our Lord not only stated but insisted that he came forth from God. He constantly took up the position here asserted, "the Lord hath anointed me" (John iv. 34; v. 19, 30; viii. 28; ix. 4; xii. 49).

II. THAT HE WAS FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD. "The Spirit of the Lord God" was upon him, and dwelt in him as in no other child of man. God gave not the Spirit "by measure" unto him (John iii. 34; xiv. 10, etc.).

III. THAT HE WAS CHARGED WITH A MISSION OF DIVINE BENEFICENCE. "Anointed to preach good tidings." Well might the human world have expected that a special messenger from heaven would come with *ill* tidings on his lips; would come to announce wrath, penalty, destruction; would pass through town and village with such a "burden" as that of Jonah to the thousands of Nineveh (Jonah iii. 4). But the coming of Christ was the advent of grace; he came to promise peace, to publish salvation. The thoughts and ways of the Supreme are not as ours; they are immeasurably magnanimous.

IV. THAT THE BENEFICENCE OF CHRIST WAS SPIRITUAL AND PROFOUND. He came to effect something more and better than the overthrow of a tyrannical government and the establishment of an earthly kingdom, than the removal of abounding poverty and the supply of material prosperity, than the introduction of any visible and transient good. He came: 1. *To confer spiritual freedom* on those who were in bondage. "To proclaim liberty to the captives;" to open the prison-doors and emancipate human souls from the thraldom of sin, of vice, of error, of folly, and to lead them into the glorious liberty of the children of God—the liberty of truth and righteousness. 2. *To convey comfort to the sorrowful.* "To bind up the broken-hearted;" to comfort all that mourn. He came to furnish us with those facts and principles which can light up the dark shadows of deepest affliction with rays of peace and hope. (See next homily.)

V. THAT EVEN THE LIGHT OF DIVINE BENEFICENCE CASTS A SHADOW OF CONDEMNATION. The day of deliverance to the righteous is a "day of vengeance" or retribution to the guilty. The brightest light of truth must fling the darkest shadow of responsibility and condemnation. The corner-stone of salvation to the penitent and believing must prove a stumbling-block to the impenitent and the unbelieving.—C.

Ver. 3.—*Christ our Comforter.* We think of our Lord as of our Divine Friend; and there is no way in which any one can show himself so true a friend as in the time of trouble. Well says the old adage, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

I. OUR URGENT NEED OF HIS DIVINE SUCCOUR. "Them that mourn in Zion." In virtue of his relation to us as our Saviour, Jesus Christ delivers us from the power and bondage of sin, and so from the remorse which attends its presence and constitutes a principal part of its penalty. But there are other things from which he does not profess to save his people in this world; these are *suffering and sorrow*. His very best disciples may inherit a bodily constitution which has in it the seeds of feebleness and pain, and which may develop these evils in their acutest form; or they may be the victims of some terrible accident or of human cruelty; or they may be called on to pass through trying straits, or to bear bitter disappointment, or to endure grievous losses and long-continued loneliness. There is no mark on the lintel of their doors to tell the angel of sorrow to pass by. He enters every home; he has a message for every heart, and the children of the kingdom hear his voice, and feel the touch of his hand, even as do the citizens of the worldly kingdom.

II. THE SUFFICIENCY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S SUCCOUR. Christ saves us *in* suffering and sorrow, though he does not here deliver us *from* it. Such is the transforming power of his mighty touch, that he converts it into another thing; under his hand it changes its aspect and is something else; the disfiguring ashes become a diadem of beauty; instead of the signs of mourning there is seen the anointing with the oil of joy; divested of the spirit of heaviness, the soul is clothed in the blessed garment of praise. The power of the wonderful Worker (ch. ix. 6) has transfigured everything—has turned the curse into a blessing. And how? 1. By a sense of his gracious presence. The sorrowing spirit rejoices to feel that its Lord is near—is nearer than closest relative, than dearest friend. 2. By a consciousness of his tender pity. The known and felt compassion, the assured sympathy of the Lord of love, fills the heart with peace. 3. By the direct, sustaining influences of his Holy Spirit. 4. By the assurance that he is seeking our highest good; that things are not happening by accident or mistake; that the gracious and wise Lord of all hearts and lives is working out an issue, dark and afar off, perhaps, but kind and good, righteous and beneficent; that he is planting and nourishing "trees of righteousness," and that these can only be grown with drenching rains and searching winds as well as with sweet sunshine and balmy airs. 5. By the promise of unshadowed blessedness a little further on.—C.

Vers. 6—9.—*Privilege, reputation, hope.* We have here—

I. AN OPEN PRIVILEGE to be eagerly employed. "Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord." Under the Law the priesthood was limited to one family of one tribe; the rest of the nation had rights and duties outside and inferior. There stand, indeed, the ancient words, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests," but this promise finds no complete fulfilment in the history of Israel. It is realized only in the kingdom of Christ. Under him the whole community is a "holy priesthood," a "royal priesthood." Christ "has made us (all) kings and priests unto God." It is open to every one of us to draw nigh unto God in closest spiritual communion; to intercede with him in earnest, believing prayer; to present unto him "spiritual sacrifices" of obedience, of resignation, of consecration. The way is open now into the holiest of all, and they please God most who approach him most frequently, and offer to him most continually the sacrifice which comes from clean hands and a pure and loving heart.

II. AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION to be greatly coveted. "Men shall call you the Ministers [servants] of our God." What is it that we would have men say about us? By what do we most desire to be distinguished and remembered? By our bodily strength or muscular skill? By our intellectual powers? By our possessions? These things "profit a little;" they "have their reward" in momentary satisfaction, in pleasure that lives awhile and dies. But they are not significant of the best and worthiest, of that which endures amid the wreck and passage of the things which perish. The one reputation worth possessing is that of being a true "servant of God." It is worth while doing much and endeavouring much, if need be, that the thing which our contemporaries shall associate with our name, and by which those who survive us shall distinguish us from others, is our faithful and devoted service of the Divine Master. So let us live that the first thought which will arise in men's minds concerning us is that we are servants of our God.

III. AN INVALUABLE HOPE to be devoutly cherished. "All that see them [their

offspring] shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." What are our deepest solicitudes concerning our children? That they will rise, will be enriched, will be honoured of men? These might prove curses rather than blessings. The wise parent will hope, will live and strive, will pray that his children may be such in spirit, in character, in behaviour, that all who see them will feel about them that the blessing of God is in their heart and upon their head.—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Wise exultation.* I. OUR CAPACITY OF EXULTATION. Our human spirit is capable of great emotion. Our feeling may sink to great depths of sorrow, or may rise to great heights of joy. We have no language which will express the degrees of spiritual distress and agony which are possible to the stricken and despairing, or which will measure the degrees of joy and ecstasy possible to the blessed and the victorious.

II. OUR TEMPTATION in this matter. The warning of the prophet of the Lord (Jer. ix. 24) proves that in other lands and other times than ours the wise (learned) man has been tempted to glory in his wisdom, the rich man in his wealth, the mighty man in his power and prowess. But such glorification is our weakness and our folly; it is not built on truth; it conducts to complacency; it ends in disappointment, if not in shame.

III. OUR WISDOM. This is to rejoice in God, to "glory in this, that we understand and know him," and are ranked among his people. We cannot go too far in our delight in him. 1. His character provides a source of spiritual satisfaction absolutely inexhaustible. We say everything in one word as to his sufficiency when we say that he is "our *God*." 2. He has done greatest things for us. He has (1) wrought for us the greatest of all deliverances—*salvation*; and (2) bestowed on us the greatest of all blessings—*righteousness*, inward and spiritual rectitude. 3. He stands pledged to accomplish that in which we shall greatly triumph (ver. 11). As the well-cultivated garden has in it living forces which will show themselves in fairest flowers and richest fruits, so has the Lord our God in himself all the wisdom, grace, and power which will be manifest in righteousness and praise, springing forth in the sight of all the nations.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Messiah's mission to the troubled.* Those more especially addressed by Messiah are called the "meek," the "broken-hearted," the "captives," and the "bound." It at once comes to mind that precisely such persons were addressed in the sermon on the mount; and it may be remarked, as distinguishing Christ from all ordinary human teachers, who have their own personal gain and success to consider, that he never sought out the great, the rich, or the learned, but gave his best to the heart-sore, the body-smitten, and the life-humbled. Our Lord makes a very striking reference to this passage in his sermon at Nazareth (Luke iv. 18). Before entering on the proper subject of this homily, it may be well to note that the only credentials which our Lord cared to present were the manifest signs and proofs that the Spirit of God was upon him. And what better credentials would any true-hearted man wish to offer? Material figures of moral conditions may be found in the depressed, afflicted, almost despairing state of the captives in Babylon.

I. MESSIAH'S MISSION TO THE MEEK. This term is used in several senses in Scripture. Sometimes it stands for the *humble*, who think lowly things concerning themselves. Sometimes it stands for the *disinterested*, who are willing to give up their own things for the sake of others. Here it stands for crushed and hopeless ones, who have lost all spirit, and think there is no light, no cheer, in this life for them. The battle with sin sometimes leaves men hard, and then it is of little use to bring "good tidings." But sometimes it makes men meek, soft, impressible, and to them Messiah comes with "good tidings;" for *them* is born a Saviour.

II. MESSIAH'S MISSION TO THE BROKEN-HEARTED. This term best expresses the state of conviction and penitence. It is the sign of that supreme grief which a man knows when he *sees himself* as he is, and as God regards him. To such a man Messiah comes with the message of a free and full *forgiveness*, which is a binding up, a healing; the joy of acceptance and welcome of love.

III. MESSIAH'S MISSION TO THE CAPTIVES. Those between whose circumstances and

whose souls there is constant conflict. Sin gets power to enslave through the body. "Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin." Messiah comes to energize souls for victory over enslaving bodies and enslaving circumstances. Giving life to souls, he gives liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

IV. MESSIAH'S MISSION TO THE BOUND. The moral suggestion is of those who are mastered by old evil habits, easily besetting sins. These become the distress of souls that have been forgiven and accepted. And Messiah comes to give "more grace," so that they may "resist unto blood, striving against sin." So Messiah meets all our gravest human troubles. He is Burden-bearer and Burden-lifter.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The year of acceptance and the day of vengeance.* Very striking is the frequency with which this, and other prophets, set together the two sides of Messiah's work. Deliverance of those who trust him goes together with judgment on those who reject him. In a most impressive way the Old Testament canon closes with this dual aspect of Divine dealings, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. . . . But unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. iv. 1, 2). And the New Testament opens with the prophetic exclamation of Simeon, as he held the infant Saviour in his arms, "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Some make a distinction between the long *year* of acceptance and the short *day* of vengeance. No doubt the first reference of the text is to the Divine indignation against those faithless or selfish Jews who would not respond to the Lord's call to return to their ancient land. So it may stand for the Divine indignation against those who are "condemned already, because they have not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God." This subject is so frequently and variously treated, that we here confine ourselves to two points.

I. ACCEPTANCE FOLLOWS FORGIVENESS. Messiah proclaims acceptance because he brings forgiveness. It is of the utmost importance that there should be no uncertain sound as to the necessity for "forgiveness." Vague sentiments prevail concerning the Divine acceptance; and there is a notion that all we can need is a sort of educating into goodness. Man, every man, needs to be *forgiven.* No man can be accepted until he is forgiven. This may lead to a full consideration of that work of Messiah which bears on the ensuring of forgiveness. It is a mediatorial work, which has relations of propitiation towards God and relations of conviction towards man. The acceptance-time is proclaimed to guilty rebels who lay down their arms and ask for mercy.

II. REJECTION FOLLOWS THE HARDNESS THAT WILL NOT SEEK FORGIVENESS. That is the "day of vengeance of our God." If put into a word, that word may be this—they are left to their fate. If put into a figure, it may be this—they are outside the lighted halls, in the "outer darkness." If fashioned in human images, the offended king must put to death those who rebelliously refuse to touch his offered golden sceptre. There is a mystery of profound and awful meaning in the expression, "the wrath of the Lamb."—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*God glorified in the joyous and the beautiful.* "A garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . that he might be glorified." The figures used are drawn from Eastern customs and sentiments. The afflicted clothe themselves in sackcloth, sit in ashes, and throw dust on their heads. In gladness and feast-time men crown themselves with garlands or wreaths. In sickness men do not use oil at toilet; when restored to health they resume the oil which "makes the face to shine." Festal days call forth bright-coloured garments; troublous seasons find men crouched on the ground heedless of the robes that cover them. But God is not honoured with ashes; he wants garlands. Nor is he honoured with neglected toilets; he wants the oil of joy. He asks for songs by the way from all who are journeying to Zion. His call ever is, "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

I. GOD'S MESSIAH FINDS MEN SAD. And they had abundant reason for being sad. Illustrate from the state of the Jewish nation when deliverance from captivity came; also from the state of the world when Jesus the Saviour came. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Dr. Kane and his shipwrecked crew might well

be sad when, in the polar regions, they never saw the sun for one hundred and forty long and weary days. Those out of Christ have good reason to be sad. It is even a hopeful sign that they are. Philosophers and scientific teachers who do not "like to retain God in their thoughts" are always sad—affectingly, impressively sad. The saddest book ever written is John Stuart Mill's autobiography.

II. GOD'S MESSIAH MAKES MEN GLAD. Jesus Christ cannot do with people who, in moral senses, stay in the ashes, neglect their toilet, and keep up miserable groans. He wants to get a song into men's souls—even praise unto a redeeming God—which shall compel them to put garlands and festal garments on, and make their faces shine. We cannot keep Jesus and sadness both with us, any more than the world can keep both sunshine and mists. This homily should be used for pleading against a long-faced, dreary religion, and in behalf of the smiles and song that should characterize all who know the grace in Christ Jesus unto life eternal.

"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a Resting-place,
And he has made me glad."

R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The world's priests and preachers.* "Men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Dean Plumptre says of this verse, "This had been the original ideal of the nation's life (Exod. xix. 6), forfeited for a time through the sins of the people (Exod. xxviii. 1), to be fulfilled at last in the citizens of the New Jerusalem" (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 9). Matthew Arnold says, "The Jews, a nation of God's servants appointed to initiate the rest of the world into his service, are to give themselves to this sacred and priestly labour, while the rest of the world do their secular labour for them." Matthew Henry says, "All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotions, and in their whole conversation, with 'holiness to the Lord' written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the 'priests of the Lord.'" We learn from this passage what are the views we may rightly take of our "priests and preachers."

I. THEY BELONG TO OUR GOD. Importance attaches to the personal appropriation indicated in the expression "our God." Only those who are themselves in right relations with God will ever put ministers into their right place, or keep them in their right place. A man who does not know God *for himself* will want his minister to become a priest, and do too much for him. The man who, in covenant relations, can say "*my* God," will thankfully accept, and wisely use, all that God's servants can do for him.

II. THEY MINISTER FOR OUR GOD. And they can do nothing but minister. They are, like their Lord and Master Jesus Christ, among us "as he that serveth." "We preach Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Ministers bring to us messages from God, but we must never let them stand before God. There is peril for our souls whenever officiating priest or popular preacher takes all our attention, and keeps us from direct dealing with God. We must never let even apostles have "dominion over our faith;" they are only "helpers of our joy." Very possibly some of our souls are hindered from attaining the best in Christian life, because our outlook is stopped by the figure of a man, and we cannot see God.

III. THEY SERVE US IN THE NAME OF OUR GOD. Emphasis is put on the word "us." It is peculiar to all faithful and wise ministers that they have a "passion for souls," the "enthusiasm of humanity;" and are ever seeking to gain *adaptation* to us. Some men are more interested in *truth* than in *persons;* but the real priests and preachers and pastors of our God follow after the great apostle and say, "We seek not yours, but *you*."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Blessed children.* "All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." "Let the children of godly parents live in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them." "Easterns value highly the retention of blessings through succeeding

generations." Abraham, as the first father of the race, may be taken as the type of all fathers and mothers. Then the course of thought may be this—

I. THE PIOUS PATERNAL CHARACTER. As seen in Abraham, it includes: 1. *Reverence.* A due sense of the "unseen" is the secret of the sense of duty which lies at the basis of all real authority. 2. *Uprightness.* Which gives a certain firmness, almost sternness, which ensures a blended fear and confidence. 3. *Obedience.* A man's own response to his sonship with God is the secret of his power to command the obedience of his children.

II. THE SECURITY PATERNAL CHARACTER AFFORDS THAT FAMILIES WILL BE RULED. There is a strange idea entertained, that there is no strong rule in fatherhood. But every home must have its *laws.* The mightiest men of earth are not the giants with the big fists. The Davids of intellectual, moral, and emotional force are grander than all Sauls who stand heads above their fellows. The highest power of influence attends on character. Put a man of good character anywhere, and he proves to be a king; he rules. There is a natural authority belonging to parentage. This is not enough. It can be kept into the manhood of the children only as parents gain the higher power of moral character.

III. THE RESULT OF GOOD RULING IS THAT THE CHILDREN TURN OUT WELL. How we dream over the future of our children! We may leave it all with God, if we are culturing ourselves into Christ-likeness, and watchfully anxious that this our Christ-likeness should shine well on them. But what do we mean by "our children turning out well"? Does that mean "proving talented," "marrying prudently," "winning business successes"? Or do we mean "keeping well in the ways of the Lord," whatever may be their circumstances, and whatever may be their relations?

IV. THROUGH GOOD PARENTS AND GOOD FAMILIES GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE WORLD ARE ACCOMPLISHED. Compare Dr. Horace Bushnell's very striking expression, "The out-populating of the Christian stock." As are the families so will be the nation. We trust in virtuous homes, well-ruled families, godly fathers, and pious mothers. Blessed indeed are those children who grow up constrained to goodness by the example, influence, and authority of godly parents!—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Joy in the Divine adornings.* Richard Weaver gives an effective and pleasing illustration. "A lady once took me into her garden, and I found there beds filled with all kinds of beautiful flowers; but at the end of the garden I came to the edge of a steep precipice, and as I stood looking down at the great black rock beneath, I thought what a dreadful place that would be to fall down. 'Come with me,' said the lady, 'and I will show you something beautiful.' She led me round to the foot of the rock and desired me to look up, and when I did I could see no rock, it was completely covered with beautiful white roses. Oh, thought I, that is just a picture of a poor sinner; he is a black, unsightly thing like that rock, but the 'Rose of Sharon' comes and covers him; and when God looks, he cannot see the sinner, for between is Christ, and he covers him with the spotless robe of his own righteousness."

I. CHRIST'S GIFT OF ADORNMENTS. Urge that a sinner, even a saved sinner, cannot be called beautiful, and cannot be fit for a place at the feast. Fetch the poor beggar in from the street, give him free invitation, and let him respond to it with all his heart; and still he will want something before he can sit down with the guests. It is something he cannot win, something he cannot buy, something of the king's own, which the king himself must give. It is a royal robe from the king's treasure. It is robe and ornaments and jewels, as the bridegroom's gift. So in the New Testament we are bidden to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and the graces of Christian character are treated as a Divine investiture. They who have such adornings will be sure to try and be worthy of them, and so graces given and graces sought for will graciously blend.

II. CHRIST'S JOY IN THOSE WHOM HE HAS ADORNED. Figured in the joy of a bridegroom over the bride when beautiful with garments and jewels which he has himself provided, and every one of which is an expression of personal affection. The joy of every faithful pastor is found in those whom he has led to rest in God. "Ye are our glory and our joy." The joy of Jesus, the Saviour and Bridegroom, is found in the multitude whom no man can number, arrayed in white garments, his gift, because they are white-souled at last, through his grace.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXII.

Vers. 1—12.—FURTHER GRACIOUS PROMISES MADE TO ISRAEL BY "THE SERVANT." Some regard the speaker in this chapter as Jehovah; some as the prophet, or the prophetical order; some as "the Servant." The last supposition appears to us the simplest and the best. The close connection with the preceding chapter is evident. If that then be, in the main, "a soliloquy of the Servant," this should be a continuation of the soliloquy. Israel is promised "righteousness," "glory," "a new name," a guard of angels, a time of peace and prosperity, deliverance from Babylon, and triumphant establishment in Zion under God's protection.

Ver. 1.—**For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace.** In the past God has kept silence (ch. xlii. 14; lvii. 11). "The Servant" has not caused his voice to be heard. Babylon has been allowed to continue her oppression unchecked. But now there will be a change. God will lift up his voice, and the nations will hear; and the "salvation" of Israel will be effected speedily. **For Jerusalem's sake.** "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are used throughout as synonyms (ch. ii. 3; iv. 3, 4; xxxi. 4, 5, and 9; xxxiii. 20; xl. 9; xli. 27; lii. 1; lxiv. 10, etc.), like "Israel" and Jacob." Strictly speaking, "Zion" is the mountain, "Jerusalem" the city built upon it. **Until the righteousness thereof go forth** (comp. ch. liv. 17; lxi. 10, 11). **As brightness**; or, *as the dawn* (comp. ch. lx. 3; Prov. iv. 18; Dan. vi. 19). **Salvation . . . as a lamp that burneth**; rather, *as a torch that blazeth* (comp. Judg. xv. 4; Nah. ii. 14; Zech. xii. 6). Israel's "salvation" would be made manifest; primarily by her triumphant return from Babylon, and more completely by her position in the final kingdom of the Redeemer.

Ver. 2.—**The Gentiles shall see,** etc. A continuation of the account of Israel's final glory, as given in ch. lxi. 6—9. What the Gentiles are especially to see and admire is Israel's **righteousness.** This may point to those acknowledgments of the purity and excellence of the early Church which were made by the heathen (Plin., 'Epist.,' x. 97), and which culminated in the saying, "See how these Christians love one another!" The sceptic Gibbon acknowledges, among the causes of the success of Christianity, "the virtues of the early Christians." **All kings** (comp. **ch. xlix. 7, 23; lx. 3; Ps.** lxxii. 11). **Thou shalt be called by a new name** (comp. vers. 4 and 12; and see also ch. lxv. 15). It is not altogether clear what the "new name" is, since in the remainder of the present chapter more than one name is suggested. Rosenmüller supposes "Hephzi-bah" to be meant. Dr. Kay suggests "the holy people," and notes that the title of "holy ones," or "saints," is given by St. Paul to all Christians (Acts xxvi. 10; Rom. i. 7; xvi. 15; 1 Cor. i. 2, etc.). Mr. Cheyne thinks that it is some unknown title of honour, akin to that mentioned by Jeremiah—"Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jer. xxxiii. 16). "New names" will be given to individual saints in the heavenly kingdom (Rev. ii. 17; iii. 12).

Ver. 3.—**Thou shalt also be a crown of glory,** etc. God will exhibit Israel to an admiring world, as a man might exhibit a "crown" or "diadem" which he held in his hand. They will look on with admiration and reverence—"for they shall perceive that it is his work" (Ps. lxiv. 9).

Ver. 4.—**Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken.** Judah had believed herself "forsaken" of God (ch. xlix. 14), and had actually been, in a certain sense, forsaken "for a small moment" (ch. liv. 7). Her enemies, it would seem, had gone so far as to give her the name in derision. **Neither shall thy land . . . be termed Desolate.** Judæa had not only been desolated by the Babylonian invaders under Nebuchadnezzar, but had remained "desolate" during the whole period of the Captivity (ch. xxxii. 13, 14; xlix. 19, etc.). It had come to be spoken of as *Sh'mârnah*, "a desolation" (see Jer. xxxiv. 22; xliv. 2, 6; Ezek. xxxiii. 29; xxxvi. 34). Now all should be altered. As Ezekiel prophesied, "The land that was *desolate* is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced and are inhabited" (xxxvi. 35). **Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah**; *i.e.* "my delight is in her." Hephzi-bah was the name of Hezekiah's queen, Manasseh's mother (2 Kings xxi. 1). **And thy land Beulah.** Beulah, or rather Bĕ'ulah, means "married" (comp. ch. liv. 1). Judæa would be "married" to her sons, or her people, when they quitted Babylon and once more took possession of her. The Hebrew verb for "to marry" (as a man marries) means literally "to be lord over."

Ver. 5.—**As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride.** There is a double employment of the analogy with marriage here. The land, Judæa, personified as a female, is married to her sons, or her people, regarded (in this connection) as a male. The people,

regarded as a female ("the virgin daughter of Zion," ch. xxxvii. 22) is also married to Jehovah, and recognizes him as her Bridegroom (comp. ch. liv. 5). As Bridegroom, God calls his bride "Hephzi-bah"—"my delight is in her."

Ver. 6.—**I have set watchmen upon thy walls.** "The Servant" has appointed watchers upon the walls of Zion—either "prophets" (Delitzsch), or "priests and prophets" (Kay), or, more probably, "angelic beings" (Cheyne), who keep perpetual watch and ward (comp. ch. lii. 8). Neither **day nor night** do they **hold their peace**, or **keep silence**, but ever intercede with God for his people, like the "angel of Jehovah" in Zech. i. 12, reminding him of his covenant with them, and his promises to them, and exhorting him to "awake, awake" for his own honour's sake (ch. li. 9—11). It is generally allowed that the "watchers" in Dan. iv. 13, 17, 23 are angels; and the same interpretation best suits the "watchmen" of the present passage. **Ye that make mention of the Lord**; rather, as in the margin, *ye that are the Lord's remembrancers;* i.e. "ye whose business it is to call to God's remembrance the needs and claims of his people, and the obligations of his covenant promises."

Ver. 7.—**Give him no rest.** Compare the teaching of our Lord with respect to the efficacy of importunity (Luke xi. 5—8; xviii. 1—8).

Ver. 8.—**The Lord hath sworn.** In answer to the representations of the "remembrancers," God solemnly binds himself by an oath to come to the relief of the people, to restore them to their own land, and to give them the enjoyment of its fruits in peace. **By his right hand.** God commonly swears "by himself" (Gen. xxii. 16; ch. xlv. 23; Jer. xlix. 13; li. 14; Amos vi. 5), or "by his holiness" (Ps. lxxxix. 35; Amos iv. 2). Once he swears "by his great Name" (Jer. xliv. 26), and once "by the excellency of Jacob" (Amos viii. 7). There is no other place in Scripture where he swears "by his right hand and arm"—emblems of his power to act. **Thy corn . . . thy wine**; *i.e.* the fruits of thy land. Hitherto, even when Israel was in possession of Palestine, its fruits were constantly destroyed, or carried off, by the raids of hostile neighbours. Henceforth this plundering should cease.

Ver. 9.—**Shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.** This is not to be understood literally, at any rate, of the whole produce of the land. What is meant is, that the produce will be consecrated by such festal means as the Law enjoined (Deut. xiv. 22—27), and that then the remainder will be consumed with due thanks and acknowledgments.

Ver. 10.—**Go through, go through the gates.** The speaker returns to the period of the exile, and exhorts the people to pass forth from Babylon, and speed on their way homewards (comp. ch. xlviii. 20; lii. 11). Some of them are to clear away obstacles, others are to bring materials and construct a highway along which the stream of emigrants may march (comp. ch. lvii. 14), while a third body removes such stones as might cause stumbling, and a fourth **lifts up a standard** to direct the march.

Ver. 11.—Meanwhile Jehovah, by his angels or his prophets, causes it to be made known to the ends of the earth that the redemption of Israel draws nigh, and that Zion's "salvation" approaches. **His reward is with him**, etc. The words are repeated from ch. xl. 10. Here they are certainly said of Israel. They go forth from Babylon, having their reward with them—*i.e.* liberty, honour, riches to some extent (Ezra i. 4—11), and their work, or rather their *recompense*—the possession of Palestine—before them.

Ver. 12.—**They shall call them**; or, *men shall call them*, equivalent to "they shall be called." **The holy people.** The Persians in some degree recognized this character in the Israelites (Ezra i. 2, 3; vi. 8—12; vii. 12—26). So did Alexander, according to Josephus. The Romans, on the contrary, regarded them as the votaries of a degrading superstition. Since the Roman conquest, they have been almost universally despised. Perhaps the prophecy may be considered to still await its complete fulfilment. **Thou shalt be called.** "Thou" refers to Zion or Jerusalem. She should be called **Sought out**—*i.e.* a special object of God's care—and **A city not forsaken**—the very opposite of her former name (ver. 4), which was "Forsaken." All the conditions of her former existence would be altered, nay, reversed, in the future.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 4, 12.—*The teaching of Scripture with respect to names.* Names are not spoken of in the Scriptures as unimportant, but as of a very high importance.

I. A SPECIAL VALUE IS SET ON THE NAMES OF GOD. The names of God are significant, and set forth his nature. "El" is "the Great;" "Shaddai," "the Strong;" "Jehovah," "the Alone-existent." God selected this last name as that by which he

would be especially known to the Jews (Exod. iii. 14), and it became a sort of proper name with them and their neighbours. It was this name which was not to be taken in vain (Exod. xx. 7). It came to be regarded as so holy that the Jews would not venture to pronounce it, but substituted the word "Adonai," or "Lord," whenever they read the Scriptures aloud. God himself is, in fact, in all his names; and nearly the same reverence is due to them which is due to him. Christians are baptized into the *Name* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 19). The *Name* of the God of Jacob defends them (Ps. xxv. 1). The Father keeps them through his *Name* (John xvii. 11). They give thanks to his *Name* (Heb. xiii. 15), fear and glorify his *Name* (Rev. xv. 4), confess and sing praise unto it (Rom. xv. 9). Christ's *Name*, through faith in his *Name*, makes them strong, yea, gives them perfect soundness in the presence of all (Acts iii. 16).

II. A CERTAIN VALUE IS SET ON MEN'S NAMES. God assigns men names (ch. vii. 14; viii. 3; Hos. i. 4, 6, 9; Matt. i. 21; Luke i. 13, etc.); alters or modifies their names (Gen. xvii. 5, 15; xxxii. 28; 2 Sam. xii. 25, etc.); explains the mystical meaning of their names (Matt. xvi. 18); gives them wholly new names (Rev. iii. 12). The sacred writers also sometimes alter men's names in contempt, or as a punishment. Thus Esh-Baal, "man of Baal," becomes Ish-Bosheth, "man of shame;" Merib-Baal becomes Mephi-Bosheth, and the like. The true name of Hezekiah's father seems to have been Jehoahaz, "possession of Jehovah" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 124); but the sacred writers, offended with him on account of his idolatries, would only call him Ahaz, "possession." Conquering kings sometimes required names of subject kings to be changed, apparently as a mark of submission and subserviency. Thus the name of Eliakim was turned to Jehoiakim by Pharaoh-Necho (2 Kings xxiii. 34), and the name of Mattaniah to Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxiv. 17). Altogether, human names are recognized as having an importance which profane writers are rarely found to attach to them.

III. A CERTAIN VALUE IS SET ALSO ON THE NAMES OF PLACES. Importance is attached to the significance of place-names, and a meaning is found for them not always in accordance with their real etymologies. Babel (Babylon) was no doubt intended by the Babylonians to mean "the gate of God;" but the sacred writers saw in the name a derivation from *bâlal*, "to confound" (Gen. xi. 9). When places ceased to correspond to their names, the sacred writers freely altered the names, to suit the circumstances. Thus the Bethel of the patriarchs becomes the Beth-aven of Hosea (iv. 15; v. 8; x. 5), Jeroboam's idolatries having turned "the house of God" into "the house of nothingness." In the present chapter Jerusalem is supposed to have become "Azubah" on her destruction by the Babylonians, and to be about to be called "Hephzi-bah" on her restoration by the returned exiles. Another name given to her by Isaiah is "Ariel" (ch. xxix. 1). Each name expresses some phase in her history or feature of her character.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Promises of future glory.* Let us assume that Jehovah is the Speaker, and that he utters this oracle in a time of darkness and despondency. What is expressed is the intense passion, if we may so say, of God for the realization of his ideas in the world. The prophet fears not to use the boldest anthropomorphic imagery in setting forth this view of God.

I. THE IRREPRESSIBLE DESIRES AND PURPOSES OF THE ETERNAL. He will not be silent nor will he rest. In dark times it seems that God is refraining himself, putting a restraint upon his lips, holding his peace, etc. Four times in the latter portion of Isaiah that thought occurs (ch. xlii. 14; lvii. 11; lxiv. 12; lxv. 6). When impiety and oppression are rampant, the wicked exclaim, "How doth God know?" and the righteous, "Why is he silent?" And yet there should be fears and scruples on both sides. Silence and reserve need not mean indifference. Nor would the voice of the Eternal be so impressive were it not for the long spaces of silence that lie between. Sooner or later he will uprouse himself, and his mighty voice will go forth, and there will be a turn in affairs.

II. THE IDEAL ON WHICH HE HAS SET HIS HEART. It is the glory of the ideal Jerusalem, the spiritual city of God, or his Church. 1. *The glory of righteousness and salvation.* The two terms seem here nearly to denote the same thing. Negatively, freedom from all external calamity and from all internal impurity; positively, attainment of all prosperity and all moral rectitude. This is to be an all-pervading brilliance, or a torch carried far from hand to hand. 2. *The beauty of holiness.* "Crown of adorning in Jehovah's hand," or "diadem of royalty," shall she be. All the associations of forsakenness, desolation, and widowhood shall pass away, and be replaced by those of nuptial beauty and joy. Her name shall be exchanged for a new one, *i.e.* her afflicted for a glorious condition.

III. THE ANGELIC MINISTRY. Angelic watchers are on the walls of the city, incessantly engaged in intercession. The idea of them is that of mediatorial beings. Here they intercede with Jehovah that he will raise the city (or Church) to her proper renown among the nations of the earth. And an answer to the prayer seems indicated, when Jehovah swears that the harvest and the vintage shall no more be pillaged by her foes.—J.

Vers. 10—12.—*The homeward call.* "The prophet returns to the exiles in Babylon, and urges them not to delay their homeward march." It is the same call which resounded in the two former divisions of the prophecy (ch. xlviii. 20; lii. 11).

I. THE WAY CLEARED. The gates of Babylon are to be thrown open. Invisible servants of Jehovah are to prepare the way (ch. xl. 3; lvii. 14). A great highway (as in ch. xi. 16) is seen stretching homeward, from which the party of pioneers is removing obstructions; and on high there floats a banner over the escort of Gentile people (ch. xliv. 22; xi. 10, 12).

II. THE PROCLAMATION. The news of the approaching salvation of Israel is to be published to the ends of the earth. Meanwhile Zion, by means of angelic or prophetic ministry, is to be informed of her coming deliverance. He who is Retributor and Compensator is at hand.

III. THE REALIZATION OF ZION'S DESTINY. The people are to be known once more by that great appellation given them in the Law (Exod. xix. 6), the holy people, partaking of the nature of the holy God—by him redeemed, by him sanctified—a title which passed over into Christian use. In contrast to her former isolation and neglectedness (Jer. xxx. 17), the city will be "sought out," the object of the nations' love and care. In Christians as the elect, the beloved of God, in the Church as the "city set on a hill," or as a glorious and spotless bride, may be found the Christian fulfilment of these prophecies.—J.

Ver. 4.—*Fellowship with God.* "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken." Mistaken we may be—our judgment is so weak, our hearts so worldly—but not forsaken. It is a beautiful word, and it is enough. God will not condescend to explain all his ways to men; but he is a Father, and the Father will never forsake his child. Isaiah is called the evangelical prophet, and he is so; he heralds the kingdom of Christ, describes the nature of the kingdom, under a King who shall reign in righteousness, and gives us the pathetic picture of his sorrows. In one word, as a prophet of the Redeemer, he describes the theophany, the appearance or manifestation of God himself; the great coming age of Immanuel, "God with us." Wars are prophesied of, even after the advent of Christ—tribulations and shaking of nations. Much has to be overturned; but amid all there is the pathway of the true King. Jesus comes, and comes to reign. Much is transient here. It is declared so to be. Man is said to be a pilgrim, and yet utters a cry of wonder that he cannot make earth a home. Riches are said to have wings, and then man is surprised that they flee away. Life is said to be like the grass, and then man is staggered that it is cut down. Friends turn false or fickle, and then man is surprised that evil hearts act in evil ways. Nature has her seasons, and then man marvels at the analogue of life which has its night as well as its day. On the one hand man scoffs at and scorns the Bible, and on the other refuses to see how full of realism and truth all its moral revelations are. It is equally true on its restful side. It tells us that amidst all we have a Father in heaven, whose will is wise and just, whose heart is kind and true and good. It assures us in that coming of

Christ, to which all the ages looked forward, that God "remembers us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever," and that, though often mistaken, we shall never be termed Forsaken.

I. THIS IS A DIVINE REPLY. A reply to what? Why, to Zion's utterance in ch. xlix. 14, "The Lord hath forsaken me." Not, mark you, that there have been no Divine footprints in the past, no Divine provision and protection in Zion's yesterday; but now he hath forsaken us. Study life, especially what is called religious life, and you will find that this is always the foolish cry of the Church. It will live in the past. It will not believe that there are prophets and righteous men to-day. It will decorate the sepulchres of the fathers. It did so in Isaiah's time; it does so now. It glorifies the days of Wickliffe and Luther, of Whitefield and Wesley, forgetful that God is the living God, and his voice is heard, his hand outstretched, his purpose working now. I know nothing in which the human mind is so fatally biased as in this backward looking and longing, whilst he is still nigh us in our breath and in our heart. Forsaken? No, there are prophets of truth still; heralds of mercy still; national seers still, who search the very heart of nations. Wherever the Spirit of Christ is, there he is. There are wars, vices, wrongs, still; but their time is not so easy as it was—not so easy, indeed, as in some past ages which we glorify. The Spirit of Christ is becoming more and more the test of good and evil, of wisdom and unwisdom, of the real and the false, of the righteous and unrighteous. There is a light shining to-day that no breakers can put out, no wild storms of passion extinguish. "The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" is here. Christ's arm is not shortened; more worn and weary spirits lean on it than ever. Christ's mercy is not exhausted; his forgiveness is still the good cheer of millions of hearts. His revelations of immortality have not faded through the lapse of years. He alone has given to the world its all-covering sky. We feel that whilst we still believe in him and cleave to him, the prophetic words are real and true, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken."

II. A DIVINE HARMONY. The words do not stand alone. They are not merely a beautiful text, or an isolated flower, or a separate jewel. We have to take the moral strain of a book to see into the mind and meaning of the plan. We do not interpret Mendelssohn or Mozart by separate passages, neither should we so treat Isaiah. He is evidently the prophet of a golden age, no matter whether there are ten hands visible in the work or one. We test truth by its voice, not by its mere speaker. All prophets were not to be listened to and obeyed simply because they were prophets. "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil-doers. . . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 14, 16); and again, "Let not your prophets deceive you" (Jer. xxix. 8); and again, "Mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies" (Ezek. xiii. 9); "Thus saith the Lord God: Woe unto the foolish prophets. . . . O Israel, thy prophets are like foxes" (Ezek. xiii. 3, 4). Yes; there was a moral test then; an instinct which revealed the true prophet, as it reveals the true Saviour. Our Lord rested all on this: "If ye were of the truth, ye would hear my voice;" "My sheep hear my voice." A remarkable instance of this moral test is given us in Ezek. xiii. 22. The people were to set their faces against the prophets. Why? "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." That which was against righteousness and assisted evil was not to be believed. Why will men be so afraid of this test? Why do they seek to rest authority on the authors and writers of books, and not rest it, as God does, and ever did, and only could, on the truth itself? It was Isaiah's way, it was our Lord's way, it was St. Paul's way. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." I thus come to my word "harmony." It is harmonious with all within us. Isaiah is a prophet of righteousness, of Divine forbearance, of Divine forgiveness, of Divine pity, of Divine ministry, of Divine sacrifice. If asked—Is this a God to be trusted, worshipped, loved? the whole inward being exclaims, "Amen, and amen."

III. A DIVINE CONSOLATION. It is really part of the "comfort ye" strain, as that

reaches to the depths of our being. Not forsaken. The same Isaiah is here. We feel sin. Israel felt it. We cannot by any philosophy of heredity escape from the consciousness of personal guilt. Alone the flame burns. At night the thorn pierces through the pillow. Are we left to bear the great sorrow unpitied and unaided? Out of Zion the Deliverer shall come. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." We feel social evils; we are hurt by unrighteousness, galled and wounded by selfishness. Amid all, fierce wars seem again and again to stir the mad passions of humanity. What thought can light our gloom, can give strength to our hopes? Only this—"A King shall reign in righteousness." If there be no hope for the supremacy of the Christ, all is lost, for beside him there is no Saviour. But are there not signs that a better spirit is abroad? I think so. Men are sighing for a Prince of peace, and with the sigh there is a sob too, "O Lord, how long?" We feel our own solitude. We seem to be forsaken. Change comes. Fortune is turned to misfortune, health to sickness. But there are restful hours in all Christian hearts. Say what men will of the mysteries, let them ponder the facts; there is a touch of Christ, there is a tender sense of an encircling arm, there is a consciousness of the good Shepherd's care and love. We want to bring home the music of this promise to weary hearts. If we want to exercise more influence than philosophers and moralists, we must have a better message. When Ulysses passed by the island of the syrens, the classic story tells us that, to save himself from their snares, he bound himself with mighty thongs to the masts, and secured his sailors' safety by filling their ears with wax, that they might not be bewitched. But when the sweet singer, when Orpheus, voyaged by the same syren island, he bound himself to no mast. He started a sweeter, nobler music than the syrens could ever reach, and so sailed by in triumph. If we are to win men and keep men—men who have been charmed with the syren voices of the world all the week—our melody must be one that comes down from heaven; the music of forgiveness and mercy, of grace and help, of God's love, and God's care, and God's everlasting throne. We are in him that is true, in him of whom all prophecy is full, who was the Spirit of it all. In life with all its mysteries, and in death with all its leave-takings. We shall never be termed "Forsaken."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—7.—*From night to noon.* The passage rather implies than states a very sad condition in which Israel is found, and it suggests to us, as a starting-point—

I. DARK DAYS THROUGH WHICH A CHRISTIAN CHURCH MAY PASS. The evils and miseries which may then be endured may include, as with Israel at the time of this prophecy: 1. Reduced numbers, causing weakness and humiliation, perhaps approaching extinction. 2. Submission to some kind of bondage; either to the tyranny of some spiritual delusion, or to the despotism of some other master than the Lord of love and righteousness. 3. The actual withdrawal of Christ; a condition in which it is rightly called "the Forsaken," for "he does not many mighty works because of unbelief." He does not dwell there, but passes by; he does not manifest his presence and his power in regenerating, or renewing, or sustaining grace. 4. The appearance of utter forgetfulness on the part of its Divine Head. There is such an absence of all fruitfulness, all usefulness, all moral and spiritual beauty, that its most appropriate name is "The Desolate One."

II. THE DUTY OF ITS MINISTERS and its best friends in these dark days (vers. 1—6). 1. Pleading with God for his people. For Zion's sake not holding peace, for Jerusalem's sake not resting, but continually and earnestly interceding with God that he will pity, will interpose, will restore. 2. Pleading with his people in God's name. The function of the prophet was to *speak for God*, and especially when his truth was forgotten and his will neglected. The duty and privilege of the minister of Christ is to declare with all fearlessness and fidelity, and with all needful reiteration, the truth which has been forgotten, the commandment which is being disregarded. This duty is shared by any others, particularly by any other officers, to whom the Spirit of God may reveal his will.

III. THE FUTURE WHICH IT IS IN THE POWER AND IN THE HEART OF GOD TO CONFER. 1. Deliverance from these distressing evils. There shall be "salvation" (ver. 1). The bonds shall be broken, the delusions dispelled, the assumption of power removed, the "evil thing in the midst" which prevented the indwelling of Christ shall be cast out. 2. Manifestation of the Master's favour. Its "righteousness" in his sight shall "go

forth as brightness;" there shall be such tokens of Divine favour that all who dwell around and observe shall "see its righteousness" asserted and behold its "glory" (ver. 2). 3. The possession of its Lord's regard. Its new name, "Hephzi-bah," shall indicate that its Lord delights in it, looks upon it with a glad approval, holds it in his right hand (Rev. ii. 1) as a man holds a crown or diadem, as something of rare value, of great price in his esteem (ver. 3). 4. The outpouring of its Lord's affection. Its new name is also to be "Beulah;" for it is to be dear to his heart as is the bride to the bridegroom, the object of his fervent love. We may be so conscious of our shortcomings and of our departures from God's will that we may fail to realize the fulness of our privilege. But it is our sacred duty to be dissatisfied with ourselves, as portions of the Church of Christ, until we are such as he can regard with Divine love and affection, such as he can prize as very precious crowns or diadems. If this seems impossible as things are, it behoves us to humble ourselves before him, to plead with him in penitent prayer, to rededicate ourselves to his service, until the hour comes when not only will the darkness have given way to dawn, but the dawn to noontide brightness.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The value of security*, etc. The principal lesson here is the inestimable advantage of national independence and consequent individual security. But other lessons also stand out from the passage, viz.—

I. THE REALITY OF NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY. It is very clearly implied that Israel had suffered grievously in the past *as a nation*, because of God's wrath. She had sinned and had been condemned, and she had paid the penalty of suffering from a cruel and rapacious invasion; so that her citizens ate not of the corn they had sown, and drank not of the wine they had planted. God makes nations as well as individuals to pay due penalty for their transgressions. Hence we have—

II. THE INDIVIDUAL OBLIGATION which this fact entails. It is impossible for any man to sever himself from the community of which he is a member; he is not at liberty to leave the national course, to be decided by other men, while he gives himself up to more congenial labours. No man can divest himself of his responsibilities as a citizen of his country; every man is bound to exert his influence on behalf of liberty, righteousness, peace, virtue, godliness.

III. THE VALUE OF SECURITY. If it be uncertain whether men will reap what they sow, if it is probable that strangers will partake of the fruit of men's toil, there will be a constantly and powerfully disturbing force at work. But security will promote: 1. *Order* and good government. 2. *Industry*—occupation, enterprise, the useful arts. 3. *Benevolence*—the origination and growth of philanthropic institutions. 4. *Piety*—the erection of sacred structures and the establishment of religious organizations.

1. Let the prosperity which is the fruit of security be consecrated by gratitude and benevolence. "Eat and praise the Lord," bring the wine "into the courts of his holiness." Beware of a selfish and complacent spirit (see Deut. vi. 12), and cultivate carefully and devoutly a spirit of gratitude toward God and kindness toward man. 2. Appreciate at its full worth and give God thanks for the national security which is enjoyed. It is not one of the smaller mercies we have received at his hand that we have *no fear of being displaced* by any "stranger," that we are so secure of the fruits of our toil. This sense of safety and stability has contributed largely to the resources at our command, and is adding incalculably to the best movements and measures of our time. 3. Rejoice in and bless God for the fact that even though we may not reap *all* that we sow *here*, there is a *future* in which the workman shall be amply and gloriously rewarded (Ps. cxxvi. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 58).—C.

Vers. 10—12.—*God's summons to the enslaved.* Taking the language of the tenth verse as an energetic address to the captive people of God to "go through" the gates of Babylon, and make their way with all diligence to Zion, the home of freedom and sacred joy, we have—

I. A DIVINE SUMMONS TO THE ENSLAVED. To the *individual soul*, that has been brought into some spiritual bondage, perhaps under the tyranny of some enslaving habit; to the *Christian Church*, which has allowed itself to become subject to some outside power other than that of its Divine Lord; to the betrayed and *subjected nation*,

which has enjoyed and is capable of an independent government,—comes the summons from above; "Call forth all thy powers, leave no means untried, prepare the way, make a supreme and sacrificial effort to break the bonds, to walk in the way, to reach the goal of a true and lasting liberty."

II. THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE. "His reward is with him," etc. The first recompense is found in: 1. A blessed sense of deliverance from bondage. The man, or the Church, rejoices greatly that he is one of the "redeemed of the Lord." The fact that God has struck off his shackles and made him breathe the sweet air of freedom, the consciousness that iniquity "has no dominion over him," is the greatest and happiest of all facts to him. Life holds no heritage which is equal to the "salvation" which has come to his heart, to his life. 2. A restored reputation. He did belong to the unholy, the guilty, perhaps to the vicious or to the violent; now he is one of "the holy people" whom all men honour. This conducts to: 3. Communion and friendship with the best and worthiest; with the Highest himself, and with the wise and good among men; he is among those who are "sought out," "not forsaken." Other rewards accompany obedience, not here stated or hinted. We may suggest: 4. Capacity for usefulness to others, occupying a position in which he (or it, the Church) may lead other enslaved ones into spiritual freedom (Ps. li. 12, 13; John xxi. 15; Acts xxvi. 18; Jas. v. 19, 20). 5. A good hope of an inheritance where perfect freedom dwells.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Godly desires for the Church.* The Jews were remarkably attached to localities. They cherished the national associations with such places as Bethel, the Red Sea, the Jordan, etc.; but they loved most intensely Jerusalem and Mount Zion. To the better Jews localities were only shrines of spiritual truths. Bethel meant "God near;" the Red Sea meant "God redeeming;" Jordan meant "God faithful to his word." Those Jews saw the spiritual through the local; we are expected to see the spiritual without the help of the local.

I. THE FERVENT DESIRES OF A GODLY SOUL. To see Zion—the type of Christ's Church—delivered and established in righteousness. 1. Delivered from (1) its weaknesses, in motive, aim, and work; (2) its hindrances, in body, business, and relationships; (3) its prejudices, both individual and sectarian. The Church in the world is like a lamp burning dimly in impure air. 2. Established in righteousness. (1) The internal character of a Church is the subject of greater anxiety than its outward condition. The King's daughter must be "all glorious within." (2) The internal character of a church is only preserved as it has a capacity for growing. The figure in the text is of a "brightness," not a mere flash, but brightness brightening, or going forth.

II. THE VARIETY OF MOTIVES THAT INCREASE THE DESIRES. 1. Our consecration vow. We gave ourselves first to Christ, and then to his Church. 2. The emotions of the Christian life. These inspire us to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." 3. Love to Christ. This, John tells us, is sure to find expression in love for the brethren.

III. THE ONE SUPREME MOTIVE PROMINENT IN THE TEXT. The real welfare of the Church itself. "For Zion's sake." We ought to feel the utmost anxiety that (1) the *joy* of the Church should be increased; (2) the beauty and Christ-likeness of the Church should be perfected; (3) the efficiency and power of the Church should be enlarged. Its righteousness—which is its true strength—should shine more and more unto the perfect day.

IV. THE MAN WHO HAS GOOD DESIRES WILL NOT WITHHOLD HIS PERSONAL EFFORTS. "I will not hold my peace," etc. The real greatness of prayer is only known to the man who works, and the greatness of work only to him who prays.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The Lord's new name for his people.* "And men shall call thee by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall appoint" (compare, for the promise of a new name, Rev. ii. 17; iii. 12). Abram, brought into covenant with God, receives a new name—Abraham. Jacob finds his triumph seal his acceptance with God, and he is henceforth known by a new name—Israel. What the name is to be God only knows, but it will recognize the fact that the people had been faithful, and were rewarded for their faithfulness. A singular sentiment prevailed among the Jews in connection with this new naming. The possession of a new name came to be regarded among the pious as a demonstration that all sins committed under the old name were

forgiven, and all decrees annulled which were issued against the sinner while possessed of his former appellation. Accordingly, at the approach of death, the Jews were wont to change the name of the dying person, and the reason of this custom will be perceived from the following prayer offered for the dying, to whom the new name has been given: "O God, take pity on A (his former name), and restore him to health, and let him henceforth be called B (the new name); and let him be glad in his new name, and let it be confirmed to him. Be pleased, we entreat thee, O God, that this change of name may abolish all the hard and evil decrees against him, and destroy the broad sentence. If death be decreed upon A (the former name), it is not decreed upon B (the new name). If an evil decree was made against A, lo! this hour he is another man, a new creature, and like a child born to a good life and length of days."

I. THE NEW NAME INDICATES THE END OF THE OLD LIFE. Illustrate: 1. By the new name given in marriage, which closes up the old life in the father's home. 2. By the new name given to those restored to Jerusalem, which intimated the close of the time of captivity in Babylon. 3. By the new name "Christian," which marks the end of the old heathen life, or pagan life. 4. By the new heavenly name (as in Rev. ii. 17), which tells that the earth-conflict has ended in the victory of holiness. Apply to the Divine recognition of our final triumph over the old Adam, which is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

II. THE NEW NAME REMINDS MEN OF THE GRACE OF WHICH THEY ARE MONUMENTS. It is very positively stated that God gives the name, to remind men of what he has done for them. The name "redeemed" keeps in mind the "Redeemer." The name "Christian" sets "Christ" ever before us. It is not *our* name for ourselves; it is *God's* name for us, and so a constant reminder of what Almighty grace has done, and can do.

III. THE NEW NAME INDICATES THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW LIFE. The name "holy city" calls attention to the fact that the people should be *all holy*, as those who are fully consecrated unto God.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The Bunyan figure of the Beulah-land.* Hephzi-bah was the wife of Hezekiah, and mother of Manasseh. Very uncertain tradition says she was a daughter of the Prophet Isaiah. The name means, "My delight is in her," and Dr. C. Geikie says, "Her name, whether given at her marriage or earlier, wakes a thought of old-world tenderness and poetry. Was it a fond reminiscence of one he had loved and respected, when Isaiah tells us that Jehovah will make Zion, after her long desolation, once more his Hephzi-bah?" The word "Beulah" means "married," and the figure rests upon the Eastern notion of the desolate condition of a maiden or a widow, and the happy satisfied state of the married woman, who has husband and home. A "married" land is one watched over, tended, cared for, and loved. Bunyan uses the name to represent the "waiting time" of old age, or of frailty, in which God's people tarry awhile ere they pass over the river. If somewhat fanciful, his picture is both beautiful and suggestive. "Now I saw in my dream, that by this time the pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground, and entering into the country of Beulah; . . . whose air was very sweet and pleasant; the way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day: wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the city they were going to: also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed; yea, here 'as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so doth thy God rejoice over thee.' Here they had no want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages." This passage is taken from the first part of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' but a similar passage at the close of the second part should be examined. The following divisions may serve as guides in the spiritualizing of this Beulah-figure.

I. BEULAH-LAND REPRESENTS TIMES OF PEACE AFTER CONFLICT WITH SIN. Such times come in various parts of our life, and are times of refreshing.

II. BEULAH-LAND REPRESENTS TIMES OF COMFORT AND REST AFTER DIVINE CHASTISEMENTS. God is very tender over the healing of his smitten ones, and gives seasons when the very heavens drop balm.

III. BEULAH-LAND REPRESENTS TIMES OF WAITING WHEN EARTH'S TOIL IS ENDED. The beautiful time of holy old age, full of sweet memories and patient trust.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The work of the praying men amongst us.* "Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchers; all day and all night they are never silent: ye that are Jehovah's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give no rest to him, until he establish and until he make Jerusalem a renown in the earth" (Cheyne). If the watchers are men, the idea is that during all the years of Israel's captivity, her watchmen, remembrancers, or praying men, are to keep at their work without ceasing, as it were, every day reminding God of his people and of his promise. The figure of the verse is taken from the temple-service, in which there was appointed a constant watch day and night by the Levites. The watches in the East, even to this day, are performed by a loud cry from time to time by the watchmen, both to mark the time and to show that they are constantly attentive to their duty. Possibly the first reference of the figure is to angel-guards appointed by Jehovah; but we may reasonably use the figure for the earth-messengers of Jehovah, the pious praying souls who are his intercessors among his people. As intercessors, these men—

I. KEEP GOD REMINDED OF HIS PEOPLE. It is a small objection, indicating very superficial thinking, that "God cannot need to be reminded of anything." The answer is easy. If God is pleased graciously to reveal himself in certain relations, he graciously condescends to accept all the conditions involved in those relations. Children tell their parents what the parents know, and both children and parents are blessed in the telling. The prayers preserved for us in the Bible are full of things which God must know. It might be a thought full of help and cheer to us all that while, busied with our earth-cares, we may be forgetting God, our pious brothers and sisters, our praying men and women, Zion's watchmen, are keeping God reminded of us. The bells that sound for morning prayers throughout our land are a voice that God hears as truly as man. Praying men keep Zion's walls ever before her King.

II. KEEP GOD'S PEOPLE EVER REMINDED OF THEIR GOD. Of this there is abundant necessity. Both prosperity and adversity tend to make us forgetful of our God. Even the steady ongoing, that has no ups and downs, makes the thought of God fade in our minds. So we need the witness of our watchers, our praying men, and their *muezzin*, or call to prayer. Especially bring out that we need to be kept in mind of the Lord's *provisions* and *promises*—the assurance of our full and final redemption. They who pray amongst us, "Thy kingdom come," keep us constantly reminded that there is a necessary *preparation* for all who are to share in the kingdom.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The mission of those who remove hindrances.* The point of interest here is that, so far as Jehovah was concerned, all things were arranged for the return of the exiles, and the restoration of the long-depressed nation. But some men were hindering the return by their hesitancies and doubtings and selfishnesses. Therefore Jehovah pleads with all who trust his Word, urging them to clear the way of the people, and get these hindrances moved out of their path. There are always hinderers to every good work, and there is always the Lord's call to us not to let these hinderers do their evil work. They take the heart out of all good schemes, and often do much worse mischief than the active opponents, because they are a foe *within* the city, and have deceptive ways which are seldom fully recognized.

I. THE WORK OF THE HINDERER. There is a good work done by the conservative-minded among us, which must not be confounded with the work of the hinderer. It is good to have a drag put on the wheels of impulsiveness. It is well to be compelled patiently to consider schemes which have been thoughtlessly and enthusiastically taken up. But the hinderer is not the man of prudence and caution, but the man of selfishness and doubt. Some men cannot see good in anything, even though to other men the thing may be rich in promise. Others delight in prophesying failure, and plucking the spirit out of enterprise. Others see that proposed schemes will make heavy demands on self-denial, and as they are not prepared for this, they put stones

in the way. No good thing was ever started that did not rouse the hinderers. And no good thing was ever carried through that did not overbear and carry away, or brush aside, the hinderers.

II. THE WORK OF THOSE WHO REMOVE HINDRANCES. They are either energetic men, who will not be repressed, or else men of faith in God, who make their loyalty master difficulties. Men of firmness and persistency are needed in every sphere of Christian enterprise; and it is all the better if they have some pleasantness and even humour, and can remove hindrances without offending hinderers. Men of faith are always needed, who, clearly seeing what God would have done, go steadily on towards its accomplishment, refusing to turn aside either to the right hand or to the left. If we cannot, or will not, help toward the on-coming of Christ's kingdom, at least we can get out of the way of those who will work.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The nearness of the Lord's coming used as a persuasion.* The immediate reference here is to the Lord's manifestation in the providences that led to the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. The Church has in every age had some great hope held out before it, and that hope could always be conceived of as a coming or manifestation of the Lord. Three "comings" are commonly recognized. Our Lord's coming in the flesh, as the Babe of Bethlehem, and the "Man Christ Jesus." Our Lord's coming in the Spirit, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord's coming in some manifestation of himself for the judgment of sinners and the glorifying of his saints. This is the special persuasion to holiness, activity, and spiritual preparedness which now rests on Christ's Church.

I. THIS BELIEF IN THE SECOND COMING HAS ALWAYS BEEN HELD BY THE CHURCH; and the fact that some sections have held distorted and extravagant views of it must not be allowed to deprive us all of the inspiration that comes from so sober, yet so great and so glorious a hope. The belief was plainly held by the apostolic Church, and used by the early teachers as a persuasion to watchfulness, quietness of trust, and godly living. Bulwer Lytton is true to life when he describes Olynthus and a party of Christians singing amid the awful desolations of Pompeii, within hearing of the multitude that was rushing hither and thither for precious life—singing with the calm assurance that their Lord was now very near—

"Woe to the proud ones who defy him,
Woe to the wicked who deny him,
Woe to the wicked, woe!"

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SECOND COMING HAS ALWAYS HAD ITS PLACE IN THE CHURCH'S CREED. In the Apostles' Creed: "From thence he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead." In the Creed of St. Athanasius: "From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, at whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works."

III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SECOND COMING IS TAUGHT IN OUR HYMNS. The real faith and hope of the Church may be better shown by its favourite hymns even than by its formal creed. In every collection of hymns for Christian use some portion is devoted to the Lord's second advent, and not a few of these hymns have become very sacred and dear to Christian hearts. A few may be recalled to mind—

"Lo, he comes with clouds descending."

"When thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come."

"Great God, what do I see and hear?"

"The Lord shall come, the earth shall quake."

Or that magnificent song of the ancient Church—

"Day of Wrath! that awful day,
Shall the bannered cross display,
Earth in ashes melt away."

IV. DEVOUT SOULS USE THIS HOPE IN URGING THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST ON CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES. For instance, J. A. James says, "We are to be waiting for the Son of God

from heaven, and to be looking for his coming as our blessed hope, above all other hopes. This waiting for Christ was in an eminent degree characteristic of the primitive Christians; it is frequently mentioned by the apostles, and seems to have been a prevailing feeling of the Churches. All earnest Christians now have the same spirit. The bride, the Lamb's wife, is, and must be, supposed to be ever looking for the return of the heavenly Bridegroom. The want of this habitual looking for the return of Christ indicates a low state of piety, a prevalence of worldly-mindedness among professing Christians." There is often much foolish talk about the "lost hope of the Church;" and it is strongly asserted that the Church generally is no longer looking for the coming of Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth. All that is true in connection with such statements is, that the great majority of Christian people fail to see that Scripture teaches the Lord's coming in any prescribed mode and time and form. The Church has been content with the inspiration and persuasion of the great fact and the large hope. The universal Church keeps her eyes fixed on the east, watching for the first signs of the dawning of the day of God; but the Church also accepts her Lord's declaration, that it is not for *her* "to know the times and the seasons."—R. T.

SECTION IX. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD ON IDUMÆA (CH. LXIII. 1—6).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Vers. 1—6.—A JUDGMENT ON IDUMÆA. Isaiah had already, in the first portion of his prophecy, announced "a great slaughter in the land of Idumæa" as resolved on in the counsels of God (ch. xxxiv. 5—10). He now recurs to the subject, and represents Jehovah as a warrior with blood-stained garments, fresh from the field of battle in Edom, where he has trodden down his foes and taken a fierce vengeance on them. The Idumæans probably represent the world-power; and the "day of vengeance" may be one still future, in which the enemies of God will feel the weight of his hand.

The description stands by itself, neither connected with what goes before nor with what follows. It has the appearance of a separate poem, which accident has placed in its present position. In form it is "a lyrico-dramatic dialogue between the prophet as a bystander and a victorious warrior (*i.e.* Jehovah) returning from battle in Idumæa" (Cheyne).

Ver. 1.—**Who is this?** The prophet opens the dialogue with an inquiry, "Who is it that presents himself before him suddenly in a strange guise?" **He comes from Edom, from Bozrah**—a principal Edomite city (see the comment on ch. xxxiv. 6)—**with dyed garments**; or, rather, *with blood-red garments*—garments incarnadined with gore. "Who is this," again he asks, "**that is glorious** (or, *splendid*) **in his apparel**"—the blood-stained vesture of the conqueror was a glory to him (Nah. ii. 3; Rev. xix. 13)—"as he travels" (or, "bends forward") **in the greatness of his strength**—exhibiting in his movements a mighty indomitable strength? Who is it? The reply is immediate—**I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save**; *i.e.* I, whose every word is "holy, just, and true," who alone am able to "save to the uttermost all that come to me" (Heb. vii. 25). The answer unmistakably indicates that the figure which has appeared to the prophet is that of Jehovah.

Ver. 2.—**Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?** The prophet resumes his questioning. What means the redness of thine apparel? Whence the stains? Are they wine-stains consequent on treading the wine-press? Among the Hebrews, as among the Egyptians (Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. i. p. 46), the juice of the grape was trodden out by the feet of men, who often splashed some upon their garments (Gen. xlix. 11).

Ver. 3.—**I have trodden the wine-press.** The warrior replies. He accepts the suggestion of the prophet; but metaphorically, not literally. He has indeed been "treading a wine-press," but it is the wine-press of his fury, in which he has trampled down his enemies; and the stains upon his raiment are, consequently, not wine-stains, but stains of blood (comp. Joel iii. 13; Lam. i. 15; Rev. xiv. 19, 20; xix. 15). **Alone.** In mine own might, with none to aid me. The literal wine-press was always trodden by a band of men. **Of the people**; rather, *of the peoples*; i.e. of the neighbouring nations none took part with God against the special enemies of his people, the Idumæans. All

more or less sympathized with his adversaries, and therefore participated in their punishment (see ver. 6). **For I will tread them . . . trample them**; rather, *so I trode them . . . trampled them* (Lowth, Rosenmüller, Delitzsch, Cheyne, by an alteration of the vowel-points). The whole is a prophecy of the future; but the dramatic form of the narrative requires that the verbs should be in the past. As "the peoples" would not help God, but took the side of his enemies, they too were placed in the wine-press, and crushed under his feet. **Their blood**; literally, *their juice*. Lowth and Kay translate, "life-blood;" Delitzsch, "life-sap;" Mr. Cheyne, excellently, "life-stream." **Shall be sprinkled . . . will stain**; rather, *was sprinkled . . . stained*.

Ver. 4.—**For the day of vengeance is in my heart**. Translate, *for a day of vengeance was in my heart* (comp. ch. xxxiv. 8; lxi. 2). "A day" is time enough for God to take vengeance, to kill, and to destroy. He hastens over work that is necessary, but uncongenial. But he lengthens out the time of release and redemption for his loved ones. The "day of vengeance" ushers in the "year of redemption." **Is come**; rather, *was come*. The Divine speaker goes back to the time preceding the actual punishment of the nations.

Ver. 5.—**And I looked, and there was none to help** (comp. ch. v. 2, "He *looked* that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes;" also ch. xli. 28, "I beheld, and there was no man"). By an anthropomorphism God is represented as looking for and expecting what might reasonably have been expected, and even as surprised when he does not find it (comp. ch. lix. 16). Out of all the many nations it was reasonable to suppose that some would have chosen the better part and have been on the Lord's side. But the fact was otherwise (comp. ver. 3). **Mine own arm brought salvation unto me**; or, *mine own arm helped me* (comp. ch. lix. 16). Nothing more is needed. If God arises, his enemies at once "are scattered" (Ps. lxviii. 1). "His own right hand, and his holy arm, get him the victory" (Ps. xcviii. 1).

Ver. 6.—**I will tread down . . . make drunk . . . bring down**; rather, *I trode down . . . made drunk . . . brought down*. See the comment on ver. 3. The destruction was to be utter, overwhelming, absolute—one from which there could be no recovery (comp. Rev. xix. 11—21, where the simile of the wine-press, and the "vesture dipped in blood," seem introduced with a special reference to this passage).

SECTION X. AN ADDRESS OF THE EXILES TO GOD, INCLUDING THANKSGIVING, CONFESSION OF SIN, AND SUPPLICATION (CH. LXIII. 7—LXIV.).

Vers. 7—14.—GOD PRAISED FOR HIS MERCIES. The address opens with pure and simple thanksgiving of the most general kind, God being praised for his loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathy with his people (vers. 7—9). An historical survey is then commenced, and Israel's shortcomings contrasted with God's mercies, but with a predominantly thankful and even jubilant tone (vers. 10—14).

Ver. 7.—**I will mention**; or, *celebrate*. **The loving-kindnesses**; or, *mercies* (see ch. lv. 3; and comp. Ps. lxxxix. 1).

Ver. 8.—**He said, Surely they are my people**. Israel was first recognized as "a people" in Egypt, when the cruel Pharaoh, probably Sethos I., said, "The *people* of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we" (Exod. i. 9). Soon afterwards God acknowledged them as "*his* people" (Exod. iii. 7). The exiles probably go back in their thoughts to this time. **Children that will not lie**; or, *deal falsely*, as the same word is translated in Ps. xliv. 17. The meaning is, that surely they will be faithful to God, and not fall away from him into idolatry or irreligion.

Ver. 9.—**In all their affliction he was afflicted**. The "affliction" of Israel began in Egypt (Gen. xv. 13), probably not long after the death of Joseph. It became an intense oppression, when the king "arose who knew not Joseph" (Exod. i. 8). God's sympathy with Israel's sufferings at this time is strongly marked in the narrative of Exodus (ch. ii. 23, 24; iii. 7, 17). An alternative reading of the Hebrew text gives the sense, "In all their affliction he was not an adversary;" *i.e.* he did not afflict them for their hurt, but for their benefit. But the reading followed by our translators, and most moderns, is to be preferred. **The angel of his presence saved them.** "The angel of his presence" occurs nowhere but in this place. It is probably equivalent to "the angel of God" (Exod. xiv. 19; Judg. xv. 6; Acts xxvii. 23), or "the angel of the Lord" (Gen. xvi. 7; Numb. xxii. 23; Judg. xiii. 3, etc.), and designates either the Second Person of the Trinity, or the highest of the angelic company, who seems to be the archangel Michael (see Pusey's 'Daniel,' pp. 525, 526). (For the angelic interpositions which "saved" Israel, see Exod. xiv. 19; Judg. vi. 11—23; xiii. 3—21; 2 Kings xix. 35, etc.) **In his love and in his pity he**

redeemed them. The "redemption" of this passage is probably that from the bondage of Egypt (Exod. vi. 6; xv. 13; Deut. vii. 8, etc.), which belonged to "the days of old"—not the spiritual redemption from the bondage of sin, which was reserved for the time of the Messiah. Having "redeemed" them, *i.e.* delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and thereby, as it were, purchased them to be his own, **he bare them**—"carried them on eagles' wings" (Exod. xix. 4), and brought them safely through the wilderness to Palestine (comp. Deut. xxxii. 10—12).

Ver. 10.—**But they rebelled.** The rebellions of Israel against God commenced in the wilderness. They rebelled at Sinai, when they set up the golden calf; at Meribah (Numb. xx. 24); at Shittim, when they consorted with the daughters of Moab (Numb. xxv. 6). Under the Judges, their conduct was one long rebellion (Judg. ii. 11; iii. 7, 12; iv. 1; vi. 1; viii. 33; x. 6; xiii. 1). They rebelled in Samuel's time by asking for a king (1 Sam. viii. 5, 19, 20). The ten tribes rebelled under Jeroboam, and set up the idolatry of the calves at Dan and Bethel. Worse idolatries followed, and in two centuries and a half had reached such a height, that God was provoked to "remove Israel out of his sight" (2 Kings xvii. 23). Judah remained, but "rebelled" under Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, "transgressing very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluting the very house of the Lord at Jerusalem" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14). These rebellions against God **vexed his Holy Spirit**—"provoked him," "grieved him," "moved the Holy One in Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 40, 41; cvi. 43). **Therefore he was turned to be their enemy** (comp. Jer. xxx. 14; Lam. ii. 4, 5). Judah had "filled up the measure of her iniquities," had gone on "until there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). God's indignation was therefore poured out upon her without let or stint. "He cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he drew back his right hand from before the enemy; he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. He bent his bow *like an enemy;* he stood with his right hand *as an adversary,* and slew all that were pleasant in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion; he poured out his fury like fire. The Lord was as an enemy" (Lam. ii. 3—5). **He fought against them;** rather, *he himself fought against them.* God himself, though they were "his people," yet fought against them and for the Chaldæans in that final struggle. He "gave the city into the hand of the King of Babylon" (Jer. xxxiv. 2).

Ver. 11.—**Then he remembered the days of old.** It is questioned *who* remembered, **God** or **his people.** Gesenius, Hitzig, Ewald, Nägelbach, Delitzsch, Knobel, and Mr. Cheyne are in favour of the people; Bishop Lowth and Dr. Kay of God. The reflections which follow (vers. 11—13) seem certainly most appropriate to the people, or to the prophet speaking in their name. **Where is he that brought them up out of the sea?** *i.e.* "the Red Sea" (comp. ch. li. 10). What has become of the protecting God who then delivered them? **With the shepherd of his flock;** or, *shepherds,* according to another reading. The "shepherd" might be either Moses, or "the angel of his face" (ver. 9). The "shepherds"—if that reading be preferred—must be Moses, Aaron, and perhaps Miriam (Micah vi. 4). **Where he that put his Holy Spirit within him?** The "him" of this passage undoubtedly refers to "the people" (Rosenmüller, Knobel, Delitzsch, Kay, Cheyne). God gave to the people in the wilderness "his good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. ix. 20), and guide them (Hag. ii. 4, 5), and govern them (Numb. xi. 17).

Ver. 12.—**That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm;** rather, *that caused his glorious arm to attend at Moses' right hand*—ready (as Dr. Weir says) to grasp him if he should stumble. **Dividing the water before them;** literally, *cleaving the waters before their face* (comp. Exod. xiv. 21). **To make himself an everlasting name** (see Exod. xv. 11—16). It was one of the main purposes of the entire series of miracles wrought in Egypt, "that God's Name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Exod. ix. 16).

Ver. 14.—**As a beast goeth down into the valley.** Bishop Lowth's version seems the best, "As the herd descendeth to the valley." Israel's passage through the Sinaitic peninsula into Canaan is compared to the movement of a herd of cattle from its summer pastures in the mountains to the valley at their base, where for a time it rests. So God gave his people, after their many trials, "rest" in Canaan (Heb. iii. 11—18). **So didst thou lead thy people.** "So" refers, not to the last simile only, but to the entire description contained in vers. 11—14. **To make thyself a glorious name** (comp. ver. 12, and see also Ezek. xxxvi. 21—23; Mal i. 11).

Vers. 15—19.—A PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND SUFFERING. From thanksgiving and confession, the people betake themselves to prayer, and beseech God to look down from heaven once more, to have compassion on them, to acknowledge them, and to save them alike from themselves (ver. 17) and from their adversaries (vers. 18, 19). "It is difficult to overrate the

spiritual beauty of the prayer contained in this passage. We may admit that the most prominent motive urged by the speaker has a nationalistic air; but behind this, and strengthening it, is a sense of the infiniteness of the Divine mercy, and of the *strong* vitality of the union between Jehovah and his people" (Cheyne).

Ver. 15.—**Look down from heaven** (comp. Deut. xxvi. 15; Ps. lxxx. 14; 2 Kings viii. 30). "The Lord's seat" was "in heaven." While the temple lay in ruins, the Jews would naturally address their prayers to God in his heavenly abode. **From the habitation of thy holiness.** Mr. Cheyne translates, from the *height* of thy holiness," taking the meaning of the rare word *z'bûl* from the Assyrian. "Height" certainly suits well most of the other places where the word *z'bûl* occurs (1 Kings viii. 13; 2 Chron. vi. 2; Ps. xlix. 14; Hab. iii. 11). **Where is thy zeal?** *i.e.* What has become of it? Has it ceased altogether, or is it only in abeyance for a time? Will not God "stir it up" once more (ch. xlii. 13)? **And thy strength**; rather, *and thy great acts* (comp. Ps. cvi. 2; cxlv. 4; cl. 2). **The sounding of thy bowels**; *i.e.* their thrilling or vibration—an indication of sympathy (see ch. xvi. 11). Jeremiah has a similar expression (Jer. xxxi. 20). **Are they restrained?** rather, *they are restrained.* They no longer show themselves. There was no room for questioning the fact.

Ver. 16.—**Doubtless thou art our Father**; rather, *for thou art our Father.* This is the ground of their appeal to God. As their Father, he must love them, and must be ready to listen to them. Abraham and Isaac, their earthly fathers, were of no service, lent them no aid, seemed to have ceased to feel any interest in them. It cannot be justly argued from this that the Jews looked to Abraham and Isaac as actual "patron saints," or directed towards them their religious regards. Had this been so, there would have been abundant evidence of it. **Thou, O Lord, art our Father** (comp. ch. lxiv. 8; and see also Deut. xxxii. 6, and Jer. iii. 4). Though the relationship was revealed under the old covenant, it was practically realized only upon the rarest occasions. **Our Redeemer; thy name, etc.**; rather, *our Redeemer has been thy name from of old.* "Redeemer" first appears as a name of God in Job (ch. xix. 25) and in the Psalms (Ps. xix. 14; lxxviii. 35). It is an *epitheton usitatum* only in the later portion of Isaiah. There it occurs thirteen times.

Ver. 17.—**Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways?** Confession is here mingled with a kind of reproach. They have erred and strayed from God's ways, they allow; but why has he permitted it? Why has he, the shepherd of his flock (ch. xl. 11; xlix. 10), not restrained his wandering sheep, and kept them in his "ways" or "paths"? The reproach borders on irreverence, but is kept within the limits of piety by the affection and trust that underlie it. They are like wayward children reproaching a tender mother, not quite believing in the justice of their reproaches, but with a very confident faith in her love and in her power to aid. They entertain no doubt but that God will "return" to them, and acknowledge them as his sheep, and resume their guidance and direction. **And hardened our heart** (comp. Exod. iv. 21; vii. 3; ix. 12; x. 1), "When men have scornfully and obstinately rejected the grace of God, God withdraws it from them judicially, gives them up to their wanderings, and makes their hearts incapable of faith" (Delitzsch). If the process has not gone very far, God may relent, and "return," and soften the proud heart, and renew in it "his fear." This is what Israel now entreats him to do. **For thy servants' sake.** There was always "a remnant" in the worst times, which had not "bowed the knee to Baal." This was God's true "inheritance," which he might be expected to protect and aid.

Ver. 18.—**The people of thy holiness**; or, *thy holy people* (comp. ch. lxii. 9; lxiii. 15; lxiv. 11). Some critics read *har*, "mountain," instead of *'am*, "people," and translate, "But for a little while have they" (*i.e.* thy servants) "had possession of thy holy mountain." The general meaning is the same in either case. "Israel, God's people, has held Palestine but for a little while"—a few centuries—and now the heathen have been allowed to make themselves masters of it, (comp. Ezra x. 8).

Ver. 19.—**We are thine.** There is no "thine" in the original, and so important a word cannot possibly be supplied from without. Translate, *We are as those over whom thou hast not ruled from of old, as those upon whom thy Name has not been called;* i.e. we have lost all our privileges—we have become in God's sight no better than the heathen—he has forgotten that we were ever his people.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Idumæans a type of God's enemies.* **There was a time when Esau** sought to slay his brother Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 41); and the same spirit of violence and

hatred possessed the Edomite nation during its entire career. Edom strove to debar Israel from entrance into the Holy Land by refusing to give them a passage through her borders (Numb. xx. 14—21). She was always ready to join Israel's enemies, and sought perpetually to take Israel at a disadvantage (2 Kings xvi. 6; 2 Chron. xx. 10, 22; xxviii. 17; Ezek. xxv. 12; xxxv. 5; Amos i. 11; Obad. 10, etc.). When the Babylonian conquest came she rejoiced, and made a mock of Israel's distress (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). She was still hostile in the time of the Maccabees, and supported the Syrian monarchs in their endeavours to crush Jewish independence (1 Macc. v. 3; vi. 31; 2 Macc. v. 15). Herod the Great, who sought to put our Lord to death in his infancy, was an Idumæan; and so, on the father's side, was Herod Antipas, who mocked him and set him at nought. The Idumæans are well selected to represent God's enemies generally—

I. ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR PRIDE. Pride was the sin by which Satan and his evil angels lost heaven; and no sin is more hateful to God or more characteristic of his enemies. Of the Idumæans it is said, "The *pride* of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks . . . that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (Obad. 3); and again, "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart" (Jer. xlix. 16). "Pride was the root of Edom's sin," says a recent commentator on Obadiah—pride of an unnatural kind, since God had assigned to Edom a low estate. Now "a low estate, acquiesced in by the grace of God, is the parent of lowliness; when rebelled against, it generates a greater intensity of pride than greatness, because that pride is against nature itself and God's appointment. The pride of human greatness, sinful as it is, is allied to a natural nobility of character. . . . The conceit of littleness has the hideousness of those monstrous combinations, the more hideous because unnatural, not a corruption only, but a distortion of nature" (Pusey, 'Minor Prophets,' pp. 234, 235).

II. ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR UNNATURAL HATRED. All hatred of one race towards another is hated by God, but the hatred of a kindred race is especially displeasing to him. It was one of the special reproaches against Ephraim that he vexed a brother, Judah. Now, Esau and Israel were not only brothers, but *twin* brothers. They ought to have been drawn closely together by this relationship, and to have supported each other against the alien races of the neighbourhood. But the tie of blood was not felt. Edom had "a perpetual hatred of Israel" (Ezek. xxxv. 5). They would gladly have conquered their brethren, and held them in subjection (Ezek. xxxv. 10); but as this could not be, they rejoiced in their brethren's destruction (Obad. 12) and gazed delightedly on their sufferings (Obad. 13). "Unrelenting, deadly hatred against the whole people of Israel, and a longing for their extermination, were inveterate characteristics of Esau" (Pusey, 'Minor Prophets,' p. 241).

III. ON ACCOUNT OF THE ENVY IN WHICH THEIR HATE WAS ROOTED. Ezekiel, declaring God's intention to punish Edom, says, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thy *envy* which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them" (xxxv. 11). The ground of all Edom's hatred of Israel was that jealousy and envy roused by the Divine preference which put the younger before the elder, and gave to Israel superior, to Esau inferior, blessings. Edom had much for which to be thankful—a good pasture country, a secure capital, commercial advantages, wisdom of a certain kind (Jer. xlix. 7); but these things did not satisfy her. They were all rendered vain, and of no account, by the fact that Israel enjoyed more numerous and greater blessings. She could not forgive this superiority; and hence her hatred and rancour. Hence the joy with which she witnessed the walls breached, and Jerusalem taken by the Babylonians; hence the loud cries to which she gave utterance, of "Down with it, down with it [or, 'raze it, raze it'], even to the ground" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7).

IV. ON ACCOUNT OF THE VIOLENCE AND CRUEL OUTRAGES TO WHICH THE HATRED LED. Edom "shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity" (Ezek. xxxv. 5). When the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem, they "stood in the crossway, to cut off those that did escape" (Obad. 14), shutting them up with the enemy, driving them back on their pursuers. Not only did they rejoice in Judah's destruction, and speak proudly in the day of her distress (Obad. 12), but they flew upon the spoil, entering into the gates with the conquerors and laying hands upon the substance of the conquered (Obad. 13). Such fugitives as escaped and settled

among them they slew (Joel iii. 19). Such captives as they could induce the Philistines or the Phœnicians to sell to them they also put to death (Amos i. 6, 9, 11). It was their earnest desire that Israel should be no more a nation, and they therefore made every effort to exterminate it. Next to extermination, they desired complete subjugation. Hence the support which they lent to the Syrians against the heroic Maccabee princes.

Idumæa's fate should be a warning to the enemies of God. Her reward returned upon her own head. As she had done, so was it done to her (Obad. 15). By the time of Malachi, Edom's mountains and heritage had been "laid waste for the jackals of the wilderness" (Mal. i. 3). She was "impoverished;" her cities were thrown down; she strove to rebuild them, but was unable (Mal. i. 4). A century later her territory, or great part of it, was occupied by the Nabathæans, who made Petra their capital (Diod. Sic., xix. 94—98). After suffering various defeats at the hands of the earlier Maccabee princes, the Edomites were finally conquered, and incorporated into the Jewish nation by John Hyrcanus. The last that we hear of them is in the Roman war, when a body of twenty thousand, admitted into Jerusalem by John of Giscala, filled the city with bloodshed, and ending by pillaging it. Thenceforth they disappear from history. The greater part perished in the terrible siege conducted by Titus. The remainder, confounded with the Jews, were sold into slavery. Idumæa became "a geographical expression."

Ver. 9.—*God afflicted in the afflictions of his people.* It is questioned by some whether God can really feel pain. Doubtless, the inner essence of the Divine nature is so far removed from us, and so inscrutable by us, that answers must be given with extreme hesitation to any questions which touch that inner essence. And in using words of God, which derive their whole meaning from our consciousness of feelings which we experience in ourselves, we must beware of supposing that the terms which we employ are used univocally of God and of men. They are, at best, used analogously. Still, as Delitzsch says, "the question whether God can feel pain seems to be answered by the Scriptures in the affirmative." Pity, and compassion, and indignation, and anger are ascribed to God in Scripture, and all of them are pains. God's "soul" is said to have been "*grieved* for the misery of Israel" (Judg. x. 16). There is nothing derogatory to the Divine greatness in the mere fact of God feeling pain; and certainly the fact is of a nature to raise our conception of the Divine goodness. God seems to be afflicted in the afflictions of his people—

I. WHEN THEY SUFFER AT THE HANDS OF WICKED MEN. It was the cruel oppression of the Israelites in Egypt which first called forth the compassion and sympathy of God for his people, and caused him to draw near to them, and to enter into a closer relationship. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage; and God heard their groaning" (Exod. ii. 23, 24). "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for *I know their sorrows*" (Exod. iii. 7). It was, again, the "sore distress" which Israel suffered at the hands of the children of Ammon that caused "the Lord's soul to be grieved" in the days of the Judges, and induced him to raise up Jephthah as a deliverer (Judg. x. 9, 16; xi. 1). The oppression of Babylon wrought similarly, and by stirring God's indignation and compassion induced him to save his people and execute judgment upon Babylon by means of Cyrus (ch. xlii. 22—25, etc.).

II. WHEN THEY SUFFER AT THE HANDS OF GOD HIMSELF. God "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." When he is forced to punish, it is with reluctance and regret that he punishes. Witness his long pleadings with his people before he consents to let judgment go forth against them, his long forbearance, his long endurance of their perversity. "All the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed at Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—16). As the "fathers of our flesh, which correct us" (Heb. xii. 9), grieve to do so, suffering often more than those

they chasten suffer, so the heavenly Father is himself afflicted as he afflicts; his "heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together" (Hos. xi. 8).

Vers. 15—19.—*The right of God's people to address him with complaint and expostulation.* No doubt the ordinary attitude of God's people towards their Maker and Ruler should be one of the most profound resignation and submission to his will. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25). Yet on occasions it is allowed them to "speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 11), to plead, expostulate, complain; even, in a certain sense, to reproach. Job pleaded with God at great length, and God was not angered, but "accepted" him (Job xlii. 9), and testified in his favour that he had "spoken right" (Job xlii. 8). In the Psalms David pleads, complains, expostulates. "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Ps. x. 1). "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Ps. xiii. 1, 2). "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions. . . . Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me. . . . For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters. . . . This thou hast seen, O Lord: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord" (Ps. xxxv. 17—23). "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? . . . Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake" (Ps. xliv. 18—26). Such expostulations as these do not anger God, but, on the contrary, are pleasing and acceptable. They show earnestness, confidence, faith, a trust in his goodness, a conviction that he will surely show himself on the side of truth and righteousness. They are within the limits of the "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" (Gal. v. 1). Caution, however, must be used, lest liberty degenerate into licence—lest complaint and expostulation pass into "murmuring." After all, God best knows what is best for us, and will assuredly do what is best for us. We are safe in his hands. In his own good time he will give us all that we need. Let us not be impatient, or imagine ourselves wiser than he. If he delays to give us that which we desire, we may be sure that there is a reason for the delay. In quietness and confidence should be our strength.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 7—9.—*An outburst of thanksgiving.* A deep heart-effusion, in which all that the religious imagination, inspired by love, can suggest, is projected upon the picture of Jehovah, the redeeming God of Israel.

I. HIS LOVING-KINDNESS. (Cf. ch. lv. 3; and the Hebrew word in ch. lxiii. 7; Ps. lxxxix. 28—49; cvii. 43; Lam. iii. 22.) The word (חֶסֶד) suggests a world of love. When used of men it implies *pity, benignity*, especially in circumstances of *misfortune*, as Gen. xxi. 23; 1 Sam. x. 2; Job vi. 14. How fine is the saying in 2 Sam. ix. 3, "I will act kindly toward him like unto God"! So that all human expressions of kindness may be and should be conceived as flowing from the one eternal Fountain. Sometimes, by a figure, God himself is called *Favour, Mercy* (Ps. cxliv. 2; Jonah ii. 9).

II. HIS GREAT DEEDS. "Renown," or "deeds of renown." The divorce of feeling from deed, of sentiment from action, that we so often see in feeble humanity, we do not find in God. With him, heart and head are one. His deeds are daily, world-extended, historical, eternal. Every commotion of the nations, every war, every revolution, must be traced to the influence of his Spirit in the last resort.

III. HIS GENEROUS BESTOWALS. There is an exuberant outflow of thought, feeling, and language here. Jehovah is to be celebrated "according to that which is due for

all that he hath bestowed, according to his compassion and his abundant loving-kindnesses." Were it not that the impression of pain is keener and deeper with us than that of pleasure, it would be seen that at every moment life teems with mercies, gifts from the Giver of all good.

IV. HIS PROVIDENCE IN HISTORY. They were his people in virtue of the primeval covenant. They were his sons by adoption. The great salvation out of Israel was prototypical of all acts in which Jehovah "became unto them a Saviour. Distinct and strong is the representation of the *sympathy* of God with their suffering; distressed in all their distresses." His *love* and his *clemency* are again mentioned. He was ever, in that long and strange history of rebellion, "overcoming evil with good"—a pardoning God. His care was that of a mother's heart—carrying the people, as it were, from their birth, promising to carry them even to hoar hairs. "I have made, and I will bear; I will carry, and I will deliver you" (ch. xlvi. iii. 4). Yet it is part of such providential dealing to chastise. There were especially times when the people did evil in the sight of Jehovah (Judg. ii. 11; iii. 7). Secretly a Holy Spirit, or Spirit of holiness, was striving with them, and they were constantly resisting it. The great covenant with God was founded on this principle of holiness; this was the distinctive characteristic of the people as of their God. By their untruth to the covenant, they changed him as it were from a friend to an enemy. Thwarted love turns to jealousy (Exod. xxxiv. 14), and the gracious face of the Father becomes that of the wrathful Judge.—J.

Vers. 10—14.—*The remembrance of the past.* I. THE MEMORY OF GOD. If God is thought of, as he must be thought of, after the analogy of human experiences, he must be thought of as remembering, calling the past to mind, and as undergoing changes of mind in consequence. These are ways of representing first to thought, then in language, an infinite love, which must be capable of all the scale and gamut of feeling—anger, wrath, jealousy, and the revulsion almost to the tenderness of tears. So in the wilderness, he, being full of compassion, forgave the iniquity of the rebels in the wilderness, turning his anger away, because he remembered that they were flesh, or but as the passing wind; he called to mind his covenant; he *repented* according to the multitude of his mercies (Lev. xxvi. 45; Ps. lxxviii. 39; cvi. 45). In the history of Israel there was nothing more memorable than the coming up out of Egypt, and the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

II. THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL EXPLAINED FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. The outward wonders, the deeds of might, were but the manifestation of an inward waking of his Spirit in the breast of the people. A Spirit of instruction, of "providential guidance and sagacious government"—"Thy good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. ix. 20). A holy light seemed in the retrospect to rest upon that period. It was said that the people "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua," for "they had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." The next generation knew not the works of the Lord, nor the works he had done for Israel (Josh. xxiv. 31; Judg. ii. 6—10). The Spirit of Jehovah appears to mean much the same as the face of Jehovah above (cf. Exod. xxxiii. 14; Hag. ii. 4, 5; cf. Numb. xi. 10—30). The term "holiness" reminds of the covenant, and the covenant of the obligations of fidelity on the part of the people, in response to the oath-keeping of God. Another image, almost carrying the same meaning, is that of the "arm of Jehovah's splendour" (ch. xl. 10; xlv. 1), ready to support Moses, to hold him up from falling (ch. xli. 10—13). Then the sublime picture of the crossing of the Red Sea rises up in imagination (Exod. xiv. 21; cf. Ps. cvi. 9; lxxvii. 16), and the wide and dreary steppe. Finally, as a herd goes down from the mountain-side into the pasture-land of the plain, so, under the same guidance, the people came to their *rest*—a beloved word (Exod. xxxiii. 14; Deut. iii. 20; xii. 9; Josh. i. 13; xxii. 4; Ps. xcv. 11; Jer. xxxi. 2; Heb. iv. 1, 9). The spiritual sum and substance of all is, "Thus thou didst guide thy people to make unto thyself a monument of glory." By his work he became for ever known among the heathen. It was a work not to be executed by any false god, nor by any human arm. "Egypt was at this time the centre of all science, art, and culture; and what occurred there would be known in other lands. God designed to make a signal demonstration of his existence and power, that should be known in all lands and should never be forgotten." God's glory is the grand end of all he does, and

consequently ought to be likewise of all that we either do or suffer. And whatever, therefore, befalls any man makes for God's glory and for his own good, if he be a child of God. We should learn, then, to estimate things by their use and tendency. Poison may enter into the composition of an antidote; and things essentially good may, under certain circumstances, become pernicious. Prosperity may harden and adversity may humble us; the one may prepare us for judgment, the other for mercy.—J.

Vers. 15—19.—*The Church's prayer.* One of extreme "spiritual beauty" (Cheyne).

I. THE MAJESTY OF GOD. He is contemplated as in heaven, upon "a height of holiness and splendour;" and here, as in Ps. lxxx. 14, is besought to "look down and behold" as if "he had given up caring for his people, and withdrawn into his heavenly palace." It expresses the thought that he, to interpose for them, must ever *condescend.* The *vastness of the distance* between God and the creature is expressed—in other words, the sense of the creature's *lowliness* and *unworthiness.* Yet elsewhere, "He is *nigh* unto all that call upon him." The chasm then presented in the imagination may be, and is, bridged over. How? By prayer—by calling upon him. "A sigh may bring the blessing down."

II. THE SEEMING INDIFFERENCE OF GOD. Nevertheless, there are times when the "heavens are as brass," and when the God believed to be "living" stirs not, speaks not, gives no sign that he hearkens. As if callous to his people's need, his "jealousy" slumbers, and needs to be "stirred." Then comes the "pain of finite hearts that yearn," for the *sympathy* (the "sounding of the bowels," ch. xvi. 11; Jer. xxxi. 20; xlviii. 36) and the compassion which seem withheld and as if deliberately kept back. Such is the tragedy of religious experience—the old conflict between the intellect which absolutely affirms the goodness of God, the heart which is denied the present sense of it.

III. FAITH IN THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD. "Thou art our Father" is the cry, the confession, and the appeal of the Church. In ch. lxiv. 8 the image is associated with that of the "Potter." In 1 Chron. xxix. 10 it is "Lord God of Israel, our Father." And with this image again is associated the Maker and Purchaser, or Redeemer (Deut. xxxii. 6). The nation is to him as the primitive family is to the father, the head, who enjoys the peculiar *patria potestas.* The people is "his son, even his firstborn" (Exod. iv. 22); "beloved, called out of Egypt" (Hos. xi. 1); "nourished and brought up" by Jehovah (ch. i. 2); as the Guide of its youth (Jer. iii. 4); who will not disown the tie nor the title (Jer. iii. 19); Father of Israel, to whom Ephraim is firstborn (Jer. xxxi. 9); a Father whose heart is sore troubled for his children's sake, and who is full of mercy and compassion to them (Jer. xxxi. 20); who demands the honour and reverence due to a father (Mal. i. 6; ii. 10). And here the name is associated with that of the *goêl,* the avenger and deliverer; for the people's history was a series of deliverances. If God is a Father, a childlike way of speech is not misbecoming in prayers. And here they ask why Jehovah "makes them to stray," as if they would throw the blame of their aberrations upon him, and he was the Cause of the hardening of their hearts. "They speak as if it is not they who need to return to Jehovah, but Jehovah who is reluctant to return to them; as if, instead of feeding his flock like a Shepherd (ch. xl. 11), he has driven it out of the safe fold into the howling wilderness" (Cheyne). Yet the *confidence* of the child beats passionately below such language. God looks not at the mere *words,* but at the *heart* in the words. And it is true, again, that from the difficult problems of thought, this way of thinking seems a better relief than the dualism of the Orientals. It is better to leave the problem with the confession, "God knows best" (cf. Rom. ix. 17—22). Jehovah is also King. The other peoples have kings as their gods; but he is the *incomparable One.* The calling on his Name signifies the union of him with his people—the eternal covenant (ch. xliii. 7; lxv. 1; Deut. xxviii. 10; Jer. xiv. 9). The spiritual life moves between opposite poles. It has been said that in the highest mood of faith there lurks *some* doubt. So in extreme despondency there is still living the germ of faith and hope. And prayer brings that germ into life and power.—J.

Ver. 1.—*The coming Saviour.* "Mighty to save." The question is asked, Who is this?" and the answer is given in Eastern figures of speech, which represent Christ's character and work.

I. THE SAVIOUR COMES WITH A GREAT SACRIFICE. With "dyed garments;" for the cross lies at the foundation of the world's recovery. We are weary of all *theories* of atonement from Anselm's day downwards, but the atonement *remains* as the central truth of our religion. It rests on our Lord's own authority as well as upon St. Paul's; for he said himself, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins."

II. THE SAVIOUR COMES IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. He is the express Image of the Father. "Glorious in his apparel," so that through all the ages men may see truth turned into life. Once in all history we see One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Christ was "clothed with light as with a garment."

III. THE SALVATION IS ATTESTED IN EVERY AGE. 1. Mighty—in his own revealed grace and power. 2. Mighty—in that every degree of guilt and sin is reached by his infinite arm. 3. Mighty—in that he saves right through, which is the meaning of the word "to the uttermost."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—6.—*The earlier and the later redemption.* The energetic and graphic language of the text applies only in part to that Messianic kingdom to which the prophet makes such frequent reference. It obviously relates, primarily and principally, to the deliverance wrought by Jehovah in favour of his people Israel, and is concerned with the redressing of their political wrongs. But the expressions used are strongly suggestive of a far greater redemption, in which all the children of men are vitally interested. We look at—

I. THOSE FEATURES WHICH CHARACTERIZE THE EARLIER RATHER THAN THE LATER DELIVERANCE. 1. *The employment of the outwardly impressive.* "This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." Something, if not much, of the stately, the striking, the magnificent, of that which was fitted to awe and overwhelm belonged to the older dispensation — to the theocracy and the divinely permitted monarchy. Under Christ it is not so. He himself "came not with observation" (ostentation); he was a "King that came, *meek*," devoid of all the shows and trappings of royal state. And it is his will that his Church should shrink from rather than secure the dignities and majesties of the earthly kingdoms (Matt. xx. 25—28). 2. *The use of violence.* "With dyed garments. . . . Their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments" (vers. 1, 3). Jesus said, and surely still says in respect of all efforts to advance his kingdom, "Put up thy sword into the sheath" (John xviii. 11). 3. *The manifestation of Divine anger.* "The day of vengeance is in mine heart" (ver. 4). Contrast with this, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John iii. 17; xii. 47; Luke ix. 56).

II. THE FEATURES WHICH ARE COMMON TO BOTH, but are most strikingly characteristic of the later redemption. 1. *The manifestation of Divine power.* "Mighty to save." Great as were the deliverances accomplished in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Canaan, in Assyria, these were small and insignificant compared with "the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus," the rescue of a guilty and degenerate race and its reinstatement in the favour and the likeness of God. Hence is by far the noblest exhibition of Divine power. 2. *The illustration of Divine faithfulness.* "I that speak in righteousness." By his interposition God fulfilled his word of promise, and showed himself a covenant-keeping Lord. But in the granting of his "great salvation," and in all the outworkings of it, both collectively and individually, there are more abundant reasons for exclaiming, "God is faithful" (1 Cor. i. 9). 3. *The completeness of the Divine work.* The picture here is, throughout, one of victorious strength. It is the return of a warrior who has thoroughly accomplished his work, by whom his enemies have been utterly subdued. He has "brought down their strength to the earth" (ver. 6). The work of Christ was perfected. He "finished" the work the Father gave him to do (John xvii. 4; xix. 30). He offered himself "without spot" to God (Heb. x. 14). He has prepared for mankind a "common salvation;" as exquisitely adapted to the most cultured intelligence as it is fitted for the most barbarous and savage peoples. He is working out the redemption of the race, and will not rest until humanity has been redeemed and restored. 4. *The single-handedness of the Divine Conqueror.* "I have trodden the wine-press alone" (vers. 3 and 5). Though God did use the instrumentality of his people, it was the presence of his overcoming arm which made *all* the difference between

victory and defeat. And there were occasions when he thought well to dispense with human agency altogether; *e.g.* the destruction of the Egyptians under Pharaoh, and of the host under Sennacherib. Although the Lord Jesus Christ did not disdain, and does not refuse to employ his disciples in his cause, yet was there a very deep and real sense in which he was alone in his redemptive work (see Robertson on 'The Loneliness of Christ'). (1) He was of such spiritual stature that none could walk with him. (2) He was engaged in a mission of such deep and lofty character that none could then enter into his great design. (3) He came to make a sacrifice of himself in the offering of which none could join. Here are reasons why we, as Christian men and as workers with Christ, should (*a*) look back with deepest gratitude; (*b*) submit under disappointment with ready acquiescence; (*c*) anticipate with full assurance the triumph which is in the future.—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*The greatness of God's goodness.* There is music in the sound and great comfort in the sense of these exquisite words. They speak to us of—

I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GOODNESS TO US. 1. *The bountifulness of his gifts to us.* "All that the Lord hath bestowed on us." "The multitude of his loving-kindnesses." His gifts night and day, in every season, through every stage of life; all material for the body, all stores of knowledge for the mind, all wealth of affection for the heart. 2. *The distinguishing favours* he has shown us. His "great goodness toward the house of Israel." Every "house," every family, every man, has some special reason to speak of Divine goodness. 3. *The love which prompts* his bestowals. All his kindnesses are "loving-kindnesses," prompted by parental affection, granted in a loving spirit. 4. His kindness toward us *in affliction* (ver. 8). He grants us Divine *sympathy*—"In all their afflictions;" and *tender succour*—"he bare them," etc., as the mother carries her sick child, the shepherd the wounded lamb. His hand may be upon us, but "underneath are the everlasting arms." 5. His grace *in redemption.* "The angel of his presence," etc.

II. OUR WISDOM AND DUTY IN VIEW OF IT. "I will mention." Here are two parts: 1. Recalling to our own thought. 2. Reminding those around us. This is *our duty;* for it is the clear will of Christ that we should make known the fulness of his kindness and the riches of his grace. We exist, as his people, that we may be witnesses to the world of all that we have learned of him. This is also *our wisdom;* for therein is found the one antidote to dissatisfaction, the one unfailing source of gratitude and joy.

III. GOD'S EXPECTATION CONCERNING US. (Ver. 8.) As God gave to Israel all the peculiar proofs of his remembrance that they might prove a loyal and faithful people or family, so with us as a Christian Church. He has manifested marvellous love, patience, pity, succour, toward us. And in what expectation? That we should show ourselves loyal to himself and true to our trust; that we should prove ourselves the "people" and "children" of God, by reverence of bearing, by submissiveness of spirit, by integrity of character, by faithfulness in the field of sacred work.—C.

Vers. 10—14.—*How God feels and why he acts.* The revolt or disobedience of Israel is said to have "vexed [grieved] his Holy Spirit." We learn from this and from a similar expression in Eph. iv. 30—

I. THE GRIEF TO WHICH GOD IS SUBJECT. Men have argued thus. God is a blessed or happy Being; he is infinite in all his attributes; therefore he is infinitely, perfectly happy; therefore there is no possibility of sorrow in his Divine nature. But such reasoning is very precarious and unreliable. We can argue little from infinity of which we know nothing, and we must not think of weighing any inference thus obtained against plain statements of Scripture. We are there assured that God is capable of grief, and we must believe that he is, our logical conclusions notwithstanding. And, looking from another point of view, we might well conclude that he *is* and *must be so.* For is he not a Divine Father? And has he not undutiful, rebellious children? How, then, could he fail to be grieved at heart? The fact of God's fatherhood is the most certain of all truths established by Divine revelation; no ground is more solid than that. Our human fatherhood is indicative of the Divine; it is the reflection of it; it is immeasurably less than it; its best, its tenderest, its most holy and generous feelings, are hints and shadows of corresponding feelings in the heart of the heavenly

Father. If, then, in our thought, we purify, magnify, multiply that parental grief which a father feels when his children go astray, we understand something of the grief of God. 1. Our Divine Father has expended on us boundless thought, affection, treasure, training, patience—a "multitude of loving-kindnesses." He has "given himself for us" in one supreme act of self-sacrificing love. 2. He looks for filial response from us, for *eager attention* to his voice when he speaks; for the *acceptance* of his pardoning love, for daily remembrance of him and communion with him; for *cheerful obedience* to his holy will. 3. He too often finds stubborn and protracted inattention, persistent refusal of his overtures of mercy, forgetfulness and neglect, a painful disregard of his will in our relations with one another—disobedience. 4. Then his heart is grieved. He who should be satisfied with us (ch. liii. 11) is disappointed in us; looking for fruit, he finds none; his Holy Spirit is vexed, is grieved, in a way and in a degree beyond our human understanding, with a *grief* which is *Divine*.

II. THE ACTION WHICH HE TAKES. "Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." God's attitude towards his people, consequent on their guilt, seemed that of an enemy. He was as one who strove with them; he sent them discomfiture, calamity, exile. God may seem to be our enemy, to contend with us. He may send us: 1. Unhappiness of heart, a sense of the insufficiency and uselessness of our life, dreariness and despondency of spirit. 2. Failure of our temporal plans and schemes, and sense of miserable defeat. 3. Bereavement. 4. A wounded heart through the inconstancy or the unfaithfulness of a friend; or some other blow which bends and threatens to break our spirit. God is against us, we feel.

III. THE END HE HAS IN VIEW. However we read ver. 11, it is clear that the purpose of God in thus striving with his people was restorative. He meant to give them rest, thus filling their hearts with joy and "making to himself a glorious Name." This is the meaning of all his adverse action toward us. *He seeks our restoration to himself and to his service.* There are with us, as with Israel, two strong securities. 1. His past loving-kindnesses. He who had bound his people to his heart as the God of Israel had done (vers. 11—14) could not and would not desert them in their distress. 2. The honour of his holy Name. God is establishing a kingdom of peace and righteousness, and he wants us as his loyal citizens. This is the meaning of all we are enduring. It is a summons from God to return to ourselves, to enter on our true heritage, to have fellowship with him.—C.

Vers. 15—17.—*The unvarying Father.* The habitation of God's holiness is the habitation of his glory; his glory is in his goodness, in his faithfulness (Exod. xxxiii. 19). His fatherhood of man remains and may be counted upon most confidently, although there may appear great obstacles in the way of it.

I. OUR INSIGNIFICANCE AMONG MEN is no indication of the absence of God's interest in us. Abraham might be ignorant of any one of his children; our illustrious ancestors, our honoured contemporaries, may know nothing of us; we may be dwelling in the humblest obscurity; but that need not diminish in the very smallest degree our assurance that God is interesting himself in us. Doubtless he is our Father. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me."

II. OUR STANDING AMONG MEN is no measure of God's regard for us. Israel might not be prepared to acknowledge one of his descendants. Men in high authority may withhold from us the light of their countenance; but if there be integrity in our heart and soundness in our life, *that* need not greatly move us. It is better to have than to lack the confidence of such men, but we can do without it, if necessary. With God for our Father, with Christ for our Divine Friend, we can dispense with "the honour that cometh from man only."

III. GOD'S DISCIPLINE OF US is no disproof of his desire or determination to bless us. God may seem to have forsaken us. He once seemed to have forsaken his well-beloved Son. We may be inclined to use such language as he then used (Matt. xxvii. 46), or as that of the text (ver. 15; and see Ps. lxvii. 7—9). But we may be reassured. Everything he has done or is doing is consistent with his unchanging love, with a fatherhood that never fails. God is only searching, pruning, purifying us. He smites that he may heal us with a wholeness that will make us truly blessed, most excellently established and enriched. 1. Therefore let the voice of prayer be heard in dark and

distressing hours. "Look down from heaven." 2. Therefore let the tried and stricken heart anticipate relief and recovery. God's Name is, from everlasting, that of "a Redeemer."—C.

Ver. 1.—*The Conqueror from Edom.* The land of Edom was the country inhabited by the descendants of Esau. The original enmity between Esau and Jacob was kept up by the two races. The Edomites were regarded by the Israelites as their hereditary enemies, and no doubt the feeling was reciprocated. The Edomites had special opportunities for harassing Israel, by reason of the proximity of their country. Bozrah was one of the chief cities, if not *the* chief city, of Edom. We may try to realize the scene so graphically sketched in this passage. At a time when war had been raging, and enmity was at its height, one of the Israelites is represented as walking on the hill that overlooked the plains of Edom. He heard sounds of triumph; turning to the direction whence the sounds proceeded, he saw in the distance the dust arising from a crowd of people, shouting and rejoicing as they came marching on. They evidently came from the chief city of Edom. Now he discerns one in the very midst of the crowd, all stained with the blood of battle, but crowned with the victor's crown, and having a mien and attitude that tell of readiness to do and dare even yet greater things. The man glories in the triumph that has been won over the national foe, and hasting down to join the victors, he asks, in admiration rather than in inquiry, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Quickened spiritual vision sees the Messianic meaning of this prophetic picture. We take our stand in the garden, where was Joseph's new tomb, on the greatest Sunday morning that ever dawned on sinful earth. Forth from the grave came One, stained indeed with the marks of conflict, but glorious in his victory; able to "speak in righteousness," able to "save."

I. WHENCE HE COMES. "From Edom and Bozrah," the land and chief town of Israel's enemies, the Champion came. The great enemy of the human family is *sin*, and the sign of the worst that sin can do is the *grave*. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Christ came forth from the grave, bursting asunder its bars and gates, as the assurance that he was, once and for ever, Conqueror over sin, and Conqueror for us.

II. HOW HE APPEARS. "With dyed, stained garments." These indicate that he has waged a fierce, bloody contest. Even in our day, rent and blood-stained garments would tell of a great fight; but these were surer signs in Isaiah's days, when battles were direct hand-to-hand encounters. In the Apocalypse, John saw our Redeemer—the Word of God—and he was "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." The greatness, the severity, the seriousness, of our Redeemer's conflict may be seen by considering (1) the power and bitterness of the foes he encountered; (2) the wounds they gave; and (3) the fact that they actually had him down. Illustrate this third point by reference to Bunyan's figure of the fight between the pilgrim Christian and Apollyon, in the Valley of Humiliation.

III. WHAT HE CAN DO. He travels "in the greatness of his strength." He is "mighty to save." He is proved to be strong; shown to be "able to save." He is a proved Samson; a tested David. He is worthy to be trusted with the whole work of redeeming us from sin, (1) its penalty; (2) its power; (3) its consequences. In conclusion, it may be urged: 1. That Christ is willing to apply to us the full benefits of his redemptive victory. 2. That Christ has, since his resurrection, made some glorious displays of his power to save. Illustrations: St. Paul, the jailor at Philippi, John Newton, Africaner, etc. 3. That there is no limit to the power of his saving grace. Each one of us may say, "He is able to save *even me*."—R. T.

Ver. 1.—*Edom on the skirts of Palestine.* Sin hangs on the borders of goodness everywhere, as just across her southern boundary-line Edom always lay threateningly upon the skirts of Palestine. We open any page of human history and what do we see? There is a higher life in man. It is imperfect, full of mixture, just like that mottled history of Hebrewdom. But always right on its border lies the hostile Edom, watchful, indefatigable, inexorable, as the redoubtable old foe of the Jews. Always it is the higher life pressed, watched, haunted by the lower; always it is Judah with Edom

at its gates. No one great battle comes to settle it for ever; it is an endless fight with an undying enemy. But "who is this that cometh from Edom?" Is it possible that this One that we see coming, this One on whose step, as he moves through history, the eyes of all the ages are fastened—is it possible that he is the Conqueror of the enemy and the Deliverer of the soul? He comes out of the enemy's direction. The whole work of the Saviour has relation to and issues from the fact of sin. If there had been no sin there would have been no Saviour. He comes from the right direction, and he has an attractive majesty of movement as he appears. He seems strong. What does he say to the anxious questioner; what account of himself does he give; what has he done to Edom; and what mean those blood-stains on his robes?

I. He replies to the question, "Who is this?" by saying, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." This reassures us. The Saviour comes in the strength of righteousness. Any reform or salvation of which the power is righteousness must go down to the very root of the trouble.

II. He replies to the question, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?" by saying, "I have trodden the wine-press." It is no holiday monarch coming with a bloodless triumph. It has been no pageant of a day, this strife with sin. The power of God has struggled with the enemy and subdued him only in the agony of strife. What pain may mean to the Infinite and Divine, what difficulty may mean to Omnipotence, I cannot tell. Only I know that all they could mean they meant here. "This symbol of the blood—and by-and-by, when we turn from the Old Testament to the New, from the prophecy to the fulfilment, we find that it was not only the enemy's blood, but his own blood too, that stained the victorious Deliverer's robes—this symbol of the blood bears this great truth, which has been the power of salvation to millions of hearts, and which must make this Conqueror the Saviour of your heart too, the truth that only in self-sacrifice and suffering could even God conquer sin. Sin is never so dreadful as when we see the Saviour with that blood upon his garments. And the Saviour himself, surely he is never so dear, never wins so utter and so tender a love, as when we see what it has cost him to save us. Out of that love born of his suffering comes the new impulse after a holy life; and so when we stand at last purified by the power of a grateful obedience, it shall be said of us, binding our holiness and escape from sin close to our Lord's struggle with sin for us, that we 'have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'" (condensed from Phillips Brooks). —R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The Lord's loving-kindnesses.* The great goodness seen in the return of the exiles from Babylon helped to a right apprehension of the goodness of God to his people all down through the long ages. Dean Stanley eloquently describes the return. "The restoration was an event which, unlikely and remote as it might have seemed, was deemed almost a certainty in the expectation of the exiles. The confidence of Jeremiah and Ezekiel never flagged that within two generations from the beginning of the captivity their countrymen would return. The patriotic sentiment, which had existed as it were unconsciously before, found its first definite expression at this period. . . . And when the day at last arrived which was to see their expectations fulfilled, the burst of joy was such as has no parallel in the sacred volume; it is, indeed, the revival, the second birth, the second Exodus, of the nation. There was now 'a new song,' of which the burden was that the Eternal again reigned over the earth, and that the gigantic idolatries which surrounded them had received a deadly shock; that the waters of oppression had rolled back in which they had been struggling like drowning men; that the snare was broken in which they had been entangled like a caged bird. It was like a dream, too good to be true. The gaiety, the laughter of their poetry, resounded far and wide. The surrounding nations could not but confess what great things had been done for them. It was like the sudden rush of the waters into the dry torrent-beds of the south of Palestine, or of the yet extremer south, of which they may have heard, in far Ethiopia. It was like the reaper bearing on his shoulder the golden sheaves in summer which he had sown amongst the tears of winter. So full were their hearts that all nature was called to join in their thankfulness. The vast rivers of their new Mesopotamian home, and the waves of the Indian Ocean, are to take part in the chorus, and clap their foaming crests like living hands.

The mountains of their own native land are invited to express their joy; each tree in the forest that clothed the hills, or that cast their shade over the field, is to have a tongue for the occasion." The point impressed is that, being so deeply impressed with one great blessing received from God, the whole course of God's dealings with his people came freshly to their view. In the light of one loving-kindness they gained clearer views of the many and various loving-kindnesses which had so constantly been showered upon them. "I will remember the loving-kindnesses of the Lord." That appears to be God's gracious way of dealing with us all. Our lives are, in fact, full of his tender mercies, but they pass by us unheeded. We need something at times which may call our attention to them. So God gives us occasional great mercies as reminders of the thousand lesser ones. A special gift from an earthly friend has something of this power; it makes us feel afresh how good and kind and tender he long has been.

I. THE LORD'S LOVING-KINDNESSES READ IN THE LIGHT OF THE REDEMPTION FROM BABYLON. This deliverance altered all their feeling about the past. It gave them a key to the meaning of their very captivity. It set them upon searching for signs of God's goodness in the national story. And what a story of mercy that long record of the Jewish Church had been! What we can see in it everywhere, those returned exiles saw in the light of their exceeding joy—forbearances, long-sufferings, provisions, bestowments, loving-kindnesses, defendings, redeemings—the good hand of their God ever on them for good.

II. THE LORD'S LOVING-KINDNESSES READ IN THE LIGHT OF THE REDEMPTION FROM SIN. St. Paul expresses this idea in the words, "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?" The "all things" come to his mind when he thinks of the great things. He who gives eternal life will be sure to nourish and feed all the life he gives. He who holds before us the hope of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory will be sure to keep us unto it, and fit us for it. We may be quite confident that he who gives glory will give grace, withholding no good thing from them that walk uprightly. This is the usual form of Christian meditations. We unconsciously follow the returned exiles' way, and begin with the greatest loving-kindness. We tune our souls to their noblest song over *redemption-love* manifested in Christ Jesus. We dwell on his condescension and his suffering until our souls say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift!" But in the quietness after the song, there seems to be a light left on our whole life-story, which, as we watch it, grows brighter and brighter; falling here and there and yonder, showing up mercy after mercy, goodness upon goodness, we also begin to say, "We will remember the loving-kindnesses of the Lord."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*God the Saviour.* The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, uses this figure for God, but expresses it more comprehensively and suggestively. "The living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10).

I. WHAT IS IT TO SAVE A MAN? What does the word "save" mean when we apply it to a man? A while ago five heavy boat-loads of saved ones from midnight wreck were landed at Dover. The poor, ragged city waif is taken from the streets into the kindly refuge, and saved from vice and degradation. The man who has embezzled money, and is in peril of the judgment, finds a friend who pays the claim, and he is saved from prison. But these are cases of saving men in only an imperfect and limited sense. What is it to save a moral being; one who has will and affections; the sense of right and wrong, and the possibility of gracious relations with God? That depends upon what disabilities and perils men may have fallen into. If we may read other men by ourselves, then they are wrong in life-principle—heart-wrong; wrong in conduct—bodily wrong; wrong in relations—socially wrong; and wrong in life-issues—under Divine penalties. To save a man must be to save him from *all this*. Too often salvation is represented as saving from hell. That is but a part of it. It is saving *me*, and saving me *now*. To change the ruling principle of the life is the hopeful beginning of salvation; but the work must be carried on. There must be the regeneration of the life and conduct, the purifying of all motive, and sanctifying of all thought, and touching of all the relationships with tender grace. So to save a man is a very large and comprehensive thing. A bit of it is saving man from overhanging penalty; most

of it is saving him from sin and from self. Self-willed men are only saved when they are brought to God in trust and love.

II. WHAT IS IT FOR GOD TO SAVE A MAN? Three points. 1. God's salvation must go to the central necessity of man, cleansing his heart-wrong. 2. God's salvation must be a gracious persuasion of man's mind and will and heart. 3. In this gracious persuasion the Trinity is now engaged. God's salvation for man is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, gaining entrance with regenerating power into a man's heart and life.

III. WHAT IS IT FOR GOD TO SAVE ALL MEN? The full and final salvation of all men seems to be declared in Scripture to be the Divine purpose. All men were placed under disability by Adam's sin; no man has any standing before God. Now, in the second Adam's righteousness and acceptance, that state of disability is removed for the whole race, and all men stand in restored relations. Humanity is relieved from its curse by Christ's perfect obedience, and all men are in that sense saved. But this is only such a salvation as there can be apart from man's will, and it is but the beginning of God's salvation. A nation may be pardoned for its rebellion as a nation, but the king may very properly require the oath of allegiance to be taken by each individual.

IV. WHAT IS IT FOR GOD SPECIALLY TO SAVE SOME? It is to have some coming voluntarily into gracious relations with him; and to make such his agents for the winning and persuasion of others. We may all of us be sons, but some of us may be sons at home, in the full joy of accepted and gracious relations. And sons at home are ever ready, waiting to do their Father's will.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*God's suffering sympathy.* There is a verbal difficulty connected with the first clause of this verse. A little Hebrew word that is employed, if pronounced in one way, means "to him;" but, if pronounced in another way, it means "not." According to the one mode the clause will read, "In all their affliction there was affliction to him;" or, as in our English version, "He was afflicted." According to the other mode the clause will read, "In all their affliction there was no affliction;" that is, nothing worth calling affliction, because his presence and help were so near to them in their time of need. Both give good meanings, but the spirit of the passage leads us, with Luther and other expositors, to prefer the former one.

I. GOD CAN FEEL. It may be said that this needs no proof. But the God sometimes presented in theological systems, preached from our pulpits, and addressed in our prayers, does not really feel as we do. It is said that "he is complete in himself, infinitely full, infinitely happy, infinitely satisfied. Nothing can add one jot to his happiness, nothing can diminish his bliss. He, as a King, recognizes and punishes sin and rebellion, but he does not feel hurt by it himself. No waves heave and toss on the quiet ocean of God." But is the impression left on our minds by all this concerning God quite true? And is that the God we are asked to love—that immovable statue? We want a God whose bosom heaves with feeling, whose face beams with smiles, who can pity us as a father pities. Too often the impression left on us is, that it is only Christ who can suffer, since he was a man. God cannot feel; Christ feels. Christ is in self-sacrifice, not God. But we must be far from the truth when we divide our vision, and with one eye see Christ, and with the other see God. Look with both eyes, and we shall see Christ in God, and God in Christ. This is true—God cannot be *physically* affected. We must not think of him as a body, capable of feeling bodily pain. He cannot be struck. He cannot be subject to disease. God is a Spirit. But he is a real Being. He is what we understand by a moral being—a moral being who can sustain relations to other beings, and can be affected by the conditions and doings of other beings. Our deepest feelings—joys or sorrows—do not come from our bodies, but from our minds. And when we say that God can feel, we mean that his moral being can be affected, and that his precise glory lies in this—he does feel rightly, suitably, adequately, divinely, in every case. 1. God must feel if he can be said to have a perfect character. We should take no impressions from the wrongs or the goodnesses around us if we had no power of feeling, and so there could be no culture of character. If God cannot feel it is no longer intelligible to us to say that he is "good," that he is "love." 2. That God can feel is taught by the imagery of Old Testament Scriptures. Constantly

he is represented as though he were a man. We read of his feet, his breath, his hand, his arm, etc. "He is represented as blessed according to the merit and beauty of whatever is done that is right. He smelled a sweet savour in Noah's sacrifice. He has pleasure in them that hope in his mercy. He is affected with joy over his people, as a prophet represents, even to singing in the day of their restored peace. He is tender in his feeling to the obedient, pitying them that fear him as a father pitieth his children. His very love is partly passive; that is, it is a Being affected with compassion by the bitter and hard lot of those under sin. On the other hand, by how many unpleasant varieties or pains of feeling does he profess to suffer in his relation to scenes of human wrong and ingratitude! The sighing of the prisoner comes before him to command his sympathy. He calls after his people as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit. He testifies, 'I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.' His repentings are kindled together in view of the sins of his people. He is said to be exercised by all manner of disagreeable and unpleasant sentiments in relation to all manner of evil doings: displeased; sore displeased; wroth; angry; loathing; abhorring; despising; hating; weary; filled with abomination; wounded; hurt; grieved; and he even protests, like one sorrowing, that he could do nothing more to his vineyard than he had done for it" (Dr. H. Bushnell). There must be deep moral meanings in these anthropomorphic expressions. 3. Rightly regarding the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, it becomes a proof that God can feel. It is said that Christ felt because he was human; the feeling was part of the humanity. But if there had been no human nature, would not he have felt and borne our sorrows and our sins just the same? The great thing about Christ is that he manifests God to us in these our human spheres, and under these our human conditions. And in him we see not only the glory of God's holiness and claims, but the glory also of his pitying feeling. When God makes himself most evident to us—as he does in the person of his Son—then we behold a loving, pitying, suffering God.

II. GOD DOES FEEL IN THE PARTICULAR WAY OF SYMPATHY WITH THE SUFFERING. "In all their affliction he is afflicted." The prophet is reviewing the Divine dealings with his forefathers; recalling more especially that deliverance from Egypt, and guidance to the promised land, which was the dearest of memories to every Jew. God's interest, he declares, had been bound up with that of his people. He suffered in their suffering. Sorrows came upon that people from outward circumstances; and worse sorrows came through their wilfulness and sin. We are to understand that God sympathized with them under both kinds of sorrow. The text is as true for us as for Israel of old. Our human troubles are so overwhelming because we persist in bearing them alone; we will not let God bear them *with* us, much less will we let him bear them *for* us. We even try to persuade ourselves that he does not feel for us under certain of our sorrows, because the sin whence they come is so abhorrent to him. Yes, the sin is, but the sinner is not—especially the stricken, suffering sinner is not.

III. WE ARE GOD-LIKE ONLY AS WE ARE AFFLICTED IN OTHERS' AFFLICTIONS. Pity for the suffering is a natural emotion. Some of us cannot bear to see even the meanest creature suffering pain. There is much of this "milk of human kindness" left in the sinful, sorrowful world, where man is "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." But we can only be rightly "afflicted with others' afflictions" when: 1. Like God, we can see sin at the root of the affliction, and yet feel drawn to the afflicted. Mere human feeling is not strong enough to draw us to the *sinner*. 2. When we can discern God working out through them his purposes of grace. As mere sufferings they must be borne alone. We cannot share the feeling of pain; but as chastisements, as discipline, we may bear troubles with others; and it is in these religious aspects of human suffering that a God-like sympathy becomes possible. 3. As we ourselves are led through experiences of trouble, as life passes on, it ought to make the brotherhood of souls perfect. Nothing brings hearts together like a common trouble. Send a woman who has a child in heaven to comfort the mother who looks into a newly emptied cradle. God touches us all—touches us to the quick sometimes—and helps us thus to feel for others' infirmities. God's power on us is his fellow-feeling of our infirmities. Our power on each other must be just this—in closeness of sympathy we bear one another's burdens.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Grieving the Spirit.* "But they rebelled, and grieved his Holy Spirit." Dean Plumptre says, "Here we may note a foreshadowing of the truth of the trinal personality of the unity of the Godhead, which was afterwards to be revealed. That which "vexed" the Holy Spirit was, in the nature of the case, the unholiness of the people, and this involved a change in the manifestation of the Divine love, which was now compelled to show itself as wrath."

I. THE SPIRIT IS HOLY; EVERYTHING IMPURE WILL GRIEVE HIM. The Bible refers to him as the *Holy* Ghost, the *Holy* Spirit, as though to suggest to us that it is this attribute of his character which bears special relation to us, and his work in us. His aim is our sanctification. All the overcomings of sin, all the removals of hindrances and evils, all the bestowments of peace, are intended to help us toward that great end. When we first go forth into life from a pure home, how grieved we feel at the association of the scoffer, the swearer, the vicious! To a chaste mind how grievous indelicacy is! So our impurities must grieve the pure Spirit. Our besetting sins must, be they pride, or selfishness, or conceit, or uncharitableness, or the cherishing of foul thoughts, be a grief and a vexation to him.

II. THE SPIRIT URGES TO ACTIVE WORK FOR GOD; WHERE THERE IS APATHY, INDOLENCE, OR REBELLIOUSNESS, HE IS GRIEVED. Among the weapons of the spiritual warfare we read of the "sword of the Spirit," as though the activity of the Christian depended on the Spirit. The highest attainments of Christian life have been made, not by quiet folk, who set themselves only on personal culture, but by active folk, who have gone forth to witness for God, taking their lives in their hands. Wherever there is shrinking back from active service—which is virtual rebellion—the Spirit is grieved. We are grieved when we see a man with great powers abusing or neglecting to use them. The Spirit would act through our energies, and is checked if we hold our powers back from him. And we suffer ourselves. The spiritual sluggard's garden will surely be like the natural sluggard's. Thorns and thistles will spring up and riot there. If he would but toil, and sow, and weed, and train, the dews and rains and sunshine would help on his work. This is the reason of our barrenness, not that we have had no dews from heaven, no Spirit of God with us, but that we have neglected our part of the work, and, withholding our loving obedience and active service, have grieved his Holy Spirit.—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*The Spirit of God in Moses.* "Where is he that put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them?" The shepherds of the flock are Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; but the chief reference must be to Moses. "God gave Moses his Holy Spirit, and with him the gift of performing miracles, and leading and teaching the people." The images of these verses may be thus explained. "One might suppose that Israel would have trodden with trembling, uncertain steps, the strange way over the bottom of the sea on which human foot was never set. But it was not so. Rapidly and surely, as the desert horse goes over the flat smooth desert without tottering, so did they march over that strange, perilous road. The image of the cattle descending into the valley is very appropriate for marking the arrival of the Israelites in the promised land after journeying in the desert. The prophet thinks of the herds of nomads that must cross a mountain range or plateau in order to reach regions rich in pasture." The point to which attention may be profitably directed is, that we usually fix our thoughts on the outward revelations given to Moses, and the actual material things which he was required and strengthened to do. And yet there is a secret mystery in Moses which is full of suggestion for us, and makes him a model for us of the Divine dealings with us also. God was in Moses, dwelling in him by his Spirit, the impulse and inspiration of all good, true, wise, and loving things. We may, therefore, illustrate from Moses—

I. THE SPIRIT OF GOD FOR US; OUR GUARANTEE OF SAFETY.

II. THE SPIRIT OF GOD WITH US; OUR CONFIDENCE OF SUFFICIENCY.

III. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN US; OUR INSPIRATION TO ALL GOODNESS.

As materials of illustration the following emblems of the Spirit may be helpful. *Water:* cleansing, fertilizing, refreshing, abundant, freely given. *Fire:* purifying, illuminating, searching. *Wind:* independent, powerful, sensible in its effects, reviving. *Oil:* healing, comforting, illuminating, consecrating. *Rain and dew:* fertilizing,

refreshing, abundant, imperceptible, penetrating. *A dove:* gentle, meek, innocent, forgiving. *A voice:* speaking, guiding, warning, teaching. *A seal:* impressing, securing, authenticating.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Good news concerning God.* "Doubtless thou art our Father." The Jews were the children of God. But they had been for a long time so neglecting him that they had lost all the nearer and dearer thoughts of him; and imaged him to themselves through the bleared and blinded vision of their own indulgences, wickedness, and sin. He became to them only a God to be feared, in the sense of "frightened at." Then the prophet's message of a merciful God, fatherly still, recovering and saving even the guilty, was indeed good news from heaven to such a people. But that which is true of many Jews in the times of the later monarchy, is, in measure, true also of us. We have let our practical neglect of God set him far from us, and darken our thoughts concerning him. We think of God as hard, severe, or indifferent, and let the bitterness of orphans enter into our souls. Then it is good news indeed concerning God which is brought to us when it can be said, "Doubtless he is *our Father.*" Two consequences of this assurance about God may be illustrated.

I. HE WANTS US TO BE HIS RESTORED, OBEDIENT CHILDREN. True children, worthy children, of the heavenly Father. But this is a more difficult matter than we at first suppose. For what sort of children are we now? And what changes must we go through before we can become the children we should be? But God's interest follows the prodigals. He can have no rest until they come home. Shepherds never willingly lose their sheep. Mothers cannot bear to lose a child. Our Father's seeking, saving mercy reaches even to the height of the sacrifice on the cross. It restores; it fills with the home-feeling; it prepares us for the eternal home-place. "Now are we the sons of God," etc.

II. HE WANTS US TO LEARN OF HIM HOW TO BE GOOD FATHERS AND MOTHERS TO OUR CHILDREN. Good sons and daughters make the best fathers and mothers. We may learn of the great Father: 1. The power of a sustained example of purity. 2. The influence of the spirit of self-denial. 3. The value of strictness to that which is truthful and righteous. 4. The gracious triumph of long-suffering patience. These are just the things we need for our human fatherhood and motherhood.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXIV.

Vers. 1—12.—ISRAEL'S PRAYER CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED. Not content with praying God to look upon them once more with favour (ch. lxiii. 15), Israel now asks for a theophany, or manifestation of the Divine Presence, such as they have experienced in the times of old, and such as shall suffice to strike terror into the hearts of their enemies (vers. 1—4). With profound humility confessing their manifold and grievous iniquities, they beseech God once more, as their Father and Maker, to have pity upon them, reminding him of the desolate condition of Judæa and Jerusalem, and urging him no longer to "refrain himself" (vers. 5—12). "The manner," as Mr. Cheyne observes, "is that of a liturgical psalm; the prophet, as it were, leads the devotions of the assembled Church," and utters in impassioned language the feelings which deeply move them.

Ver. 1.—**Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens!** God "dwells in the thick darkness" (2 Chron. vi. 1). "Thick clouds are a covering to him" as he "walketh in the circuit of heaven" (Job xxii. 14). The Church would have the covering "rent," and God show himself openly, both to his people and to their enemies. **That thou wouldest come down!** God "came down" on Sinai in the sight of all the people (Exod. xix. 11, 20). David saw him in vision "bow the heavens and *come down*; and there was darkness under his feet" (Ps. xviii. 9). It is such an "epiphany" which the Church now desires—a revelation of God in all his glory, in his might as against "the nations" (ver. 2), in his mercifulness as towards themselves. **That the mountains might flow down**; or, *quake.* When God descended on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly" (**Exod. xix.** 18). When he appeared to

David, "the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken" (Ps. xviii. 7). When he was seen of Elijah, "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; and after the wind was an earthquake" (1 Kings xix. 11). Micah saw the Lord "coming forth out of his place," and "the mountains were molten under him, and the valleys cleft" (Micah i. 3, 4). The mountains represent that which is most firm and solid and strong upon the face of the earth. If even they "melt and flow and tremble" at the presence of God, what might must his be! And who may abide him?

Ver. 2.—**As when the melting fire burneth,** etc.; rather, *as when fire kindles brushwood, and makes water to boil.* Connect the similes with the last clause of ver. 1. The mountains shall be as powerless to resist Jehovah, as brushwood or water to resist fire. **To make thy Name known** (comp. ch. lxiii. 12). Such an "epiphany" as the Church prays for would make the Name of Jehovah known far and wide, exalting him high above all gods, and causing "the nations"—*i.e.* the whole heathen world – to "tremble at his presence" and refrain from injuring his people.

Ver. 3.—**When thou didst terrible things** (comp. Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Ps. xlix. 4; cvi. 22). The phrase, as Mr. Cheyne remarks, is a "standing" one for the wonders of the Exodus. Which **we looked not for**; *i.e.* which transcended our utmost expectations. **Thou camest down** (see Exod. xix. 11, 20).

Ver. 4.—**Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared,** etc.; rather, as in the margin, *neither hath the eye seen a God, beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth upon him.* The only "living God" who really works for his votaries, and does them good service, is Jehovah (comp. ch. xli. 23, 24; xliv. 9, etc.).

Ver. 5.—**Thou meetest him that rejoiceth.** God "meets" with gracious welcome and ready aid whoever rejoices in doing righteousness and serving him, whoever "remembers him in his ways." But this, alas! is not the present relationship between God and Israel. God is "angry" with them—they must, therefore, "have sinned;" and so they proceed to confess their sin. **In those is continuance, and we shall be saved.** This is a very difficult passage. Mr. Cheyne regards it as hopelessly corrupt. Bishop Lowth and Ewald attempt emendations. Of those who accept the present text, some understand "in those" of God's ways, others of the "sins" implied in the confession, "We have sinned;" some make the last clause an affirmation, others a question. Delitzsch renders, "Already we have been long in this state (of sin), and shall we be saved?" Grotius and Starck, "If we had remained in them (*i.e.* thy ways) continually, we should have been saved."

Ver. 6.—**But we are all as an unclean** thing; rather, *we are all become as one who is unclean* (comp. ch. xxxv. 8; lii. 1). A moral leprosy is upon us. We are like the leprous man, who has to rend his clothes, and to go about crying "*Tâme! tâme!*" "Unclean! unclean!" that those who hear may get out of his way. **All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; or, *as a menstruous garment* (see Lam. i. 17). In the best deeds of the best men there is some taint of evil. As Hooker says, "Our very repentances require to be repented of." **We all do fade as a leaf** (comp. ch. i. 30, "Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth;" see also ch. xxxiv. 4). **Our iniquities . . . have taken us away**; or, *carried us away*; i.e. taken us far from God, carried us into a region where God is not, or where at any rate "his presence is not felt" (Cheyne).

Ver. 7.—There is **none that calleth on thy Name.** A hyperbole, like Ps. xix. 1, 3, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." A general lethargy and apathy had come over the people, so that they could with difficulty rouse themselves to faith and calling upon God. But this general lethargy was not universal; there was a "remnant" which "prayed and did not faint." **That stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.** This expresses more than mere prayer; it is earnest, intense, "effectual fervent" prayer. Perhaps none among the exiles may have been capable of such supplication as this, especially as God had **hid his face from them,** and no longer looked on them with favour. **And hast consumed us, because of our iniquities**; rather, *and hast delivered us into the power* (literally, *hand*) *of our iniquities.* Men's sins are their masters, and exercise a tyrannical control over them, which they are often quite unable to resist (comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 10, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?"). God at times judicially delivers the wicked into the power of their sins (see Rom. i. 24, 26, 28).

Ver. 8.—**But now, O Lord, thou art our Father** (see the comment on ch. lxiii. 16). **We are the clay, and thou our Potter** (comp. ch. xxix. 16; xlv. 9). Thy hands have made us and fashioned us, both as individuals and as a nation. Thou hast lavished thy labour and thy skill upon us. Surely thou wilt not "forsake the work of thine own hands" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8).

Ver. 9.—**Be not wroth very sore.** At the time of the Captivity God was wroth very

sore (Lam. v. 22). **His anger was hot against the sheep of his pasture** (Ps. lxxiv. 1). But they had suffered, they had been afflicted many years. Might he not now relent, and remit somewhat from his fierce anger? **Neither remember iniquity** (comp. Ps. lxxix. 8). God had already made a promise by the mouth of Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy trangressions, and *will not remember thy sins*" (ch. xliii. 25). The captives lay hold, as it were, on this promise, and entreat that their "iniquity" may be not only forgiven, but forgotten (Jer. xxxi. 34). **We are all thy people.** A fresh argument. "We are thy children," individually (ver. 8); "we are thy work, thy creatures" (ver. 8), again individually; but also, "we are all of us (*kullânu*), collectively, thy people"—the people whom thou hast chosen to thyself, and over whom thou hast watched for so many centuries. Surely this consideration, if no other, will induce thee to forego thy wrath and forgive our iniquity.

Ver. 10.—**Thy holy cities are a wilderness.** Commonly Jerusalem stands alone as "*the* holy city" (ch. xlviii. 2; lvi. 1; Dan. ix. 24; Neh. xi. 1, 18); but here the epithet is applied to the cities of Judah generally. They were all in a certain sense "holy," as being comprised within the limits of "the holy land" (Zech. ii. 12) and "the holy border" (Ps. lxxviii. 54). **Zion . . . Jerusalem** (see the comment on ch. lxii. 1).

Ver. 11.—**Our holy and our beautiful house.** This is the true meaning. The exiles have the tenderest and most vivid remembrance of the holiness and the beauty (or glory) of that edifice, which had formed the centre of the national life for above four centuries, and had been a marvel of richness and magnificence. Many of them had seen it with their own eyes (Ezra iii. 12), and could never forget its splendours. **Where our fathers praised thee.** Though in the later times of the Captivity there were still some of the exiles who had seen the temple, and probably worshipped in it, yet with the great majority it was otherwise. *They* thought of the temple as the place where their "fathers" had worshipped. **Burned up with fire** (see 2 Kings xxv. 9; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19; Jer. lii. 13). **Our pleasant things**; or, *our delectable things*—as in ch. xliv. 9; the courts, gardens, outbuildings of the temple, are probably meant.

Ver. 12.—**Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things?** rather, *at these things*—seeing that these things are so. Will they not provoke thee to interfere?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 8—12.—*Pleas for mercy.* Israel had three main grounds on which they could rely in pleading to God for mercy.

I. GOD WAS THEIR MAKER. The framer of a work cannot see without dissatisfaction the destruction of his work, or its deterioration, or its depravation to purposes lower than those intended for it. This dissatisfaction is the greater, the more considerable the labour and the thought that has been expended upon the work, the greater the care that has been taken of it, the longer that it has been watched over. Israel, as far as earth was concerned, was God's master-work, that in which God's creative efforts had culminated. He had created the world for mankind, and mankind (in a certain sense) for Israel. He had loved and cherished Israel, watched over his work, protected and guarded it, for well-nigh a millennium. Israel might well feel that it had a tower of strength in the plea, "We are the work of thy hand" (ver. 8).

II. GOD WAS THEIR FATHER. God had condescended to reveal himself as their "Father" at the time of the Exodus (Deut. xxxii. 6); and ever since had constantly addressed them, through his prophets, as his "children" (Exod. iii. 22; Deut. xxxii. 19, 20; Ps. lxxx. 15; lxxxii. 6; ciii. 13; Prov. iii. 12; viii. 32; ch. i. 2, 4; xxx. 1, 9; xliii. 6; xlv. 11; lxiii. 8; Hos. i. 10; xi. 1, etc.). Rebellious, backsliding children, indeed, had they been; yet still not wholly renounced, not wholly cast off, not deprived of the name or of the rights of children. Thus they could plead with God his fatherhood (ch. lxiii. 16; lxiv. 8), and therewith claim his tender care, and kind consideration, and merciful forgiveness, and gracious protection, and powerful aid against their enemies. A Father could not but pity his children, could not but be ready, on their turning to him with true penitence and humble confession of sin (vers. 5—7), to receive them and reinstate them in his favour.

III. GOD WAS THEIR KING. The Israelites were not only God's "children"—they were "his people." He had acknowledged them as such from the days of Moses (Exod. iii. 7, 10; vii. 16; viii. 1, etc.). He had taken them to himself to be his "peculiar

treasure—a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 5, 6). He had actually directed the policy of their state, as king, for several centuries (Judg. viii. 23; 1 Sam. viii. 7; x. 19; xii. 12). They had rejected him, when they insisted on having a king "like the nations" (1 Sam. viii. 5); but, with the Captivity, his kingly right had revived (Hos. xiii. 10), and they could properly appeal to him as "his people" (ver. 9).

The Christian Church, "Israel after the Spirit," is equally entitled to make these pleas with "Israel after the flesh." God is their Maker; God is their Father (Matt. v. 45, 48; vi. 1—9, etc.). Christ is their King (John xviii. 36). But they have also a further plea; Christ is their Redeemer; he has borne their sins—he has suffered in their stead—he has made atonement for them. In his Name they can "go boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb. iv. 16), secure that they will "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Longing for the appearance of God.* "Widely yawns the gulf between Israel and her God. A revelation on the widest possible scale is necessary to smite down unbelief and annihilate opposition; God himself must appear."

I. FIGURES OF THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD. The rending of the heavens. For the time of trouble is as the hiding of the face of God behind thick clouds (Job xxii. 13, 14). The word given, *rend*, is very strong—*tear asunder*, as garments in grief (Gen. xxxvii. 29; 2 Sam. xiii. 31), or as a wild beast the breast of any one. The faithful firmly believe that he will find a way to show himself through the densest darkness of the most unhappy time. The idea is that of a coming in power to destroy his foes (cf. Ps. xliv. 5, 6). The shaking mountain, the fire causing the boiling of the waters, the terror of the nations, and the terrible deeds of Jehovah—all this imagery belongs to the memory of the Exodus, where he proved himself to be the living God.

II. EVANGELICAL APPLICATION. Ver. 4 is cited by St. Paul as illustrating the effect of the gospel in producing happiness and salvation (1 Cor. ii. 9). If the prophet urges that no god had ever done what Jehovah had done, and no human being had witnessed such manifestations from any other quarter, the apostle applies the thought to the manifestation of God in Christ. For *waiting men* salvation is prepared. Piety may be defined—is so defined in Scripture—as waiting upon God (Ps. xxv. 3, 5, 21; xxvii. 14; xxxvii. 9; cxxx. 5). God had given manifestations of his existence in the past, of his power and goodness, which had been furnished to none other than his friends. And to those interpositions the suppliants appeal as a reason why he should again interpose and save them in their sore calamities.—J.

Vers. 5—11.—*The cry of humiliation and of hope.* I. THE CONFESSION. "Woe are we, for we are unclean!" Like the leper, dwelling alone without the camp (Lev. xiii. 44—46), so is the people; as he is cut off from the society of men, so they from the converse of God; or as something *ceremonially* polluted and defiled (Lev. v. 2; Deut. xiv. 19), or *morally* defiled (Job xiv. 4). The language carries a feeling of intense abhorrence. Under another figure, their penal offences have "carried them away like the wind," whither Jehovah is not; and they are as the leaves fallen and faded, from which all beauty has disappeared. In this degeneracy the very *conscience* and the religious instinct is dead, or in a state of lethargy. "How aptly is the state of a sinful world described! How indisposed to rouse itself to call upon God!" No man rises to God without an effort; and unless men make an effort for this, they fall into the stupidity of sin as certainly as a drowsy man sinks back into deep sleep. So nerveless are they, they cannot "stir themselves" to take hold on God. He, on the other hand, seems to have hidden his face from them, and to have given them over *into the hand* of their sins—if this be the true rendering. Their iniquities tyrannize over them; they pine in them, and moral life seems, under such conditions, hopeless.

II. THE PLEA OF THE CHURCH. 1. *She reminds him of the fatherly relation.* This includes creative energy and providential will. He has made them and moulded them, as clay is moulded by the potter. He, therefore, must restore them, and he alone; for

they are wholly in his hand, and under his control. "The whole verse is an acknowledgment of the *sovereignty* of God. It expresses the feeling which all have under the conviction of sin, when sensible that they are exposed to the Divine displeasure for their transgressions. Then they feel, if they are to be saved, it must be by the mere sovereignty of God; and they implore his interposition to 'mould and guide them at his will.' Only when sinners have this feeling do they hope for relief; and then they feel that if they are lost, it will be right; if saved, it will be because God moulds them as the potter does the clay." 2. *She reminds him of other motives for his interference.* His *holy cities* have become waste, the holy and splendid house of Jehovah reduced to ruins, with all its precious objects. The land and the temple were alike *dedicated, consecrated* to God, hallowed also by the memory of ancestral piety. And what attachment stronger than that to places of worship where our forefathers engaged in the service of God? "It would be difficult to find any passage in the Bible, or out of it, to equal this in pathos. Here was an exiled people, long suffering in a distant land, with the reflection that their homes were in ruins, their splendid temple long since fired and lying in ruins, the rank grass growing in their streets, their country overrun by beasts and with a rank vegetation. To that land they sighed to return; and here, with the deepest emotion, they plead with God on behalf of their desolate country. We should go to God with deep emotion when his Church is prostrate, and then is the time when we should use the most tender pleadings, and our heart should be melted within us." We are reminded also of the lesson of *childlikeness* in prayer. Why should we ever be ashamed of the child-heart and the child's utterance, "crying in the night, and with no language but a cry"? "*Wilt thou hold thy peace?*" If there is any meaning in the names "Father" and "child" in religion, then such language is *natural, reverent, justifiable;* and the energy of the soul from which it springs is *prevailing* with the All-powerful and the All-merciful. "Here is a model of affectionate and earnest entreaty for Divine interposition in the day of calamity. Thus may all God's people learn to approach him as a Father, and feel that they have the inestimable privilege, in times of trial, of making known their wants to the Most High. Thus pleading, he will hear us; thus presenting our cause, he will interpose to save us."—J.

Ver. 7.—*The averted face.* "Thou hast hid thy face from us." If so we cannot be happy. The universe itself will refuse to strike out its sweetest notes of joy for us. It is a Father's world, and must have a Father's love in it all to make us blessed! One of the oldest, sweetest prayers in the Bible is, "God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us." The Christian *must* have this blessing. You say, "Ah! but men of the world can enjoy nature and society without God." It is manifest, you declare, that they do. Certainly; but even then it is a surface-joy, even then it may be disturbed by the Egyptian death's-head at the feast; by memories flashing across the mind; some vulture may suddenly swoop down upon its prey in their hearts. But a Christian has his joy in God, and without him he is out of health, sick, faint, weary, sad. Spiritual health is necessary to the soul *who has* known God, to make enjoyment complete and real.

I. THIS IS NOT AN ARBITRARY ACT. Some parents are by turn tender and severe; they indulge and they punish in hasty moods. Their frame of mind is not regulated by high principle, by a healthy estimate of things. It is otherwise with God. The earliest records tell us that to deal with the righteous as with the wicked is *far* from him. Yes, very far! We read in Isaiah that God had hidden his face from the house of Jacob, but it was because they had "sought out them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards." "Should not," says the prophet, "a people seek unto their God?" And again Isaiah says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." This is the secret of the hiding. Sin is against the peace, purity, beauty, order of the universe, and it wrongs a man's own soul. Would it be right to smile, then? Mark, God does not hide his face because of *old sins* that have been repented of and forgiven. Remember that there is no *human meanness* in God's nature. He does not touch the heart with pain about old deliquencies. "Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more." I am told that there are some people who do not pray for the forgiveness of sins, because they are Christians, and all has been forgiven them unto the end. What a

perversion! Is not the very test of their being Christ's at all *something more than present feeling*; viz. that enduring unto the end they shall be saved? Then they find the Lord's Prayer a difficulty—"Forgive us our trespasses;" and they suggest that that was only a provisionary prayer, until the dispensation of the Spirit came! Such methods would destroy the whole authority of Scripture. A man might hear me take a text and say, "*That* was said to *apostles*," implying it was *only* meant for them. No! we sin every day, and we need a fountain ever open for sin and uncleanness. We need as much the prayer for daily forgiveness as we do for daily bread. It is when sin is indulged in by us who profess to love him—when it becomes sweet, when it becomes habitual, when it has withdrawn us from the Divine fellowship—that God hides his face.

II. THIS IS DETRIMENTAL TO ALL JOY. We are made to enjoy nature and men. We are constituted for every variety of joy. But as one nerve in agony can destroy all the rest of night, so a sin that separates us from God can darken all other joy. Even in the sweet summer-time, when holiday comes, we still need him. The golden-sanded bay, the landscape full of greens and greys, the iridescence of light through the clouds above the mountains, the scent of the pines, the delicate harmonies of colour in the fields, the mossy carpet of the woods, the russet roofs of cottages half hidden in the blossoms of summer,—all these, so restful and refreshing, lose their charm if the Saviour's smile be absent, if we cannot hear his voice amid the groves and hills, and at evening feel "we have walked with God to-day." It was true in the old dispensation, when the revelation was through patriarchs, and prophets, and symbols, and sacrifices; but it is intensely true *now*, that we have seen God in the face of Jesus Christ—that God's averted face is the soul's severest punishment. We have come very near to God. No human priesthood intervenes now. We have boldness of access by faith to the throne of God. No veil is over the holy of holies now. We draw near through the rent veil—that is to say, Christ's flesh. Consequently enjoyment deepens; consequently also the sorrow deepens when I sin. Why? Because the more clearly I have seen the face, the more I feel its averted glance.

III. THIS IS THE MOST SPIRITUAL OF ALL TESTS. It has to do with the life within as well as the conduct without. *There*, where no eye of man reaches—*there*, in the galleries where no foot of man ever treads—are the sights and sounds which may drive away the Divine Guest. Long before sin incarnates itself in deeds, before it becomes actual and open, the evil is at work. The tree is rotten while the bark is sound. First make the tree good. Yes; and remember that decay always begins at central points outside the reach of man's observation. *Yes, and outside the reach of our own observation* sometimes. Hence the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." 1. *Men like other tests.* Their "opinions," their attendance at sacraments, their absolution by confessors, their consistency of conduct. 2. *Men realize the power of this in times of anxiety and trial.* Now that they are brought low in sickness; now that friends are separated from them who used to cheer and inspire them; now that they are very near to the valley of the shadow of death—nothing will do but reality then. The words of others, their good opinions of us,—all these stand for less than nothing then. May God's face shine in again upon our souls now! That is heaven—at least, it is the premonition of it. All our worst sorrows will flee like the weird shadows on the mountains before the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. It is pleasant for others to smile on us—to walk in the light of human appreciation and love. Households feel this; Churches feel it. Sometimes noble and valiant men in great Reformation eras have to do without it. The light varies so, too; it is so uncertain at the best. But this shining of the face of God makes the heart restful and gladsome everywhere. We shall one day enjoy it to the full. No clouds of sin or doubt will intervene between us and God. So is it with the blessed dead. Many times the beautiful descriptions St. John gives of heaven in the Apocalypse are negative. "No curse," "no night," "no sorrow," "no more death." But once it is positive: "They shall see his face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*Hope in God.* The fervent language of the text is indicative of an intense spiritual struggle; the heart of the prophet is filled with conflicting hopes and

fears. Sensible of great national sins, but mindful of great mercies at the hand of God, he now fears lest Israel has gone beyond redemption, and now prays for Divine rescue and restoration. We have—

I. A SENSE OF GOD'S OVERWHELMING POWER. Israel was brought very low; her land was desolate, her people scattered, her ordinances unobserved; but let God once appear in his majesty and his strength, and everything would be subdued before him; the enemy would be utterly routed, the cause of truth and piety would immediately triumph (vers. 1—3). Low as the Church may be found at any time, it only needs that God's presence should be manifested, and his power be exercised, and the strongest mountains of difficulty will melt away, prejudice be uprooted, hatred be cast out, unbelief be dislodged, indifference and indecision be consumed, earnest thought be enkindled, piety and virtue be made to burn and to enlighten.

II. A RECOGNITION OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Ver. 5.) God meets with the tokens of his favour those that rejoice to work righteousness, that remember him in his appointed ways—in worship, in thanksgiving, in obedience, in filial submission; but he is wroth with Israel, and righteously so, for Israel has sinned. In every age and land he that works righteousness is accepted and blessed of God; at all times and in every place the man that sins against his conscience must confront the anger of God, showing itself in one or more of a number of ways—in compunction, in ignominy, in desolation and ruin, in sickness, in desertion and loneliness, or in early death.

III. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF UTTER UNDESERVEDNESS. "In those [sins] is continuance;" or long have we continued in our sins, "and shall we be saved?" (ver. 5). Is there salvation to be found for the nation that for whole generations has forsaken its God? is there mercy to be had for the individual soul that for whole periods of life has lived in guilty negligence of a Divine Father and Saviour?

IV. A REMEMBRANCE OF HIS ABOUNDING GOODNESS. (Ver. 4.) It is "Jehovah of hosts" alone that wrought these marvellous deliverances for his expectant people. All other deities ignominiously and pitiably failed their devotees in the hour of trial. Their idols had mouths, but they spake not; they had hands, but they handled not; their voice could not command the storm, nor their arm arrest the tide. But the history of the people of God and of the Church of God is a history of Divine goodness and grace, of interposition in the time of peril, of redemption from ruin, of gracious and glorious manifestations of Divine affection and attachment. This encourages to—

V. A PRAYER FOR HIS EFFECTUAL INTERPOSITION. "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens! that thou wouldest come down!" (ver. 1). Our unworthiness is very great, but thy mercy is large and free; make thy presence known, thy power felt, in the midst of us.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Life as a leaf.* There are three volumes in the great work of God by which he is educating us—the written Word, Divine providence, and the world in which he has placed us. There are many pages in this last volume, and we do well to read them with reverent spirit. We may learn many things from the vegetation which clothes and adorns the world, and which supplies us with food and medicine and shelter. The fading of the leaf is particularly suggestive; we are reminded that—

I. ALL IS NOT LOST TO THE TREE WHEN THE LEAF FALLS. The leaf has been a recipient from the trunk, drinking in its vital juices, but it has been *giving* as well as *receiving;* it has been absorbing sunshine and air and moisture, and has been passing these on to the trunk, doing this in the very act of decaying, so that when the leaf has fallen its most precious part remains behind. We are large recipients from the society to which we belong, but we should be continually giving as well as taking. Before we fall, and even as we fade, we may be, and should be, imparting wisdom and truth, all wholesome and helpful principles, a reverent and holy spirit, by which the community will be the better and the richer when we are no longer seen or even remembered.

II. THERE IS AN APPARENT BUT TREACHEROUS BEAUTY IN DECAY. The russet tints of autumn are very exquisite, but it is *the beauty of decay.* Each particular leaf is pitted and spotted and torn, and it owes its colour to the decomposition which has begun. So is it with some fair human institutions: there may be the grandeur or the brilliancy of external prosperity—superficially regarded they are interesting, fair,

admirable—but there is no inward soundness; it is not the excellency of growing life we are looking upon, but the melancholy beauty of decay.

III. THE INEVITABLENESS OF DECLINE. A psalmist and a prophet speak poetically of "trees whose leaves do not fade." But such trees, we know, are not found in the vegetable kingdom. *Human hearts need not fade.* They who are ever drinking in the sunshine of Divine truth, who bathe in the waters of Divine wisdom, on whom fall continually the dews of the Divine Spirit—these are "trees planted by the rivers of water," and "*their* leaf does not wither;" they keep their freshness, their purity, their joy to the last; they never lose it. But *human lives must.* We *all* do fade as a leaf; the time must be reached when the physical and mental powers begin to decline, and then life lessens in its force and its range from year to year, until the gust comes which brings down the faded leaf to the earth. Prudence may put off the date, but the experience is inevitable and must be faced. We must be provided with a true and real consolation.

IV. THE MINGLING OF THE GRADUAL WITH THE SUDDEN IN THE DECLINE OF LIFE. Everything, in the history of the leaf, is a gradual process, until the last killing frost or pelting rain detaches it from the bough. Death is seldom quite sudden, usually much less so than it seems. It is generally the case that the vigour of the frame has been impaired and the vital powers lessened before the attack proves fatal. We all do fade as a leaf; we decline before we die, we fade before we fall, we walk down the hill by many paces before we take the last step and touch the bottom. Yet is there, almost always, something sudden in the great removal. The day of the Lord still comes as a thief in the night.

V. HUMAN LIFE, UNLIKE THE LEAF, HAS NO FIXED TIME TO DROOP AND DIE. We know the season of the falling leaf, but the time of failing health and of the departing spirit we do not know. Well sings Mrs. Hemans—

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set; but *all*—
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, O Death."

C.

Ver. 7.—*Taking hold of God.* We do well to associate with the words of the text those of ch. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength;" thus connected, we have before us—

I. THAT WHICH CONSTITUTES GOD'S STRENGTH TO US, or that in him of which we have the greatest need. The strength of the father is, to the family, his providing and directing power; the strength of the mother is her affection and her unfailing sympathy; the strength of the elder brother is his protection, of the elder sister her example. The strength of any one to whom we are related is that in him which most powerfully affects our well-being. There may be in creation many millions of beings to whom God's strength appears to be that of his majesty, his infinity, his omniscience, his holiness. We also, the children of men, have a very large and deep interest in these, *especially in his holiness.* We give thanks at the remembrance of it (*vide* Ps. xxx. 4; xcvii. 12). Without it we should not be what we are, and should have no hope of rising to the noble heights we have before us. But that in God of which we have most *conscious* need is (1) Divine mercy; (2) Divine bounty and guidance; (3) Divine succour. The one hope we have is in the assurance that God is strong in these, and we feel that if they are but directed toward us and embrace us in their beneficent course, all will be well with us.

II. THE NECESSITY WE ARE UNDER TO APPROPRIATE IT. It may be said that God is so generous a Being that he does not wait for any action on our part to bestow his blessings upon us; that, notwithstanding human disregard and rebellion, he multiplies his mercies unto us; that the magnanimous Father in heaven makes his sun to shine on the evil as well as on the good. This is true, but it is far from exhausting the truth. To what extent we shall be recipients of Divine mercy depends on whether or not we "take hold" upon it. God is so strong, so abundant in mercy, that his grace overflows to those who seek not for it, and they are not "dealt with according to their sins;" they derive great benefit from the abundance of God's patience. But if we wish to

know all the fulness of Divine mercy as it is to be known by any seeking human spirit, we must lay hold on God's strength in this direction. We must "call upon his Name" with penitential spirit and with true faith in Jesus Christ, and we shall have not merely the overflow, but the full cup of Divine mercy, his grace in all its richness and fulness outpoured upon our own heart—the forgiveness of all past sin and all present unworthiness, admission to his full friendship, freedom to partake of all the privileges which belong to the child at home, heirship of the heavenly kingdom. In the same way, it is necessary, if we would experience the fulness, the height and depth, and length, and breadth, open to us of God's *bounty* and *guidance*, or of his *succour* in a time of special need, that we should "lay hold on him," on "his strength," in all these things; and we do lay hold by (1) maintaining toward him the attitude of sonship, and (2) going to him in the act of earnest, believing prayer.

III. THE NEED FOR HOLY ENERGY IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. "There is none that stirreth up himself," etc. If men complain that they have not felt the peace and joy, or found the provision and the guidance, or experienced the delivering succour which they looked for from waiting on God, the answer and the explanation *may* be this—that they have been cold in their approach and their requests to God, when they should have been eager and ardent; formal, when they should have been spiritual; unexpectant, when they should have been full of faith and hope; languid, when they should have been energetic; easily daunted, when they should have been earnestly persistent. They have made a feeble and futile effort, when they should have thrown their whole soul into the sacred exercise, into the spiritual work. They must arouse themselves, "stir themselves up."—C.

Vers. 8—12.—*A twofold plea.* The prophet addresses himself to God in earnest prayer for Divine interposition, and he uses a twofold plea.

I. THE INTIMACY AND FULNESS OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP. 1. God was their *Creator*. He made them as truly as the potter fashions the clay; they were his workmanship (ver. 8). 2. God was their *Father*. He had cared for them and bestowed on them his parental love; would he abandon his own children? 3. God was their *Redeemer*. He had rescued them from bondage, had given them their heritage, had made them "his people" (ver. 9). So fully and so intimately is God related to us now, and we can use the same terms with a deeper and larger meaning, taught of Christ and redeemed by his blood.

II. THE SEVERITY OF THEIR DISTRESS. Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation, "the holy and beautiful house" a calcined ruin, the beauty of the land a barrenness and a blot. The extremity of the Church's misery, its utter helplessness without Divine relief, is a strong plea with which to come to him who gave himself for it and lives to establish it.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Prayer for humbling manifestations of God.* "Vers. 1—3 are parallel to ch. lxiii. 15, but grander and bolder. There the prophet, in the name of the Church, petitioned that Jehovah would look down on the misery of his people. Here a look is felt to be insufficient, so widely yawns the gulf between Israel and his God. A revelation on the largest possible scale is necessary to smite down unbelief and annihilate opposition; God himself must appear" (Naegelsbach). The prayer is for a Divine manifestation suited to the circumstances and necessities of God's people as truly as the fire-manifestation of Sinai had been. The prophet seems to think that some overwhelming manifestation of God would silence the unbelievers, and put the hinderers out of the way, as nothing else could. There is always a tendency to trust in the extraordinary rather than in the ordinary methods of Divine working. We think men will repent, if only some one would rise from the dead and witness of eternal things to them; and God's answer in every age is, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I. SUCH PRAYER OFTEN SHOWS THAT WE FAIL TO NOTICE GOD'S WORKING IN QUIETER WAYS. Men do not pray for "lightning" who duly recognize what the "light" is doing. Yet the silent forces are the mighty ones. Atmosphere does more than wind; dew does more than storms; moisture does more than rains. God works his best work silently, quietly. We think big things must make a big noise. It is true of our every-

day lives; the things that make our happiness and success are not prominent things that happen occasionally, but the ten thousand little things that pass almost unheeded, and that seem to us too small to hold God. It is true of our spiritual life. Living in the warmth of the smile of God does more for us than any special times of manifestation. It is true of the kingdom of God in the world. It cometh on secretly, no man knoweth how.

II. SUCH PRAYER SOMETIMES SHOWS THAT WE WANT GOD TO WORK BY JUDGMENTS RATHER THAN BY MERCIES. It means, "Appear, O Lord, to overthrow our adversaries." That, indeed, seems to be the tone of the prophet's prayer in the text. He at least wants the hinderers and enemies forcibly persuaded, if, indeed, he does not pray for them to be taken out of the way. But it is never consistent with the Christian spirit to take prayers to God for the judgment of anybody. That is not the way in which to pray for hinderers, slanderers, or enemies. We are properly taught to pray that God would "baffle their designs and turn their hearts." If we rightly felt God's presence *with us now*, we should not want to ask for any coming of his from heaven.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Man's ignorance of God's goodness to him.* "For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God beside thee, which worketh for him that waiteth for him" (Revised Version). A very old weakness of humanity it is to try and find somebody who may be preferred to God, and this comes out of the fact that God is so very imperfectly known, or else is so very strangely misunderstood. A hint is here given us of the reason why there is so much misunderstanding of God—*he has to be waited for.* It is quite true of him that he is always working for us; but it is also true that he is often a *long time* in the working out of his purposes. Then, because men cannot get what they want done *done quick*, they foolishly begin to think that God *cannot* do it for them, or *will not* do it for them. They fail to see the Lord's goodness. The point of impression may be, that in all the reviews we can take of the past, God has surely wrought good things, even if he has been long at the working. We may, therefore, cherish trustful thoughts concerning him, and be quite willing to leave the unfoldings of all the future in his supreme control.

I. REVIEW GOD'S WAYS OF EDUCATING THE WORLD. What a long time of preparation before he could manifest his Son, and, through him, teach the world the Divine fatherhood!

II. REVIEW GOD'S WAYS OF TRAINING THE JEWS. Their good things were always long in coming. Canaan was forty years away from Egypt. Restoration was seventy years away from judgment.

III. REVIEW GOD'S WAYS OF SANCTIFYING HIS CHURCH. Our hardest work nowadays is to hold fast the conviction that the Church *is* sanctifying, for the process seems so long, and the waiting-time is so trying.

IV. REVIEW GOD'S DEALINGS IN PERSONAL LIVES. Who of us has not had to learn the lesson of the goodness of God in what he holds off, out of our reach, and makes us wait for and work for long? Do not let us, then, ever mistake God. It is ours to wait *for* him, and to wait *on* him, but we may hold the good cheer of this faith—he is surely "working for every one that can wait for him."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The sincere man's estimate of himself.* "For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." This is the language indeed of an intercessor, of one who speaks as representing the nation, and tries to speak as the nation should speak. But such a man must get at the knowledge of the condition of the nation by a deep and true estimate of his own real self. There is no sign of conscious separation of himself from his people. Right reading of his own life alone enables him to read theirs. And this is true for us also. No man who fails to apprehend the "plague of his own heart" will ever properly realize the evils of his own times. Pharisee-souls can never know the real sins of their age. Sincere and humble souls find themselves—as they know themselves—the measure of the men around them, as they stand in God's sight.

I. THE SINCERE MAN FINDS HIS GOODNESS IS SEARCHED. A man's own goodness is

no more than a crust put over a state of uncleanness. Before God a man sees it to be no more than a crust. A man's own goodness is a dainty garment, which makes a brave appearance. Before God a man sees that it does but cover a foul person, and the foul person has polluted the dress. There is no place where we find out the worthlessness of our own goodness like the place of prayer.

II. THE SINCERE MAN IS IMPRESSED WITH HIS OWN FRAILTY. It is not that he finds *life* fading; the thing that oppresses him is that he can never keep at a high level of goodness; he is always fading from his standards; he can no more keep on in goodness than the leaves can keep on the trees all autumn and winter through. One writer says, on the expression "we fade as a leaf," "This means that sin brings with it the curse of God, and deprives us of his blessing, both for the body and the soul, so that the heart is dissatisfied and distressed."

III. THE SINCERE MAN RECOGNIZES JUDGMENT INFLICTED. The past calamities of life are read aright, and seen to be a man's iniquities taking him away from peace and prosperity. There is no standing steady for any of us who keep in our sins. If we cannot find out how our iniquities can *be taken away*, we shall be sure to find that our iniquities will *take us away*. When we are truly humbled under God's hand concerning ourselves, we are fitted to make confession before God in the name of our nation. —R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Our Father and our Potter.* "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." The prophet here is making no such assertion of the absolute sovereignty of God as we associate with the figure of the potter because of St. Paul's use of it in Rom. ix. 20, 21. Here the power of the great Potter is made the ground of prayer. "The clay intreats him to fashion it according to his will, and has faith in his readiness, as well as in his power, to comply with that prayer. The thought of the 'potter' becomes, in this aspect of it, one with that of the fatherhood of God." Fausset says, "Unable to mould themselves aright, they beg the sovereign will of God to mould them into salvation, even as he made them at first, and is their Father." The idea of the fatherhood of God, as held by the Jews, differs as materially from the idea held by us, as our impressions of human fatherhood differs from theirs. To us the association of "father" and "potter" is incongruous; but to Easterns, who hold the absolute rights of fathers, it was quite a natural association. What may we learn by the linking of the two terms together?

I. Potter reminds us that God can answer our prayer BY THE MASTERY OF OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. The clay must yield under the potter's hands. He makes of it what vessel he pleases. He makes or mars as he pleases. So we say, "Our times are in thine hands." All belonging to us is fully within the Divine control. He can mould as he pleases the "clay" of our circumstances, so that our prayers shall be answered. The "we" of the text is not "we as individuals," but "we inclusive of all our surroundings and associations."

II. Father reminds us that God can answer our prayers UPON DUE CONSIDERATION OF US. Father brings in the element of feeling and personal relationship. Beyond what God *can* do, we have the most gracious assurances as to what he *will* do. This should lead us on to the Christian conception of answer to prayer, based on our Lord's words, "If ye then know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?"—R. T.

SECTION XI. GOD'S ANSWER TO THE EXILES' PRAYER (CH. LXV.)

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXV.

Vers. 1—7.—ISRAEL'S SUFFERINGS THE JUST MEED OF THEIR SINS. God's mercy is such that it even overflows upon those who are outside the covenant (ver. 1). It has been offered to Israel, but Israel has rejected it. Their rebellion, their idolatries, and their pride have caused, and must continue to cause, their punishment (vers. 2—7).

Ver. 1.—I am sought; rather, *inquired of*,

or *consulted* (comp. Ezek. xiv. 3; xx. 3, 31). The application of the text by St. Paul (Rom. x. 20) to the calling of the Gentiles will be felt by all believers in inspiration to preclude the interpretation which supposes Israel to be the subject of ver. 1 no less than of vers. 2—7. **I said, Behold me.** This was the first step in the conversion of the Gentiles. God called them by his messengers, the apostles and evangelists. **A nation that was not called by thy Name** (so Gesenius, Delitzsch, Kay, and others). Bishop Lowth, Ewald, Diestel, and Mr. Cheyne, following the Septuagint and other ancient versions, render, "a nation that has not called upon thy Name." But this requires an alteration of the vowel-points, which seems unnecessary.

Ver. 2.—**I have spread out my hands.** Not exactly in prayer, but in expostulation (comp. Prov. i. 24, "I have stretched out my hand," where the verb in the Hebrew is the same). **All the day**; or, *all day long*, as in Rom. x. 21; *i.e.* continually, day after day, for years—nay, for centuries. **A rebellious people** (comp. ch. xxx. 1; and see also ch. i. 4, 23; Hos. iv. 16; Jer. v. 23; vi. 28). The "rebellious people" (*'am sorêr*) is undoubtedly Israel. **In a way that was not good**; rather, *in the way that is not good*; *i.e.* the "way of sinners" (Ps. i. 1)—the "way that leadeth to destruction" (Matt. vii. 13).

Ver. 3.—**That sacrificeth in gardens** (comp. ch. i. 29; lvii. 5; lxvi. 17). The groves and "gardens" of Daphné, near Antioch, became famous in later times as the scene of idolatrous practices intimately bound up with the grossest and most shameless sensualism. We have few details of the ancient Syrian rites; but there is reason to believe that, wherever Astarte, the Dea Syra, was worshipped, whether at Daphné, or at Hierapolis, or at Balbek, or at Aphek, or at Damascus, or in Palestine, one and the same character of cult prevailed. The nature-goddess was viewed as best worshipped by rites into which sensualism entered as an essential element. Profligacy that cannot be described polluted the consecrated precincts, which were rendered attractive by all that was beautiful and delightful, whether in art or nature—by groves, gardens, statues, fountains, shrines, temples, music, processions, shows—and which were in consequence frequented both day and night by a multitude of votaries. **And burneth incense upon altars of brick**; literally, *upon the bricks*. It is not clear that "altars" are intended. More probably the incense was burnt upon the tiled or bricked roofs of houses, where the Jews of Jeremiah's time "burned incense unto all the host of heaven" (Jer. xix. 13; xxxii. 29; Zeph. i. 5). Brick altars are nowhere mentioned. The Assyrians and Babylonians made their altars of either stone or metal ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 36, 37; Herod., i. 183). The Hebrews in early times had altars of earth (Exod. xx. 24). The "altar of incense" in the tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 1—3) was of wood plated with gold; that of burnt offering, of wood plated with bronze (Exod. xxvii. 1, 2). Solomon's altars were similar. Elijah on one occasion made an altar of twelve rough stones (1 Kings xviii. 31). The Assyrians used polished stone, as did the Greeks and Romans.

Ver. 4.—**Which remain among the graves.** The rock tombs of Palestine seem to be meant. Persons "remained among" these, in spite of the ceremonial defilement thereby incurred, either with the object of raising the dead, and obtaining prophecies from them, or of getting prophetic intimations made to them in dreams (see Jerome's 'Comment.,' *ad loc.*). **And lodge in the monuments**; or, *in the crypts*. "*N'tsurim* may refer to the mysteries celebrated in natural caves and artificial crypts" (Delitzsch). An account of such mysteries is given by Chwolsohn in his 'Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus,' vol. ii. pp. 332, *et seq.* **Which eat swine's flesh.** Not in mere defiance of the Law, but in sacrificial meals (ch. lxvi. 17) of which swine's flesh formed a part. Swine were sacrificial animals in Egypt (Herod., ii. 47, 48), in Phœnicia (Lucian, 'De Dea Syra,' § 54), and with the Greeks and Romans. They do not appear to have been employed for the purpose either by the Assyrians or the Babylonians. It was probably in Palestine that the Jews had eaten "swine's flesh," at sacrifices to Baal or Astarte (Ashtoreth). In later times to do so was regarded as one of the worst abominations (1 Macc. i. 41—64; 2 Macc. vi. and vii.). **Broth of abominable things.** Either broth made from swine's flesh, or from the flesh of other unclean animals, as the hare and rabbit (Lev. xi. 5, 6), or perhaps simply broth made from the flesh of any animals that had been offered to idols (Acts xv. 29).

Ver. 5.—**Stand by thyself**; *i.e.* "keep aloof—come not into contact with me; for mine is a higher holiness than thine, and I should be polluted by thy near approach." Initiation into heathen mysteries was thought to confer on the initiated a holiness unattainable otherwise. Thus the heathenized Jew claimed to be holier than the true servants of Jehovah. **These are a smoke . . . a fire** (comp. Ps. xviii. 8, "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it"). The heathenized Jews are fuel for the wrath of God, which kindles a fire wherein they burn continually (comp. ch. lxvi. 24).

Ver. 6.—**It is written before me.** The misconduct of his people is "written" in God's

book, which lies open "before him," so that their sin is ever in his sight (comp. Ps. lvi. 8; Mal. iii. 16; Rev. xx. 12). **I will not keep silence** (comp. Ps. l. 3). "Keeping silence" is a metaphor for complete inaction. **But will recompense**, etc.; rather, *until I have recompensed, yea, recompensed* [*them*] *into their bosoms* (comp. Luke vi. 38). Gifts were given and received into the fold of the *beged*, or cloak, which depended in front of the bosom.

Ver. 7.—**Your iniquities.** This is a new sentence, not a continuation of ver. 6, which should be closed by a full stop. It is an incomplete sentence, needing for its completion the repetition of the verb *shillamti*, "I will recompense." **Which have burned incense upon the mountains** (see 2 Kings xvii. 11; Hos. iv. 13; Ezek. vi. 13; and comp. ch. lvii. 7). **And blasphemed me**; rather, *reproached me* (see ch. xxxvii. 4, 17, 23, 24). **Therefore will I measure their former work**; rather, *therefore will I, first of all, measure their work into their bosom.* The expression, "first of all," prepares the way for the encouraging promises of vers. 8—10.

Vers. 8—10.—SALVATION PROMISED TO A REMNANT. In Isaiah, and especially in the "Book of Consolation" (ch. xl.—lxvi.), promises are almost always intermingled with threatenings. The threats extend to the bulk of the nation; the promises are limited to "a remnant," since a remnant only could be brought to "seek" and serve God (ver. 10). Here the announcement that a remnant would be spared is introduced by a simile from men's treatment of their own vineyards (ver. 8).

Ver. 8.—**As the new wine is found in the cluster**; rather, *as when new wine is found in a grape-bunch*; i.e. as when even a single cluster of grapes is spied on a vine-stem, the vine-pruners say one to another, "Destroy not that stem, but spare it," so will God refrain from destroying those stocks in his vineyard, which give even a small promise of bearing good fruit. **Destroy it not.** The words are thought to be those of a well-known vintage-song, which is perhaps alluded to in the heading (*Al-taschith*) prefixed to Ps. lvii., lviii., and lix. "Each of these psalms was probably sung to the air of this favourite song" (Cheyne). **A blessing is in it**; *i.e.* "a boon from God" (comp. ch. xxxvi. 16; 2 Kings v. 15).

Ver. 9.—**A seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah.** Scarcely, "the people of the two captivities" (Delitzsch), though no doubt many Israelites of the ten tribes did return with Zerubbabel (1 Chron. ix. 3; Ezra ii. 2, 70; iii. 1; vi. 17; viii. 35, etc.). Rather, a mere pleonasm, as in ch. ix. 8; x. 21, 22; xxvii. 6; xxix. 23; xl. 27; xli. 8, etc. (see the comment on ch. xl. 27). **An inheritor of my mountains.** The whole of Palestine is little more than a cluster of mountains. The cluster may be divided into three groups: (1) The mountains of Galilee, extending from Hermon to Tabor, separated from the next group by the plain of Esdraelon; (2) the mountains of Samaria and Judæa, extending from Carmel and Gilboa to the plateau of Mamre above Hebron, which is 3600 feet above the sea; (3) the mountains of the trans-Jordanic region, including those of Bashan, Gilead, Moab, and Edom, separated from the two other groups by the Jordan valley. The highest elevation attained is that of Hermon (9400 feet); other minor heights are Jebel Jurmuk, in Galilee, 4000 feet; Safed, also in Galilee, 2775 feet; Ebal and Gerizim, in Samaria, 2700 feet; Sinjil, 2685; Neby Samwill, 2650; and the Mount of Olives, 2724 feet. The plateau of Mamre reaches a height of 3600 feet. The only Palestinian plains are those of Esdraelon, Sharon, and the Ghor, or Jordan valley. Thus the land may well be spoken of as "my mountains." **Mine elect** (comp. ch. xliii. 20; xlv. 4). The same expression is used of Israel in 1 Chron. xvi. 13; Ps. lxxxix. 3; cv. 6, 43; cvi. 5. God "chose" Israel out of all the nations of the earth to be his "peculiar people."

Ver. 10.—**Sharon shall be a fold of flocks.** "Sharon," instead of being "like a wilderness" (ch. xxxiii. 9), shall once more be "a place for flocks"—a rich pasture for the flocks and herds of the returned exiles. (On the position and fertility of Sharon, see the comment upon ch. xxxiii. 9.) **The valley of Achor** (see Josh. vii. 24—26). The *'Emeq 'Akor* was near Jericho. The two places seem to be selected on account of their position, one on the eastern, the other on the western border. **My people that have sought me**; or, *inquired of me*—the same verb as that used at the beginning of the chapter.

Vers. 11—16.—A MIXTURE OF THREATS WITH PROMISES. The prophet returns, in the main, to his former attitude, and resumes his denunciations (vers. 11, 12); but, with ver. 13, he begins to intermingle promises of favour to God's servants with threats against the rebellious, and finally (in ver. 16) turns wholly towards the side of grace and favour, announcing the coming of a time when "the former troubles" will be altogether "forgotten," and the kingdom of truth and right will be established.

Ver. 11.—**But ye are they that forsake the Lord**; rather, *but as for you who forsake the*

Lord. **And forget my holy mountain**; *i.e.* either, literally, *forget* Zion, being absent from it so long (Ps. xxxvii. 5), or, possibly, *neglect* Zion, though you might worship there if you pleased. **That prepare a table for that troop**; rather, *that prepare a table for Gad.* There is ground for believing that "Gad" was a Phœnician deity, perhaps "the god of good fortune" (Cheyne), though this is not clearly ascertained; sometimes worshipped as an aspect of Baal, whence the name. Baal-Gad (Josh. xi. 17; xii. 7); sometimes connected with other deities, as Moloch and Ashtoreth. The practice of "preparing tables" for the heathen gods was a common one, and appears in Herod., i. 181; in Baruch vi. 30; in Bel and the Dragon, ver. 11; and in the Roman *lectisternia.* The tables prepared for the dead in Egyptian tombs were not very different, and implied a qualified worship of ancestors (Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. pp. 423, 424; vol. ii. p. 39). **And that furnish the drink offering unto that number**; rather, *and that fill up mixed drink for M'ni.* M'ni appears, like Gad, to have been a Syrian deity, the name Ebed-M'ni, "servant of M'ni," occurring on Aramæo-Persian coins of the Achæmenian period (Rödiger, in 'Addenda to Gesenius' Thesaurus,' p. 97). The word may be suspected to be cognate to the Arabic "Manât," a god recognized in the Koran as a mediator with Allah; but can scarcely have any connection with the Aryan names for the moon deity, Μήν, Μήνη, *Mena*, and the like. Its root is probably the Semitic *mânah*, "to number" or "apportion," the word designating a deity who "apportions" men's fortunes to them (τύχη, LXX.).

Ver. 12.—**Therefore will I number you**; or, *apportion* you (*mânithî*)—a play upon the name of M'ni. **The sword . . . slaughter.** Not, perhaps, intended literally. Wicked men are God's sword (Ps. xvii. 13), and deliverance into their hand would be deliverance to the sword and slaughter. The exiles suffered grievously at the hands of their Babylonian masters (ch. xlvii. 6; xlix. 17, etc.). The character of their sufferings is given in the ensuing verses (vers. 13, 14). **When I called, ye did not answer** (see 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16; Prov. i. 20—25; ch. lxvi. 4).

Ver. 13.—**Therefore thus saith the Lord God**; rather, *thus saith the Lord Jehovah* (comp. ch. vii. 7; xxv. 8; xxviii. 16; xxx. 15; xl. 10; xlviii. 16; xlix. 22; l. 4, 5, 7, 9; lii. 4; lvi. 8; lxi. 1, etc.). **My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry**, etc. This entire series of contrasts may be understood in two ways; literally, of the two classes of exiles, the religious and the irreligious; metaphorically, of God's servants and his adversaries at all times and in all places. The religious exiles would return to the land of promise as soon as permitted, and would there prosper in a worldly sense—have abundance to eat and drink, rejoice, and sing for joy (Ezra iii. 11—13). The irreligious, remaining in Babylonia, would suffer hunger and thirst, endure shame, cry and howl for sorrow and vexation of spirit. This would be one fulfilment of the prophecy; but there would also be another. God's servants at all times and in all places would be sustained with spiritual food, and "rejoice and sing for joy of heart." His adversaries would everywhere feel a craving for the "meat" and "drink," which alone satisfy the soul, and would be oppressed with care, and with a sense of shame, and suffer anguish of spirit.

Ver. 15.—**Ye shall leave your name for a curse** (comp. Jer. xxix. 22). In their formulas of imprecation the Jews were in the habit of saying, "The Lord make thee like" this or that person, or this or that class of persons. The name of the exiles should be used in this manner. **Unto my chosen** (see the comment on ver. 9). **The Lord God shall slay thee** (see the comment on ver. 12). Some, however, take the words as part of the formula of imprecation. **And call his servants by another name** (compare what is said of "new name" in ch. lxii. 2).

Ver. 16.—**That he who blesseth himself**; rather, *so that he who blesses himself.* The sequence of the argument is not altogether clear. Perhaps it is meant that God will call them *by his own Name* (Amos ix. 12)—"the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9); and thence it will become natural for them to use no other name, either when they call for a blessing on themselves, or have to confirm a covenant with others. **In the God of truth**; literally, *in the God of the Amen*; i.e. the God who keeps covenant and promise, to which the strongest formula of consent was the word "Amen" (see Numb. v. 22; Deut. xxvii. 15—26; 1 Kings i. 36, etc.). Similarly, St. John calls our Lord "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness" (Rev. iii. 14). **Because the former troubles are forgotten.** When the blessed time has come wherein men call themselves by the Name of the Lord, and know of only one God as the Source of blessing and the confirmation of an oath, then the former state of human affairs, with all its "troubles," will have passed away, and the new era will be inaugurated, which the prophet proceeds to describe at length (vers. 17—25).

Vers. 17—25.—A PROMISE OF NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH. The final answer of God to the complaint and prayer of his people (ch. lxiv.) is now given. The entire existing state of things is to pass away. God will create a new heaven and

a new earth, and place his people therein; and the old conditions will be all changed, and the old grounds of complaint disappear. In the "new Jerusalem" there will be no sorrow, neither "weeping" nor "crying" (ver. 19); life will be greatly prolonged (ver. 20); men will always enjoy the fruit of their labours (vers. 21, 22), and see their children grow up (ver. 23). Prayer will be answered almost before it is uttered (ver. 24). Finally, there will be peace in the animal world, and between the animal world and man. No living thing will kill or hurt another in all God's "holy mountain" (ver. 25).

Ver. 17.—**I create.** The same verb is used as in Gen. i. 1; and the prophet's idea seems to be that the existing heaven and earth are to be entirely destroyed (see ch. xxiv. 19, 20, and the comment *ad loc.*), and a fresh heaven and earth created in their place out of nothing. The "new Jerusalem" is not the old Jerusalem renovated, but is a veritable "*new* Jerusalem," "*created* a rejoicing" (ver. 18; comp. Rev. xxi. 2). The germ of the teaching will be found in ch. li. 16. **The former shall not be remembered.** Some suppose "the former troubles" (see ver. 16) to be meant; but it is best (with Delitzsch) to understand "the former heavens and earth." The glory of the new heavens and earth would be such that the former ones would not only not be regretted, but would not even be had in remembrance. No one would so much as think of them.

Ver. 18.—**I create Jerusalem** (comp. Rev. xxi. 2, "I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, *coming down from God out of heaven*, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"). The description which follows in vers. 11, 12 is quite unlike that of the old Jerusalem. **A rejoicing.** The "new Jerusalem" was to be from the first all joy and rejoicing—a scene of perpetual gladness. Her people also was to be "a joy" or "a delight," since God would delight in them (ver. 19).

Ver. 19.—**The voice of weeping shall be no more heard** (comp. Rev. xxi. 4). The reasons there given are satisfactory: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow . . . neither shall there be any more pain." But these reasons scarcely apply here. For Isaiah's "new Jerusalem" is not without death (ver. 20), nor without sorrow, since it is not without sin (ver. 20), nor, as there is death there, is it without pain. Isaiah's picture, according to Delitzsch, represents the millennial state, not the final condition of the redeemed; but this trait—the absence of *all* weeping—can only be literally true of the final state.

Ver. 20.—**There shall be no more thence an infant of days**; *i.e.* there shall not go from the new Jerusalem into the unseen world any infant of a few days old. On the contrary, even "the youth" shall reach a hundred; *i.e.* one who dies when he is a hundred shall be regarded as cut off in his youth. The general rule shall be, that old men shall "fill their days," or attain to patriarchal longevity. Even the sinner, who is under the curse of God, shall not be cut off till he is a hundred. What is most remarkable in the description is that death and sin are represented as still continuing. Death was spoken of as "swallowed up in victory" in one of the earlier descriptions of Messiah's kingdom (ch. xxv. 8).

Ver. 21.—**They shall build houses, and inhabit them.** The curse pronounced on apostasy in Deut. xxviii. 30 shall no more rest on God's people. They shall have the fruition of their labours. No enemy shall be able to deprive them of their crops and houses.

Ver. 22.—**As the days of a tree are the days of my people.** Trees endure for many hundreds, perhaps for thousands of years. The cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Bashan, were known to have an antiquity of centuries. Isaiah may have had a knowledge of other trees to which attached the tradition of a yet longer existence. In our own day Brazil and California have furnished proofs of vegetable growths exceeding a millennium. **Mine elect shall long enjoy**; literally, *shall wear out*; i.e. have the *full* use and enjoyment of the work of their hands.

Ver. 23.—**They shall not . . . bring forth for trouble.** Their women shall not bear children to see them carried off after a few days, or months, or years, by disease, or accident, or famine, or the sword of the invader. There shall be an end of such "troubles," and, God's blessing resting upon those who are his children, their children shall, as a general rule, "be with them;" *i.e.* remain to them during their lifetime, and not be lost to them by a premature decease.

Ver. 24.—**Before they call, I will answer.** God is always "more ready to hear than we to pray." In the "new Jerusalem" he will be prompt to answer his people's prayers almost before they are uttered. It is involved in this, as Delitzsch notes, that the will of the people shall be in harmony with the will of Jehovah, and that their prayers will therefore be acceptable prayers.

Ver. 25.—**The wolf and the lamb shall feed together** (comp. ch. xi. 6—8; Hos. ii. 18). The portraiture here is far less elaborate than in the earlier chapter, to which the present passage may be regarded as a reference. (For the sense in which the entire

picture is to be understood, see the comment upon ch. xi. 6—9.) **Dust shall be the serpent's meat.** Here we have a new feature, not contained in the earlier description. Serpents shall become harmless, and instead of preying upon beasts, or birds, or reptiles, shall be content with the food assigned them in the primeval decree, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and *dust shalt thou eat* all the days of thy life" (Gen. iii. 14). Mr. Cheyne appositely notes that "*much dust* is the food of the shades in the Assyrio-Babylonian Hades" (see the "Legend of Ishtar" in the 'Records of the Past,' vol. i. p. 143, line 8). **They shall not hurt nor destroy.** Repeated from ch. xi. 9, word for word. In neither case should we regard the subject of the sentence as limited to the animals only. The meaning is that there shall be no violence of any kind, done either by man or beast, in the happy period described.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*Men's sins recorded in God's book.* As far back as the time of Moses, God announced through him that men's sins were "laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures" (Deut. xxxii. 34). The later prophets (Mal. iii. 16), with the Psalms (Ps. lvi. 8), and the Revelation of St. John (xx. 12—15), speak of "a book," or "books, of remembrance," which contain the record of human frailty. Jeremiah says, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond" (xvii. 1); and Daniel, like St. John, tells of a time when the judgment will be set, and "the books opened" (vii. 10). The heavenly registers record the acts of men, both good and bad; and in one register seem to be written the names of those whom God regards as "living ones" (ch. iv. 3). This register is called "the book of life" (Rev. iii. 5; xiii. 8; xvii. 8; xx. 12, 15). Such are the biblical statements on the subject. The expressions used are doubtless accommodations to human modes of thought, and are not to be taken literally. The great truth, however, which they convey is to be understood in the most absolute literalness. Men's sins will not be forgotten, even when they are forgiven. They are all registered in God's memory; and perhaps it may be found that each man's sins are also registered in some secret place of his own memory, though at present he is unable to recall the greater part of them. All will be taken into consideration at the time of judgment, and all will be set forth in the sight of men and angels. There is nothing "secret" which shall not then be "revealed," or "hid" which shall not be "known." Men will be judged and sentenced "according to their works" (Rev. xx. 13)—"according to that they have done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Cor. v. 10).

Vers. 8—10.—*Where sin abounds, grace yet more abounds.* The portrait of Israel in vers. 2—7 is painted in such dark colours as to suggest that it must almost necessarily be followed by the absolute renunciation of the whole nation. A people "rebellious," "walking in the way that is not good," "provoking God to anger continually," given over to a sensualistic idolatry, and yet proud, piquing itself upon its elevated religious position as a participant in certain heathen mysteries (ver. 5),—what can be done with such a nation of backsliders? Must not God sweep it from the earth? Certainly, if it were not for God's *abounding* mercy; if the sight of a people given up to sin did not raise in him as much pity as indignation, as much compassion as resentment. After all, they are his children; they are his people; they are "all the work of his hands" (ch. lxiv. 8). God, in his compassion, pours out his grace freely under such circumstances. He seeks among the lost, if so be that any among them may be saved. He offers his grace to them all, presses it upon them, "spreads out his hands all the day" to the rebels, entreating them to return and submit themselves, and be saved. What mercy does he show to Nineveh! Because it is "a bloody city . . . all full of lies and robbery" (Nah. iii. 1), because "their wickedness is come up before him" (Jonah i. 2), therefore he goes out of his way to send his prophet to preach repentance to them. He forces his prophet to go to them; he puts his word into his prophet's mouth, and makes that word, for the moment at any rate, effectual. Nineveh "repents at the preaching of Jonah," and, on its repentance, is "spared" for above two centuries. Israel now is spared, invited to return to Judæa, bidden to "dwell there" and

"inherit it." And "a remnant" hearkens, and returns, and repents, and "does the first works" (Rev. ii. 5), and becomes a great and flourishing and religious people.

Vers. 13—15.—*The contrasts of the religious with the irreligious life.* The prophet notices three main contrasts.

I. GOD'S SERVANTS ARE FED WITH A FOOD THAT SATISFIES; HIS ADVERSARIES ARE TORMENTED BY A CEASELESS CRAVING. Man is so constituted that nothing short of his highest good contents him. Earthly blessings, health, wealth, success, fame, power, glory, leave a void in the heart which nothing earthly can fill up. The worldling is always dissatisfied, always desires more than he has, craves some fresh excitement, desires some "new pleasure." "Hungry and thirsty, their souls faint in them" (Ps. cvii. 5). With God's servants the case is different. A Divine contentedness fills their hearts. They have been given to drink of a water of which "whosoever drinketh shall never thirst," but it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). They have God for their Saviour; they are at one with him; and in this communion they rest satisfied; they neither hunger nor thirst.

II. GOD'S SERVANTS SING FOR JOY OF HEART; HIS ADVERSARIES HOWL FOR VEXATION OF SPIRIT. "The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the dwellings of the righteous" (Ps. cxviii. 15). The love of God, which "casts out fear" (1 John iv. 18), reigns in their hearts, and elevates them above the troubles and anxieties of ordinary human life. They "know whom they have believed;" they know in whom they trust. All their care they have cast upon God; and hence they are without care; their souls are full of an ineffable joy and satisfaction; they want nothing, unless it be to have their communion with God complete (Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2, 4; Phil. i. 23, etc.). But the adversaries of God are always vexed in spirit. Worldly cares trouble them; worldly disappointments annoy them; doubts and misgivings with respect to the future weigh on them; an awful fear lest they have entirely mistaken the true end and aim of life broods over them. In the expressive language of Scripture, they "howl" through anguish of heart—complain, murmur, proclaim themselves pessimists. The world, to their thinking, is the worst of conceivable worlds; the scheme of the universe, if there be any such scheme, a gigantic fraud and mistake.

III. GOD'S SERVANTS BRING A BLESSING UPON THE EARTH; HIS ADVERSARIES LEAVE THEIR NAME AS A CURSE TO IT. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. v. 6). God would have spared Sodom if it had contained "ten righteous" (Gen. xviii. 32). It is the existence of his servants upon the earth that especially commends the earth to his care, and causes him to watch over it, to sustain it, and to bless the increase of it. Moreover, the servants of God are a blessing to mankind at large, (1) as an example to them; (2) as a real help to them if they desire to amend their ways; (3) as in many respects ameliorating and elevating their condition. God's adversaries, on the contrary, are in every respect a curse to the earth. They debase its moral tone; they stir up strife in it; they are the authors of war, bloodshed, enmities, calumnies, uncleanness, variance, sedition, heresy, blasphemy, and the like; they caused God once to "repent that he had made man on the earth" (Gen. vi. 6), and they cause him continually to look upon the earth with more or less of disfavour. Their presence pollutes the earth, and makes it necessary that "the first heaven and the first earth" shall "pass away" (Rev. xxi. 1), and be superseded by "new heavens and a new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (2 Pet. iii. 13).

Vers. 17—25.—*The new creation.* It is difficult to harmonize the various passages of Scripture which touch on "the new creation." In one place (Acts iii. 21) it is called an ἀποκατάστασις, in another (Matt. xix. 23) a παλιγγενεσία. Sometimes its scene appears to be the present world purified (ch. ii. 2—4); sometimes an entirely new world created for the habitation of God's people (ch. lxv. 17, 18). Perhaps the best explanation is that of Delitzsch, that there are to be altogether three worlds, or three ages. 1. The first age, or ordinary human life, as we have hitherto known it—a checkered scene of sin and holiness, of happiness and misery, of sorrow and rejoicing. 2. The second age, or the period of the millennium, in which "the patriarchal measure of human life will return, in which death will no more break off the life that is just beginning to bloom, and in which the war of man with the animal world will be

exchanged for peace without danger." 3. And the third age, or a final state of happiness in heaven, or the heavenly Jerusalem, when death will be destroyed, and sin will be no more, and tears will be wiped from all eyes, and the former things will be passed away altogether (Rev. xxi. 4). The three ages are distinctly marked only in the apocalyptic vision of St. John the divine (ch. xx., xxi.). Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophets have an indistinct view, in which the second age and the third age are confused together, the characteristics being chiefly those of Age II., but some of the characteristics of Age III. being intermingled. Age I. and Age III. are common to all the redeemed. Age II. will belong only to a select few—"the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands," who will "live and reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. xx. 4).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Threatenings and promises.* Both, as it would appear, addressed to the chosen people, though many, including St. Paul, apply the earlier part of the passage to the conversion of the Gentiles. There is a polytheistic party, and a party of true believers in the nation.

I. GOD BEFOREHAND WITH MEN. He "allows himself to be consulted;" he "offers answers," or "is heard" by those who came not to consult him. He was "at hand to those who did not seek him." To a nation that did not call on him he cried, "Here I am!" (ch. lxiv. 7; xliii. 22). It is actually he who "spreads out his hands"—"in the gesture of prayer; what a condescension!" (cf. Prov. i. 24). And this "all the day," or continuously—"as if God did beseech you." It is a thought full of deep pathos and Divine beauty, that God no less seeks men than they seek him. He in a sense prays them to be reconciled to him. While, therefore, prayer is in one aspect the going forth of active desires after God, on the other hand it is the response to his action upon us. Not a day passes but the gentle mercy and love expressed in his providence offers its silent plea to heart and conscience: "Child of man! I love thee; come to me, and be at peace."

II. THE STUBBORNNESS OF MAN. The people are described as "unruly," and as "walking in a way which is not good, after their own thoughts." In the will and its licence, falsely called liberty, lies the mischief. The carnal mind is not "subject to God, neither indeed can be." In "will-worship," the indulgence of the senses and the caprices of the fancy, lies the source of idolatry. And thus they irritate Jehovah to his face continually. They sacrifice in the gardens and on the bricks, *i.e.* the tiles of the houses (2 Kings xxiii. 12; Zeph. i. 5; Jer. xix. 13), or on altars of materials forbidden by the Law (Exod. xx. 24, 25). They appear to be guilty of necromancy, of the consultation of dreams or citation of the departed. They incur ceremonial pollution by eating of swine's flesh and other animals. And, initiated into some heathen rites, they had actually assumed a superior holiness to that of the people of God, thus caricaturing the true religion.

III. THE WRATH AND VENGEANCE OF JEHOVAH. Here, again, the strongest figures are employed. These abominations are "a smoke in his nose, a fire burning all the day long." Nothing can more strongly express what is offensive and irritating. So in Deut. xxxii. 22, "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell" (cf. Ps. xviii. 5; Ezek. xxxviii. 18). And with equal force the *certainty of Divine vengeance* is described. Either the sin of the Jews, or the Divine decree for its punishment, is written before Jehovah. The allusion is to the custom of kings of recording decrees in a volume or on a tablet, and *kept in their presence*, so that they might not be forgotten. Moreover, "the fortunes of men, past, present, and future, are all noted in the heavenly registers" (ch. iv. 3; Ps. lxvi. 8; Dan. vii. 10). A book of remembrance was written before Jehovah (Mal. iii. 16). From this follows the *justice of Divine punishment.* He will not *keep silence;* nothing shall suppress his just edict or sentence. He will certainly *recompense*, and in full measure; the large and loose bosom of the Oriental garment being, by a figure, viewed as the receptacle of those Divine

penalties (Ps. lxxix. 12; Jer. xxxii. 18; Luke vi. 38; Exod. iv. 6, 7; Prov. vi. 27). The firm scriptural doctrine that the consequences of ancestral sin pass over to posterity here appears (Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7; Job xxi. 19; Numb. xiv. 18; Luke xi. 50, 51). There seems to have been a *founding* and an accumulation of crime which now threatens to sweep down every barrier before it.

IV. THE BEAM OF HOPE. In this extreme of denunciation and despair a transition, as ever, occurs. His mercy is not "clean gone for ever." The majority of Israel may be evil, for all that there is ever a "remnant" according to the election of grace. The vintagers, finding but a few good grapes on a cluster, say to each other—perhaps it is the snatch of a vintage-song—"Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it." We are too ready to deal with men in the lump and in the mass—they are a "bad lot," in familiar language we say. But the Divine eye marks the *element of worth* amidst the most corrupt and worthless mass (cf. ch. i. 9; vii. 3; x. 21; xi. 11—16). That which has the *germinal principle*, the seed-life in it, he cherishes; he will, in spite of all that is of another quality in the midst of which it may be imbedded, preserve. So here, the mountains and the whole land from east to west shall be preserved by the people (ch. xxxiii. 9; Josh. vii. 24—26). Tillage is the very symbol of peace, plenty, prosperity (ch. xxx. 23, 24). A traveller may see in the valley of Sharon, when the sun gilds the mountain-top, and the flocks are returning to their fold, a visible expression of the future Paradise of God. "What a Paradise was here when Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, and sang of the roses of Sharon! What a heaven upon earth will be here again, when he that is greater than Solomon shall sit on the throne of David; for in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth!"—J.

Vers. 11—16.—*The doom of the idolaters.* I. THE SINS. On the one hand it is the forsaking of Jehovah, the forgetting of his holy mountain. It is the keeping aloof from the true worship celebrated on Mount Moriah. But the heart of man knows no deeper need than that of worship; and the setting of the tables before the images of heathen deities (*lectisternia*) witnesses, even as an aberration and a caricature, to that yearning for communion with the Divine which true religion and revelation recognize and offer to satisfy. Here Gad, a Canaanitish god, is named; and M'ni, a Syrian deity. Similar rites prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, and other peoples of antiquity. In the first 'Iliad,' at the sacrificial feast, the god is supposed to be present, himself a partaker, and a listener to the people's song of praise. Between such worship and that of the Eternal, the sole and incomparable Holy One of Israel, there could be no compromise.

II. THE CAUSE. *The sword.* There may be an extreme of human obstinacy and perversity for which there is no cure but the sword. And thus we may even see in war a Divine purgative, and allow some truth in the stern saying of one of our poets, "Yea! carnage is thy daughter." So the invasion of the Chaldeans was recognized as a scourge sent to chastise the abominations of the priests and the people (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14, 16, 17). *Want and poverty*, and all the associated sufferings. And here again it must be admitted the "curse does not causeless come." There is a *general* connection at least between poverty, famine, and some neglect of Divine commands; and it may be seen in the lore of ancient nations in general. The time of drought was ever recognized as a time for special prayers and sacrifices. The name of the unfaithful ones shall become as a byword in formulas of imprecation.

III. THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE GOD. Ever, against the background of human infidelity and fickleness, he shines out in the splendour of self-consistency, the "God of the Amen," the "Faithful and True Witness." The "Amen" seems to refer to the solemn associations of the oath and the covenant (Deut. xxvii. 15). He stands in a *sacramental* mutual relation to his people. "They my people, I their God." If they be true to him, he will be certain to bless them. Religion has a deep mystical root—a conscience toward God, which in purity is the fount of all blessing, the defilement of which is the origin of all curse.—J.

Vers. 17—25.—*The new creation.* It seems that the leading thought of the prophet is the transformation of nature in harmony with the changed nature of man. Its

grandeur needs not to be pointed out. Ordinarily, indeed, we think of man's dependence on nature. If the thought be pushed to its limits, it ends in materialism. Spiritual religion, on the contrary, sees in the changes of nature a human pathos; its waste and desolation the effect of human sin, of violated Divine laws; its flourishing aspect and fertility the effect of human obedience and true religion (cf. ch. xi. 6—9; xxx. 26; xliii. 19; li. 16). Upon the difficult interpretation of such language much difference of opinion naturally arises; but it is open to all to catch the inspiration of the thoughts.

I. THE DIVINE EXULTATION ON THE NEW CREATION. It was said of the Creator at the beginning that he looked with complacent joy upon his works. All was very good. It was the "joy of God to see a happy world." How much deeper the Divine complacency in moral renewal! Note the emphasis and iteration of the thought. *Rejoicing, exultation*, is the very key-note of the passage; weeping and the sound of crying is to be as unheard as at the gayest scene of festival. And may we not feel that beneath all the sadness, the discord, the gloom of this enigmatic world, the prophetic pulse of the Divine creation, love, is ever exultantly beating? May we not believe that there is ever before his eye the picture, rising to clearness of outline and brilliancy of colour out of Erebos and Chaos, of eternal day, of the new heavens and earth wherein dwell righteousness? There should be in every heart a prophetic sympathy, which should vibrate in unison with these oracles of God.

II. PARADISAIC PICTURES. Under imagery, partly endeared to the Hebrew heart and fancy, partly of Oriental tinge in general, the heart of man resents the doom of an "untimely" death—it seems contrary to the intention of nature; and aspires to length of days as a good. Here it is predicated that no death in infancy shall occur; that one who dies at the age of a hundred shall be regarded as early lost, and even the wicked shall not be cut off before their hundredth year. "The number of their days shall they complete, and they shall grow old in peace, and the years of their happiness shall be many" (Book of Enoch, v. 9). Similar is the picture of the silver race in the 'Works and Days' of Hesiod, ver. 130. The human race shall attain the longevity of the oak, the terebinth, the cedar, or the cypress. The proverbial *sic vos non vobis* will have lost its applicability. One will not build, and another enter the finished habitation; one will not sow, and another reap; but each man will "see the fruit of his labour;" the work of their hands the elect shall use to the full. The rising hope of parents shall not be nipped in the bud; nor shall the travail of body or of mind be mocked, as it too often seems now, by an empty result. That element of contradiction or seeming contradiction to the benevolent scheme of the world, which has perplexed the thought of sages in every time, shall disappear even from the animal world. The wild animals shall lose their ferocity, and the malignant infernal serpent, as it would seem, shall be banished to his subterranean domain. Here, again, we find parallel pictures in Oriental poets, and in the Romans Virgil and Horace. Perhaps few would be disposed to take these descriptions literally. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of the animal world remaining what it is in other respects, yet with its native instincts changed. Yet how great a marvel is the conversion of a single human soul! If the savage passions which rage there can be subdued and brought under the obedience of Christ, why need we despair of a nation, of a race? At any rate, all things assume a changed aspect to the renewed soul, which means the purged eyes, the deeper insight into the perfect wisdom and love which preside over the universe. The discontent we feel with the present scheme of things is a hint that the soul is secretly acquainted with their other, their ideal or Divine side.—J.

Ver. 23.—*Requited toil.* "They shall not labour in vain." This is God's comfort to all his faithful servants. Success is not to be measured by our sight, or by the statistics and "seemings" of superficial men.

I. HARVESTS ARE SOMETIMES LONG DELAYED. It has been so in our foreign mission fields, and it is so often here at home in our Christian Churches, and it is so in our families. But the Divine seed only "slumbers;" it does not "perish." Harvests often sprout in greenness and wave in golden glory over men's graves.

II. HARVESTS ARE NOT TO BE MEASURED BY THEIR FIRSTFRUITS. There, in a school or a church, some Henry Martyn, some Wilberforce, some Heber, some Livingstone, is brought into Christ's fold. Perhaps that soul is the only *one* soul we can make

estimate of in a whole year's toil. We may, perhaps, feel disappointed—only one; but that one soul may be, under God, the means of giving spiritual life to a new continent. We must wait and work, and never weary, for Christ *must* reign. And the sower *shall* in due season reap, if he faint not.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—7.—*The offensiveness and the doom of sin.* The passage brings out in a very graphic form—

I. THE OFFENSIVENESS OF SIN. 1. *Assumption.* "Walking after their own thoughts" instead of reverently inquiring God's will (ver. 2). 2. *Positive disobedience* in the manner of Divine worship (ver. 3). 3. *Superstitious practices*, implying discontent with the disclosures God had made in his holy Word (ver. 4). 4. *Irreligious self-indulgence* (ver. 4). 5. *Spiritual pride.* "I am holier than thou" (ver. 5) All these things were hateful to the Holy One of Israel; they constituted "rebellion" in his sight (ver. 2); they amounted to a defiant provocation of his wrath (ver. 3); they were as a continual smoke in the nostrils (ver. 5). All sin, whatever be its form or name, is "an abominable thing which God hates;" it is to his pure eyes unutterably loathsome; it is as the leprous skin to the eyes of man—he "cannot look upon" it. It draws down his righteous condemnation.

II. ITS INEVITABLE DOOM. 1. We must not argue non-observance or indifference from temporary silence. "Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence" (ver. 6; Ps. l. 21). 2. Guilt accumulates with time (ver. 7). God mercifully postpones punishment, thus giving opportunity for repentance and escape. But if there be impenitence and continuance in sin, there is an awful "treasuring up of wrath," an accumulation of guilt against a day of account. Nations, families, Churches, individual souls, may well take earnest heed to this solemn truth. 3. There is an absolute certainty and fulness of penalty to the obdurate. "I *will* recompense, even recompense," etc.; "I will measure their work," etc. 4. Those who have abused their trust must look for a humiliating displacement (ver. 1). God will remove the chosen instrument of his truth and grace, and he will find another to do his work. Let the too-confident "children of the kingdom" beware lest they have to make room for those whom they have been accustomed to despise.—C.

Ver. 5.—*The hopeless.* The husbandman is often tempted to tear up the vine, or to pluck up the herb, or to plough up the crop, when patience and painstaking would result in flower and fruit. In the spiritual world, it is often found that where death seemed to prevail, there was life beneath the surface.

I. THE APPEARANCE OF SPIRITUAL DEATH. The *Church* is so degenerate, that the teaching of Divine truth is found to be ineffectual; the *nation* so corrupt, that the statesman and the magistrate and the teacher are powerless; the *family* so depraved, that it is a pest to the community; the *child* so wayward, that parental authority is no restraint. Then is entertained—

II. THE POLICY OF ABANDONMENT. Those who are pure, reverent, loyal; they to whom iniquity is found to be hateful; men that are anxious to use their opportunities, so as to get some spiritual returns;—these say, or are inclined to say, "Let us leave these souls so fast imbedded in sin whom we cannot extricate, and let us seek and save those who can be reached and rescued." Then comes—

III. THE PLEA OF FAITH AND PITY. "Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." "Let it alone this year" (Luke xiii. 6—9). That root that looks dead is not dead, and under careful nourishment it will revive. That *soul* that seems dead is not dead; there is a seed of life in it still; beneath all its folly, its waywardness, its vice, its guilt, there is a possibility of true repentance; there is a sensibility which will respond to patient, human love; there is a spiritual capacity which the truth of God, made mighty by the Spirit of God, will touch with renewing power, and from which unsuspected beauties and graces will arise. Within the ugliest and most worthless souls there may lie concealed germs of real nobility. Wait long, very long, before you abandon to destruction. Over them, and of them, the Divine voice may be whispering, "There is a blessing in *them* for the loving, patient, prayerful workman."—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*From depression to prosperity.* We learn here—

I. THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD MAY FALL INTO A STATE OF SAD DEPRESSION. "Jacob" and "Judah," at the time of this prophecy, were reduced to a very low estate. It seemed as if they would produce nothing.

II. THAT COMFORT MAY THEN BE FOUND IN GOD'S RELATION TO THEM. They are still "mine elect;" still those whom the Divine Father pities and purposes to bless, for whom the Divine Saviour died, with whom the Divine Spirit pleads.

III. THAT THEY SHOULD SPEND THEIR STRENGTH IN SEEKING AND IN SERVING. "My servants shall dwell there . . . for my people that have sought me." In the time of difficulty and distress let good men be earnest and constant in prayer; let them be consistent in life and active in holy labour. Then they will find—

IV. THAT THEY MAY LOOK FOR A RENEWED AND A NOBLE HERITAGE. From end to end of the land (from Sharon to Achor) the scenes of pastoral industry shall be witnessed, and God's servants shall dwell in the land; there shall be *fulness* and *permanence* of blessing.—C.

Ver. 20.—*The Christian view of age.* These words are not to be taken literally; they are distinctly pictorial, highly hyperbolical; they indicate a state of future blessedness, employing images most likely to be impressive and inspiring at the time of utterance. They may suggest to us the Christian aspect of old age.

I. THAT CHRISTIAN LIFE TENDS TO LENGTH OF DAYS. Health, and therefore life, depends most on habit. What shortens life is folly, irregularity, excess, anxiety, sorrow; Christian principles guard against these, or materially modify them. What lengthens life is purity, temperance, serenity, and cheerfulness of spirit; Christian principles are a security for these.

II. THAT CHRISTIAN LIFE TENDS TO PRESERVE THE CHILD-HEART IN THE AGED MAN. A beautiful object is a "green old age;" an excellent thing it is when "he that is a hundred years old dies a youth." The best preservative of freshness of spirit, openness of mind, youthfulness of heart, is *an unselfish habit.* Disinterestedness of soul, broad and generous sympathies, active participation in all onward movements,—this will keep the heart of youth in the form of age.

III. THAT THE CHRISTIAN PROMISE POINTS TO THE LONG FUTURE. "The shorter life, the earlier immortality."

IV. THAT WE MAY DIE YOUNG, AND YET FILL UP THE MEASURE OF OUR DAYS. Our Lord died a young man, and yet he "finished the work which the Father gave him to do." Many martyrs, many devoted labourers in the field of usefulness, have failed to reach extreme old age, but they have not failed to accomplish the task which the great Leader had set them. The excellency of life depends on its quality, not on its quantity. "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand," etc. "Though the sinner die a hundred years old, he shall be accursed," and his life will be a bane and a blot. A very few years (or months) of holy service may be of inestimable service to the cause of Christ and of man.—C.

Ver. 24.—*The Divine readiness.* Man is slow to respond. 1. His *limited intelligence* makes him slow to apprehend what is needed. 2. His *imperfect sensibility* makes him slow to feel the urgency of the need. 3. His *feebleness of execution* makes him slow to interpose and to effect. God is not under these limitations. His perfect readiness is seen in—

I. HIS ANTICIPATION OF OUR NECESSITIES. Providing this world for our habitation; preparing its soil and its seed; storing its coal and its metals, etc.; providing for our wants in sunshine and in rain, etc., which come without our asking for them; having all kinds of truth and knowledge ready for our inquiry; etc.

II. HIS ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS. 1. Sometimes literally granting our requests at the very time of our asking (Dan. ix. 20, 21). 2. Always virtually meeting us with an immediate response; for when he does not grant us all we ask instantly, as he could not do with any regard to our real and spiritual interests, he does hear us and heed us, and determine in what way he will bless us.

III. HIS RESPONSE TO OUR APPEAL IN SORROW AND IN PENITENCE. There are two things in regard to which the words of our text are emphatically true. 1. When *in sorrow* we ask for his *sympathy.* When the cares, anxieties, disappointments, losses,

separations of life, overtake us, then the stricken heart of man turns and looks for the healing hand of God, then the troubled child goes to his heavenly Father; and never vainly. For in the very act of an appeal, while we are yet upon our knees, before we have left the sanctuary, God has laid his kind hand upon us, Jesus Christ has spoken "peace" to our agitated spirit. 2. When *in penitence* we ask for his *pardon*. When, away in the far country of unbelief, or of wrong-doing, or of irreligion, or of unfaithfulness and backsliding, or of indecision and procrastination, we hear the summons from the Father's home, and when we say, "I will arise and return," what happens then? A Divine readiness to receive us, even as the great Teacher has shown us. Then the Father of souls does not wait to be convinced, and to be induced to pardon and reinstate us. He *comes forth to meet us;* he anticipates our action; he breaks in upon our confession with his words of forgiving and accepting love (Luke xv. 21, 22); he overwhelms us with the proofs of his Divine affection.—C.

Vers. 1—3.—*Divine reproaches.* In the two previous chapters we find the prophet, pleading in the name of Israel, had urged that God kept strange silence when his people were so long held captive, and their land lay so desolate. In this chapter we have the Divine answer to the prophet's plea. There was good reason for the long delay. Instead of the people reproaching their God, their God might much more reasonably reproach them, for they had rejected his long and earnest appeals; they had put the stumbling-blocks in the way of their own restoration. They were not "straitened in God;" they were "straitened in their own selves." "He has called his people, but in vain; they have been obstinately deaf to him, unfaithful, and superstitious. The unfaithful shall be punished; but a faithful remnant shall be saved and restored to Zion, and from them the promises shall take effect" (Matthew Arnold). The Divine reproaches here may be regarded as addressed to three classes—the negligent, the wilful, and the insolent.

I. DIVINE REPROACHES OF THE NEGLIGENT. There are always among us those who give no heed to God, whether he speaks in thunder-voice, or with the still small voice; in judgments or in mercies; from Sinai or from Zion. This is the most perplexing difficulty with which God's ministers have to deal. Men hear, but give no heed. They even recognize the truth and importance of what is declared, but fail to see any relation in which it stands to them. No harder work is set before the servants of God than to break down pride and self-satisfaction, and awaken personal concern. Indifference to heavenly and Divine things keeps men away even from God's "feast of fat things, and wines on the lees well refined." Ministers have constantly to be the arousing trumpet-blast, which cries, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

II. DIVINE REPROACHES OF THE WILFUL. The secret of wilfulness is over-confidence in self. A man persuades himself that it "is in man that walketh to direct his steps." Or, as Isaiah puts it, a man is quite comfortable, walketh "after his own thoughts," even though he goes in a way that is not good. Such a man opposes all Divine voices and messages, because he finds the beginning of every one of them is this, "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God." Wilful people will have *their* way, but they will not have *God's* way.

III. DIVINE REPROACHES OF THE INSOLENT. (Ver. 3.) "Provoketh me to anger continually to my face." It is strange that we must recognize a more hopeful condition in active opposition to God, than in dogged and sullen resistance, or in weak indifference. The man who can oppose has strength of character, and Divine reproach may be convincing to him.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The pride of superior holiness.* Dr. W. Kay has a suggestive note on this verse: "A deep insight is here given us into the nature of the mysterious fascination which heathenism exercised on the Jewish people. The Law humbled them at every turn with mementoes of their own sin, and of God's unapproachable holiness. Paganism freed them from this, and allowed them (in the midst of moral pollution) to cherish lofty pretensions to sanctity. The man who had been offering incense on the mountain-top despised the penitent who went to the temple to present 'a broken and contrite heart.' If Pharisaism led to a like result, it was because it, too, had emptied the Law of its spiritual import, and turned its provisions into intellectual idols."

Henderson says, "The conceit of imaginary holiness, accruing from certain external relations, and the performance of certain ritual or bodily exercises, such as the Jews have long entertained, and which is also awfully prevalent among nominal Christians, Jehovah here declares to be peculiarly offensive to him." The illustration of this "stand-by" attitude is found in our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

I. HOLINESS OF RITUAL. Religion may be a *doing* or a *being*. The religion of doing is the minute and careful observance of ritual. It may be ritual as appointed by God, or it may be ritual as arranged by man. A certain goodness, righteousness, bringing with it much self-satisfaction, and a great disposition to despise others, may come out of a religion of *doing*. Thousands have been fascinated by it in every age. And yet it is but an external matter, of the senses and of the mind; and it has always been found possible to keep it up along with heart-impurities and life-immoralities. The ritualist is not at all bound to be a clean-living man. Pharisees thought themselves holy, on the ground of their precise obediences; and it was a Pharisaic commonplace to live in self-indulgence and sin. Matthew Arnold, writing of such mere ritual holiness, says, "Doing all this out of superstition, and out of the vain notion that it will be of religious avail to them, they insolently repel their unsuperstitious and faithful brethren as less holy than themselves." In a thousand ways, and constantly, it is needful to press on attention that ritual is an *aid to* holiness, not holiness, and the danger of ritual is (1) that it may blind us to the goodness of those who are not holy *in the same way*; and (2) it may make us indifferent to the claims of *spiritual* holiness.

II. HOLINESS OF HEART. (See the kind of holiness acceptable to God, shown in a former homily on ch. lxvi. 1, 2.)—R. T.

Vers. 13—15.—*Contrasted lots of those who serve God and those who forsake him.* This passage should be compared with Luke vi. 20—26. "The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woeful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set, the one over against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other."

I. CONTRAST THE TWO KINDS OF LIFE. The man who fears God and sets his heart upon serving him, finds the promises fulfilled—"Verily thou shalt be filled;" "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate." He may take his place in anxious and troublous times, but since he is God's servant, he shall be even as Elijah, fed by ravens, or by poor widows, if need be. The man who fears not God is left to ordinary human devices, and may be left hungry and thirsty and desolate. He holds no guarantee. The Giver of all good is under no covenant-pledge to see that he wants no good thing. "God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon continually, and shall want nothing that is good for them. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in it, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving. In communion with God and dependence upon him there is full satisfaction; but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but dissatisfaction and disappointment."

II. CONTRAST THE TWO KINDS OF DISPOSITIONS. Trust in God brings peace and heart-rest. Those who know what soul-rest is, find it easy to sing and give thanks. "The joy of the Lord is their strength." There is good cheer and high hope in their souls. "God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart; they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them but may have an allay sufficient for it. But, on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss, wherewith they had flattered themselves, are frustrated, oh, what confusion will fill their faces!" (Matthew Henry). "The joy of the world resembles a torrent. As upon a glut of rain, you shall have a torrent come rolling along with noise and violence, overflowing its banks, and bearing all before it; yet it is but muddy and impure water, and it is soon gone and dried up: such is all the joy this world can give. It makes a great noise, it is commonly immoderate, and swells beyond its due bounds; yet it is but a muddy and impure joy; it soon rolls away, and leaves nothing behind but a drought in the soul. Now, since the world's joy is but such a poor empty thing as this, it is most gross folly for us to lay out our best love upon that which cannot repay us with the best joy" (Bishop Hopkins).—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*A new earth.* The idea is that God will be sure to take care that a man's surroundings match the man himself. He will have a new earth for regenerate men. He will have heaven for those who can be "holy still." The fundamental idea of the verse is that nature itself must be transformed to be in harmony with regenerate Israel. Long life shall be one of the marked peculiarities of the "new earth." Cheyne quotes the following similar passage to ver. 20 from the Book of Enoch: "And they shall not be punished all their life long, neither shall they die by plagues and judgments; but the number of their days shall they complete, and they shall grow old in peace, and the years of their happiness shall be many, in everlasting bliss and peace, their whole life long." Some take this text as a poetical representation of the new condition into which the returned exiles entered; and in that view we have an ideal picture of what ought to have been. We, however, take the more general principle that God makes a new earth for the new-born man; everything to him becomes new. And God makes a new earth for his sanctified Church—does make it, in a sense, now, and will make it, in a larger sense, by-and-by. In what sense, then, can we be said to want a "new earth"?

I. NOT IN THE SENSE OF A CHANGED WORLD OF THINGS. It is not possible for us to conceive of anything better, more restful, more satisfying, than this paradise of earth, which God has made and decked for us, with its hills, and vales, and streams, and seas, and flowers, and trees, and hoar-frost, and harvest-fields, and spring-time greenery, and autumn tinting. We love our earth, fair earth, and do not want it changed.

"'Twas a fair scene—a land more bright
Never did mortal eye behold! . . .
Those valleys and their fruits of gold
Basking in heaven's serenest light;
Those groups of lovely date trees bending
Languidly their leaf-crown'd heads,
Like youthful maids, when sleep descending
Warns them to their silken beds;
Those virgin lilies, all the night
Bathing their beauties in the lake,
That they may rise more fresh and bright
When their beloved sun's awake."

(T. Moore.)

We can, indeed, only conceive of heaven as like earth, all of it as beautiful as some of the earth is to us. Poetry anticipates that

"There, on a green and flowery mound,
Our weary souls shall sit."

And Scripture figures heaven as a city in a paradise. No sense of wanting relief from the ever-exquisite associations of earth comes to us. Even earth's dark things, her night, her winds, her storms, her winter, are precious to us, and we scarce would have them otherwise.

II. BUT IN THE SENSE OF A CHANGED WORLD OF BEINGS. There are lands where

". . . every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile;"

and it is just that "vileness of man" which has made earth so sad, life so bitter, and death so terrible. Could we clear the human race away, as with another flood or fire, and start again the cleansed earth with a race in whom righteousness should dwell, then, verily, we should want no other heaven—earth would be heaven. Illustrate these points: 1. The good man makes a new earth *of his sphere.* 2. The good parents make a new earth of their home. 3. The holy Church helps to make a new earth of social life. 4. The well-principled statesman tries to make a new earth of the nation. 5. Those who believe in God and know his redemption strive to make a new earth of the sorely smitten heathen lands. We all want that new earth in which holiness shall be everywhere—holiness the glorifying sunshine that makes earth to be summer-time always; holiness shall jingle from the very bells of the horses. Call *that* new earth what you may please, it will be *heaven.*—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The woe of aged sinners.* There are three special periods of life in which men are peculiarly exposed to the power of temptation and sin. Most men that fall, fall either into young men's perils, full-grown men's indulgences, or old men's sins. A pure, humble, godly old man is one of the noblest sights to be seen under heaven. And by so much as that is beautiful, a godless, characterless, debased old man is a shame and contempt. "A hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." Yet old age has its special evils. Temptations to those sins which the Bible gathers up into the word "uncleanness." Often uncleanness of word and conversation; often, alas! of life and conduct also. It would appear that bodily lust and passion gathers itself in old age for one last struggle to gain the mastery. The flame flares up in the socket, and old men need to keep very near to God, very much in the power of the sanctifying Spirit, if, having withstood all the perils of youth and manhood, they do not fall under the temptations of old age. What an awful sight is the foul-mouthed, leering-eyed, depraved old man, tottering on the very edge of the eternal, where "he that is filthy shall be filthy still"! The prophet tells of the time when there shall be no confusions about the state of aged sinners, because they are in great state, or are spared long. "The sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed."

I. THE WOE OF AGED SINNERS COMES IN BITTERNESS OF SUFFERING. The self-indulgent life ensures an unusually suffering old age. There are natural and necessary penalties, which are first smitings of Divine judgment.

II. THE WOE OF AGED SINNERS COMES IN THE ESTIMATE OF THOSE WHO TEND THEM. The aged sinner outlives his so-called friends, who shared his self-willed doings, and might have sympathized with him. He is put, for tending, into the hands of a new generation, who only see the wreck and ruin of body and character which the life has led to. He feels despised; he feels the misery of being despised. He knows well enough that they wish him gone.

III. THE WOE OF AGED SINNERS COMES IN FEARS OF THE FUTURE. It comes on a man sooner or later that he will have to "give an account of his stewardship." His body was not his own; his time was not his own; his talents were not his own; his possessions were not his own; his relations were not his own. Presently he asks himself—What have I done with God's property, which was entrusted for a while to my care? Conscious of having diverted God's property to his own uses, he may well fear to meet his offended God.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Swift answers to prayer.* The answer comes even when the prayer is but a thought, is only a sigh; for God is the Infinite Thought-reader.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near."

One of the wonderful revelations of the day that is coming will be God's showing us the many answers he sent to prayers of ours that never took shape in human words, that were no more than the outlook and uplook of our souls. The point impressed by the prophet here is that, by reason of man's sinfulness, delays in answering his prayers are often necessary, delay doing a very essential disciplinary and corrective work. But if a man were holy—in full harmony with God's will—there would never be any question about his prayers, never any need for delay in answering them. God could respond *at once.* "In man's experience of men, often, as things are now, in his relations with God, there is an interval between prayer and answer. In the new Jerusalem the two would be simultaneous, or the answer would anticipate the prayer." God's present method in relation to prayer may be illustrated from Dan. ix. 23; Luke xviii. 1—7; 2 Cor. xii. 8.

I. WHAT IS IT IN US THAT MAKES ANSWER TO PRAYER SLOW AND EVEN UNCERTAIN? It is certain that God is more willing to hear than we are to pray. He has made large and firm promises of answer if we pray; and yet sometimes his answer is a *refusal,* and at other times it is a *delay,* and at yet other times the gift of something which we did not desire. The explanation is in us; we either ask for wrong things, or else we ask in

a wrong spirit. We need rebuff, or we need correction. An unanswered prayer should always set us upon "examining ourselves."

II. WHAT IS IT IN US THAT MAKES ANSWER TO PRAYER COME SWIFTLY? The conformity of our desires with God's will, and the offering of ourselves in the spirit of submission, dependence, and trustful love, which becomes obedient children.

"Lord, teach us how to pray aright."

R. T.

SECTION XII. FINAL THREATENINGS AND PROMISES (CH. LXVI.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Vers. 1—4.—THE UNGODLY EXILES REBUKED. Israel, being about to return from the Captivity, had the design of rebuilding the temple and re-establishing the temple worship. God rebukes this design in persons devoid of any spirit of holiness, and warns them that mere formal outward worship is an abomination to him (vers. 1—3). In ver. 4 he threatens them with punishment.

Ver. 1.—**Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool** (comp. Ps. xi. 4; ciii. 19). The Hebrews, while they earnestly desired to have a material emblem of the presence of God in their midst, were deeply impressed with the feeling that no temple could be worthy of him, or other than most unworthy. "Will God," said Solomon, "indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heavens of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings viii. 27). And again, "Who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? Who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?" (2 Chron. ii. 6). Thus Isaiah's note of warning was no novelty, and might find responsive echoes in the hearts of many. **Where is the house that ye build unto me?** rather, *what manner of house is it that ye would build to me, and what manner of place for my rest?* God needs no "house;" and they cannot build him a house that could be in any way worthy of him. *They*, moreover, are unworthy to build him any house, which is the real ground of the refusal. There was no refusal, when the better part of the exiles, having returned, took the building in hand (see Ezra iii. 8—13; vi. 14, 15; Hag. i. 8—14; Zech. i. 16; iv. 9, etc.).

Ver. 2.—**All these things**—*i.e.* heaven and earth—**hath mine hand made**; *i.e.* have I, Jehovah, brought into existence. How, then, can I need that men should build me a house? **All these things have been, saith the Lord.** The sentence seems incomplete. Mr. Cheyne supplies, "I spoke." The sentence will then run, "I spoke, and all these things came into being, saith Jehovah;" *i.e.* heaven and earth, and all things that are therein, came into being at my word (comp. Gen. i. 1; ii. 1). **But to this man will I look**; *i.e.* though I have made all things and all men, I will not equally regard all. Him only will I respect who is of a poor and contrite spirit, etc. (comp. ch. lvii. 15).

Ver. 3.—**He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man**; literally, *is a manslayer*. The full meaning seems to be, "He that, not being of a poor and contrite spirit, would offer me an ox in sacrifice, is as little pleasing to me as a murderer." Sacrifice, without the true spirit of sacrifice, is an abomination (comp. ch. i. 11, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord," etc.). There, however, the sacrifices are actually offered; here they are hypothetical. The ungodly exiles design to offer sacrifice to God in his temple, when they have rebuilt it (ver. 1). God rejects their offerings by anticipation. **As if he cut off a dog's neck**; *i.e.* "would no more please me by the sacrifice than if he were to make an offering of the unclean dog." (On the uncleanness of the dog, see Deut. xxiii. 18.) **He that offereth an oblation**; or, *a meat offering* (see Lev. ii. 1—15). **He that burneth incense.** With his meat offering, as directed in Lev. ii. 1, 2. Such a one is no better than he that **blesseth** (*i.e.* worships) **an idol.** It may be suspected that the ritual acts selected for comparison with those of the Levitical law are practices to which the exiles were given (comp. ch. lxv. 3, 4). **Yea, they have chosen**, etc.; rather, *as they have chosen*. The clause stands over against the first clause of ver. 4, "As they (*gam hêmmah*) have chosen their ways, so I (*gam ăni*) have chosen their delusions."

Ver. 4.—**Their delusions**; or, *their childish follies* (LXX., ἐμπαίγματα). As God sends on some men "strong delusion that they

should believe a lie" (2 Thess. ii. 11), so on others he sends a spirit of childish folly, which makes their conduct silly and headstrong. Persons whose characters are of this stamp are especially liable to vain and groundless "fears." **When I called, none did answer** (comp. ch. lxv. 12, and see the comment on that passage).

Vers. 5—14.—THE GODLY EXILES ENCOURAGED. The scoffs which have long greeted those who believed God's promises and expected the restoration of Zion, will be put to shame. The silence in which Zion has lain will be broken; she will be once more a city "full of stirs, a tumultuous city" (ch. xxii. 2). Suddenly, without any pains of travail, she will bring forth; and her offspring will be "a nation born at once" (ver. 8). The godly exiles are called upon to rejoice at the prospect (ver. 10), and promised peace and comfort in the restored city (vers. 11—14).

Ver. 5.—**Hear . . . ye that tremble.** The godly are addressed—those that have a reverent fear of God's word (comp. ver. 2, *ad fin.*; and see also Ezra ix. 4; x. 3). **Your brethren that . . . cast you out**; rather, *that put you away* (Cheyne), or *thrust you from them* (Delitzsch). The verb used came in later times to designate formal excommunication; but here it points merely to a practical renunciation of fellowship. **Said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy**; rather, *said, Let Jehovah glorify himself, that we may see your joy*; i.e. "said sarcastically, May the prophecies be fulfilled, and God humble Babylon, and release Israel, and restore her, that we may witness your rejoicing. We should gladly see all this; but we do not in the least expect it." **And they shall be ashamed**; rather, *but as for them* (*i.e.* those who so speak) *they shall be ashamed.* The event shall shame them.

Ver. 6.—**A voice of noise from the city . . . from the temple.** The "city" and "temple" are suddenly in existence—they have sprung into being. The prophet sees Jerusalem rebuilt, restored, and hears sounds go forth from it—partly, perhaps, the sounds of ordinary city life; but amid these, there is **a voice of the Lord, rendering recompense to his enemies.** The Jewish state, restored by Zerubbabel, did, after a time, bring under subjection several of its ancient adversaries.

Vers. 7, 8.—**Before she travailed,** etc. Without any long delay, without any labour pains, Zion will bring forth **a man-child**—a whole **nation,** which will be **born at once,** and not grow up by slow degrees. The occupation of Jerusalem by the great body of the returned exiles (Ezra ii. 1; iii. 1) is intended. Such a second birth of a nation was strange, and without precedent (comp. ch. xlii. 9; xliii. 19). **Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?** rather, *can a land be brought forth in one day?* It is not only a people, but a country, that is born anew; not only the Jews, but Judæa

Ver. 9.—**Shall I bring to the birth,** etc.? *i.e.* "Should I arrange all the preliminary circumstances for the restoration of my people, and stop there?" (Cheyne). Nay, should I, having done so much, interpose at the last moment, to **shut** the womb? Without such interposition, matters have progressed so far, that the result must come.

Ver. 10.—**Rejoice ye with Jerusalem . . . all ye that love her.** The call to rejoicing is general. Restored Jerusalem is to be hailed with joy "by *all* who love her," whether her own children or foreigners. To both she will be a blessing (vers. 11—13).

Ver. 11.—**That ye may suck.** Restored Jerusalem will be as a mother to all who love her, to all who have mourned for her when she lay as it were dead (1 Sam. xv. 35; 2 Sam. xiv. 2). She will have "milk" to give to all—"the sincere milk of the Word" (1 Pet. ii. 2)—and from her both Jew and Gentile will "suck out no small advantage" (Ps. lxxiii. 10). She will also impart to them from **the abundance of her glory.**

Ver. 12.—**I will extend peace to her like a river**; literally, *I will direct peace to her, like a river.* The waters of streams are in the East directed hither and thither by the agriculturist. God would have given his people "peace, as a river," long previously, had they permitted him (ch. xlviii. 18). **And the glory of the Gentiles** (comp. ch. lx. 5, 11; lxi. 6, etc.). **Like a flowing stream**; literally, *as an overflowing torrent.* There is perhaps a contrast intended between the former and the latter times. In the former times Assyria had swept over Israel like an overwhelming flood to destroy her (ch. viii. 7, 8); now the glory of the whole Gentile world should similarly overflow and overwhelm, but only to enrich and exalt. **Ye shall be borne upon her sides** (see the comment on ch. lx. 4). It is Jerusalem, and not the Gentile world (Delitzsch, Cheyne), that will thus care for and caress her children. The continuance of the metaphor from ver. 11 is marked by the repetition of the verb, "ye shall suck."

Ver. 13.—**As one**; literally, *as a man.* Israel is now looked upon as grown up, and receiving comfort from God himself in Jerusalem.

Ver. 14.—**Your bones shall flourish like an herb** (comp. ch. lviii. 11). In the time of calamity, Israel's "bones" have been "consumed" (Ps. xxxi. 10), and "waxed old"

(Ps. xxxii. 3), and "burned with heat" (Job xxx. 30). Now they shall enjoy a time of refreshing from the Lord. New life shall enter them, and health and growth shall follow. The nation shall be rejuvenated, and "flourish" in more than its pristine strength. **The hand of the Lord shall be known**; or recognized, both in this merciful treatment of his servants, and also in the indignation with which he will visit his enemies. This last clause conveniently introduces the following "theophany" (vers. 15—18).

Vers. 15—18.—THE VENGEANCE WHICH GOD WILL TAKE ON HIS ENEMIES. A signal outpouring of God's vengeance upon his enemies precedes the settlement of the Church in its final glorious conditiou, both in Isaiah and in the Revelation of St. John (see ch. xxxiv., xxxv., and Rev. xix.—xxi.). The wicked have to be removed before the righteous can be established in peace. Here the agencies employed against the wicked are "fire" and "sword"—fire pointing (as Delitzsch remarks) to destructive occurrences of nature, and the sword to destructive occurrences of history. God himself is represented as guiding and directing both agencies, to the punishment of the ungodly and the relief of those who trust in him.

Ver. 15.—**Behold, the Lord will come with fire.** "Fire" is a usual accompaniment of a "theophany." God descended on Sinai "in fire" (Exod. xix. 18), and led the Israelites through the wilderness by the pillar of the cloud and of fire (Exod. xiii. 21, 22), and filled the tabernacle with a glory as of fire (Exod. xl. 34), and "answered David from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (1 Chron. xxi. 26), and in the same way answered Solomon (2 Chron. vii. 1) and Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 38). Isaiah almost always describes a theophany as a "coming with fire" (see ch. x. 16—18; xxvii. 4; xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30; xxxiii. 12, 14, etc.). The agency of fire in the judgment that will overtake the wicked simultaneously with Christ's second coming, appears in 2 Thess. i. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 7—10. **With his chariots** (comp. Ps. lxviii. 17; Hab. iii. 8). "Chariots," in the plural, may be regarded as symbolizing the "hosts" of natural and supernatural forces that God has at his command (Cheyne). **Like a whirlwind.** The whirring of the wheels of chariots, their noise, the swiftness of their pace, and the destruction that they cause, make this simile most appropriate. **To render his anger**; or, *to expend his anger*—to vent it.

Ver. 16.—**By fire and by his sword** (see the introductory paragraph). The "sword of Jehovah" is spoken of also in ch. xxvii. 1 and xxxiv. 5, 6 (comp. Rev. xix. 15, 21). **Will the Lord plead with all flesh**; rather, *will the Lord judge all flesh* (comp. Jer. xxv. 31, where the same phrase occurs).

Ver. 17.—**They that sanctify . . . themselves in the gardens** (comp. ch. i. 29; lxv. 3; and see the comment on the latter passage). **Behind one tree in the midst**; literally, *behind one in the midst.* It seems quite impossible that "one" can mean "one tree," when no tree has been mentioned, and gardens do not necessarily contain trees. The marginal rendering, "one after another," is also impossible. The "one in the midst" must have been either a hierophant who directed the ceremonies (Gesenius, Hitzig, Knobel, Delitzsch), or an image of a deity (Scaliger, Voss, Grotius, Lagarde, Cheyne). In the latter case, we must suppose that the worshippers had a scruple about mentioning the deity's name, and were accustomed to call him "one," or "a certain one" (comp. Herod., ii. 171). Isaiah adopts their usage. **Eating swine's flesh** (comp. ch. lxv. 4). **And the abomination.** The word is used generically of all the "abominable things" forbidden to be eaten in Lev. xi. 4—30, as the camel, the coney, the hare, the eagle, the vulture, the ferret, the chameleon, the lizard, etc. **The mouse.** Probably the jerboa (see Lev. xi. 20).

Ver. 18.—**For I know their works.** There is no verb in the Hebrew text, from which something has evidently fallen out. Mr. Cheyne supplies, "I will punish;" Grätz, "I have seen." "I know" is supported by the Targums, the Syriac Version, several manuscripts of the Septuagint, and the authorities of Saadiya, Vitringa, and Gesenius. **And their thoughts**; *i.e.* I know, not only their works, but even the thoughts from which the works proceeded. **It shall come**; *i.e.* "the time shall come." (For the full phrase, see Jer. li. 33; Ezek. vii. 7, 12.) **All nations and tongues.** This expression has been compared with Daniel's "kindreds and nations and languages" (iii. 4, 7, 29; iv. 1; v. 19, etc.), and has been regarded as a sign of late authorship. But "nations" and "tongues" are coupled together in Scripture as early as Genesis (x. 5, 20). **They shall come, and see my glory**; *i.e.* "see the glory that I shall get me upon my enemies" (vers. 15—17).

Vers. 19—24.—THE FINAL CONDITION OF THE CHURCH OF THE REDEEMED ON EARTH. When the enemies of God have been consumed, there shall go out from the Church missionaries, who shall convert the distant Gentiles, and unite them, and the Jews who dwell among them, into a single body of

worshippers, which shall inhabit the new Jerusalem on equal terms, and join continually in a common worship of Jehovah. The awful destruction of the wicked, and their eternal sufferings, shall at the same time be held in remembrance.

Ver. 19.—**I will set a sign among them.** Dr. Kay suggests that the "sign" is the resurrection of our Lord, or possibly a miraculous manifestation of Christ which is to precede his coming in judgment. Mr. Cheyne, less venturesome, finds in the prophet's words merely a suggestion of "*some* mysterious event, which he leaves his awestruck readers to imagine." **Those that escape of them.** Not, surely, those of God's enemies that survive the slaughter, but "the remnant" of Jews, that are not among God's enemies, and so "escape." These shall be sent (as missionaries) to the *distant* nations; not literally to those enumerated, but to such as at the end of the world occupy a position which the nations mentioned occupied on Isaiah's horizon. Of these nations, Tarshish (Tartessus) was at the furthest limit westward, Pul and Lud, or rather Phut and Lud, at the furthest limit southward, Tubal and Javan at the furthest limit northward. **Pul,** which occurs nowhere else in Scripture as a geographic name, is almost certainly a wrong reading for Phut, which occurs in Gen. x. 6, and also three times (Jer. xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 10; xxx. 5) in connection with Lud. Phut designates an African nation, probably the Nubians, whom the Egyptians called Pet, and who were noted as bowmen. Wetstein's conjecture of "Puu" (Punici, 'Phœnicians'), commended by Mr. Cheyne, is quite unsupported and highly improbable. **Lud.** It is tempting to connect "Lud" with the Lydians, who were certainly known as "Ludi" to the Assyrians of the time of Asshur-bani-pal (B.C. 669—626). But the other scriptural notices of "Lud" (Jer. xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 10; xxx. 5), which uniformly connect it with Phut, point rather to an African people. See also Gen. x. 13, where the Ludim are a subdivision of the Egyptians. **That draw the bow** (comp. Jer. xlvi. 9). **To Tubal, and Javan.** Tubal stands, no doubt, for the Tibareni, a people of the Asiatic highland west of the Upper Euphrates, called *Tuplai* or *Tabali* by the Assyrians. They would occupy Isaiah's northern and north-western horizon, in company with Javan, or the Ionians (Ἰάφονες), who were among the chief people of Asia Minor. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech (Μόσχοι, Muskai) are joined in Gen. x. 2 and Ezek. xxvii. 13. **The isles afar off;** *i.e.* the shores and islands of the Mediterranean.

Ver. 20.—**They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.** When the distant Gentiles have been converted, they shall bring to Christ the Jews of the dispersion, who dwell with them in the remote parts of the earth (comp. Zeph. iii. 10). **Upon horses.** The "new Jerusalem" being localized, the converts from the distant regions are represented as journeying from their own lands to the "holy mountain," and bringing the Jewish exiles with them by various methods of conveyance—upon horses, mules, and dromedaries, in chariots, and finally in palanquins or litters. "Litters" were used by the great men among the Egyptians from a very early date (see Roselini, 'Monumenti Civili,' pl. xciii. fig. 2; Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. ii. p. 208). They were also employed by the Persians (Herod., iii. 146) and by the later Romans. **As the children of Israel bring an offering;** rather, *bring the meat offering.* The existence of the temple, and the continuance of the Levitical rites at the time of the delivery of this prophecy, are clearly implied.

Ver. 21.—**And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites;** literally, *and I will also take of them unto the priests and unto the Levites;* i.e. I will add to the existing body of priests and Levites, who are presumably Jews, fresh members from the newly converted Gentiles. The existence of a sacerdotal order, with distinctions of ranks, in the Church of the redeemed, is implied, and the gracious declaration is made that the privilege of furnishing members to both ranks of the order shall be conferred upon the Gentile proselytes.

Ver. 22.—**As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain.** The "new heavens and the new earth," once created, continue for ever (comp. Rev. xxi. 1—27; xxii. 1—5). **So shall your seed and your name remain.** This statement is usually taken to be a promise of some special pre-eminence to the Jew over the Gentile in the final kingdom of the redeemed. But St. Paul speaks of all such privileges as already abolished in his day (Col. iii. 11); and, if the priesthood is to be common to both Gentile and Jew, the principle of equality would seem to be conceded. Perhaps no more is here meant than that, as the "new heaven and new earth" will always remain, so there will always remain a seed of true believers to worship God in them.

Ver. 23.—**From one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another.** Not that "new moons" and "sabbaths" will continue to be observed, for "new moons" have already lapsed, and "sabbaths" too will lapse when life is one perpetual sabbath passed in the worship of God. The phrase used by the prophet is intended to express

absolute continuance without an interval. **Shall all flesh come to worship before me** (comp. Ps. lxv. 2). The prophet still uses habitual modes of expression, though speaking of a time and circumstances to which they are no longer appropriate. "The literal meaning," as Dr. Pusey says ('Prophecy of Jesus,' p. 39), "was physically impossible." "All flesh," in all regions of the "new earth," could not worship in one spot, "and so it was plain that Isaiah spoke of a worship other than that at any given place" —of a worship such as that whereof our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John iv. 21).

Ver. 24.—**And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases**, etc. Here is more imagery, which it is impossible to understand literally. The carcases could not remain always to be looked at, nor while they remained could the sight of them be otherwise than loathsome to God's redeemed saints. Again, they could not be at the same time burnt with fire and eaten by worms. "The prophet, by the very mode of description adopted by him, precludes the possibility of our conceiving of the thing set forth as realized in any material form in this present state. He is speaking of the future state, but *in figures* drawn from the present world" (Delitzsch). Does he mean more than this—that the redeemed shall have in their thoughts, at any rate from time to time, the fact that, while they have by God's great mercy been saved and brought into his kingdom, there are those who have not been saved, but lie for ever under the awful sentence of God's wrath? This is a knowledge which the redeemed must have, and which may well produce a salutary effect on them, intensifying their gratitude and maintaining in them a spirit of reverent fear. **Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched** (comp. Mark ix. 44, 46, 48). It cannot be by chance that the evangelical prophet concludes his glorious prophecy with this terrible note of warning. Either he was divinely directed thus to terminate his teaching, or he felt the need that there was of his emphasizing all the many warnings dispersed throughout his "book" by a final, never-to-be-forgotten picture. The undying worm and the quenchless fire—images introduced by him—became appropriated thenceforth to the final condition of impenitent sinners (Jud. xvi. 17; Ecclus. vii. 17), and were even adopted by our Lord himself in the same connection (Mark ix.). The incongruity of the two images shows that they are not to be understood literally; but both alike imply everlasting continuance, and are incompatible with either of the two modern heresies of universalism or annihilationism. **They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh** (comp. Dan. xii. 2, where the word *deràon* is rendered "contempt"). The Jewish rabbis regarded it as anomalous that any portion of Scripture should conclude with words of ill omen. When, therefore, this chapter was read in the synagogue, or the last of Ecclesiastes, or Lamentations, or Malachi, they directed that after the reading of the last verse, the last verse but one should be repeated, to correct the sad impression that would otherwise have been left upon the mind. But Isaiah thought it salutary to leave this sad impression (comp. ch. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*God to be worshipped in buildings, though no building can be worthy of him.* Of a surety, God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts vii. 48) in any such sense as to be accessible in such places exclusively. There is truth, as well as grandeur, in the words—

> "My altars are the mountains, and the ocean,
> Earth, air, sea, all that springs from the Great Whole,
> Who hath produced, and will receive, the soul."

And it is always to be borne in mind that we are in his presence everywhere; that he may be worshipped everywhere; that "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him" (2 Chron. ii. 6); that he inhabits all space, as he inhabits all eternity (ch. lvii. 15). But, in condescension to the infirmity of human nature, he has been pleased in all ages that men should build him "houses," and has condescended, in a certain sense, to localize himself therein. At Sinai he gave exact and most elaborate commands for the construction of the tabernacle and its appurtenances (Exod. xxv.—xxx.) To David he communicated by his Spirit "the pattern" of the first temple—"of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat,

and of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, and of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things" (1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12). On the return from the captivity he required the Israelites to "go up into the mountain, and bring the wood, and build the house," and declared that he would "take pleasure in it and be glorified" (Hag. i. 8). Under Christianity the first church was the "upper room" where "all continued with one accord with prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts i. 13, 14). Churches are human, not Divine, necessities; but God has been pleased to give them his sanction, as needed by man. Without them worship would decay, if not disappear; for men cannot live in the rare atmosphere of mere spiritualism.

Vers. 10—14.—*The blessedness of the restored Church.* The restored Church is to Isaiah the Church that will endure from the return of the captives to the end of the world. The later Jewish period and the entire Christian period are with him blended into one, and present themselves to him as constituting a single phase of the Church's life. Here he speaks to encourage the exiles, and dwells especially, though not exclusively, on the *immediate* blessings.

I. THE CHURCH WILL TEACH HER CHILDREN SOUND DOCTRINE. This is the special object of the existence of a Church, which claims to have a revealed "deposit" committed to it by God, and has, as the first end and aim of its being, to communicate this revelation to all who come within the sphere of its teaching. Doctrine is the milk on which the Church nourishes her children, and the restored Church will teach a doctrine which may well "satisfy" and which will be full of "consolation" (ver. 11).

II. THE CHURCH WILL BE GLORIOUS, AND WILL IMPART TO HER CHILDREN OF HER GLORY. Though the Church is frequently, if not even continually, oppressed and downtrodden by the world, yet a glory attaches to her, whereof no persecution, no contempt, no contumely, can altogether deprive her. She is, whatever the world may think or say, "the holy Catholic Church," with Christ as her Founder, with Christ as her Lord and Master, with Christ as her King, the oldest and most venerable society in the Western world at any rate, and one in which membership cannot but ever be a high honour.

III. THE CHURCH WILL ENJOY, BY GOD'S BLESSING, MUCH OUTWARD AND INWARD PEACE. Peace was our Lord's legacy to his Church: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27); and notwithstanding the facts of external persecutions, and internal quarrels and schisms, which occupy so large a space in Church histories, and so large a share in the thoughts of most Christians, it is nevertheless true that, on the whole, peace has flowed over the Church "like a river," and has flowed into the hearts of the bulk of her true members like an abounding stream. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (ch. lvii. 21); but in the soul of the true Christian is a "peace that passeth all understanding," that wells up continually as from an inexhaustible fountain, and spreads around him an atmosphere of happiness.

IV. THE CHURCH WILL DERIVE HONOUR FROM THE COMING IN OF THE GENTILES. Further and further, as time goes on, does the light of Christianity shine, and more and more are the dark places of the earth illuminated. Long since did the Gentiles begin to come to the Church's light, and "kings to the brightness of her rising" (ch. lx. 3). But the process is not yet complete. Not a year passes but the gospel is carried into some new region by faithful and true missionaries, and the Lord adds to the Church fresh souls whom he wills to be saved. The incoming of the Gentiles does not now bring her wealth or worldly honour; but it is yet more for the true honour of the Church than it was when she converted the court and camp and people of the Cæsars. For now her efforts bring her no worldly gain. She has to go out into the highways and hedges—the wild lands of savage tribes or the yet wilder courts and allies of great towns—and to bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, the downtrodden, and the ignorant, and the criminal, and the houseless; to civilize and train them, and frequently to feed them and clothe them; thus following the commands of her blessed Master, and preparing for herself the high honour of hearing one day the glorious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

V. THE CHURCH WILL DERIVE CONTINUAL COMFORT FROM HER LORD. "I will not leave you comfortless," said the blessed Jesus; "I will come to you" (John xiv. 18). In all their difficulties, in all their troubles, Christ comforts his people—comforts them with his Word of truth, comforts them with his gracious promises, comforts them with his presence in their hearts and souls. He comes to them, and makes his abode with them, and is a continual inward sustaining power, raising them above the cares and troubles and vexations of the world, inspiring in their hearts love and joy and peace.

Vers. 15—17.—*The purging of the earth by the destruction of the wicked.* The kingdom of Christ cannot be fully set up in all its blessedness until the earth is prepared for its reception; and the main preparation required is the elimination from it of those wicked persons who, while they remain, must always constitute a disturbing element, inimical to the earth's peace and a hindrance to the Church's happiness. The teaching of Scripture is that, before the Church is finally established in the blissful position which it is intended to occupy, the removal of this element will have taken place. Partly by wars and tumults, by their swords being turned against each other, but still more completely by some miraculous outpouring of God's wrath, typified under the figure of fire, the wicked will be cleared out from all parts of the earth's surface, and only the godly will remain. The description of the day of vengeance is given, with the greatest fulness, in the Revelation of St. John (xix. 11—21), where, however, it is difficult to determine how much is imagery, how much literal description. "I saw heaven opened," says the beloved apostle, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True [comp. ch. iii. 14], and in righteousness does he judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God [comp. ch. lxiii. 1—6]. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, . . . these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

Vers. 22—24.—*Eternal suffering and eternal glory.* Holy Scripture sets before us, as Moses set before the people of Israel in the wilderness, a tremendous alternative—"life and death;" one the eternal foil and counterpart of the other, with the exhortation a thousand times repeated in a thousand different forms—"Choose life" (Deut. xxx. 19). Man's desire is to separate what God has inseparably connected, and to retain "everlasting life," "eternal glory," "endless bliss," but to get rid altogether of their counterparts—"eternal suffering," "everlasting contempt," "endless death." But man cannot alter the system of God's universe, nor, could he do so, is it to be supposed that he would find himself able to improve it. Deep down in the nature of things lies the eternal antagonism between good and evil—an antagonism which would seem to be necessary to the very existence of good in created beings; and the teaching of Scripture clearly is that this antagonism continues for ever (see Dan. xii. 2; Matt. xxv. 46; Mark ix. 44; John v. 29; Rev. xx. 10, 15; xxi. 8; xxii. 11, 15). Of the nature of the eternal glory and the eternal suffering reserved for souls in the world to come, it is impossible for us in this life to have anything more than a dim and faint conception. But some points may be laid down negatively.

I. THE PAINS AND JOYS ARE NOT, NECESSARILY, IN ANY SENSE MATERIAL. For (1) they exist in the intermediate state (Luke xvi. 23—25), where men have no bodies, the resurrection not having as yet taken place; and (2) they are described by *contradictory* material images, which would certainly not have been the case had the descriptions been intended literally.

II. THE PAINS AND JOYS ARE OF VARIOUS DEGREES OF INTENSITY. For (1) we hear of "few stripes" and "many stripes," of rule over "five cities" and over "ten cities" (Luke xii. 47, 48; xix. 17, 19); and (2) we are told that the rewards and punishments shall be apportioned exactly according to men's deserts, and men's deserts vary infinitely by infinitesimal degrees.

III. THE MAIN PUNISHMENT OF MANY MAY NOT CONSIST IN POSITIVE PAIN AT ALL. Mediæval divines spoke of many souls in the place of punishment as suffering only the *pœna damni*, or "sense of loss" inseparable from being shut out from God's presence, from the presence of the holy angels, and from that of the spirits of just men made perfect. This is quite possible, and in no way contradictory to the statements of Scripture.

IV. THERE MAY NOT IMPROBABLY BE AN AMELIORATION IN THE CONDITION OF SOME OF THE SUFFERERS. It cannot but be the case that the sufferers may bear their punishment with different degrees of patience, of obduracy, or of rebellion. As the determinedly rebellious would deserve, and may receive, an augmentation of punishment, so the more submissive and patient may conceivably have their burdens lightened. The very act of submission lightens the weight of a suffering, and a merciful God might be expected to show his approval of the submission by some positive alleviation of the pain.

These are thoughts which may tend to mitigate the horror wherewith some persons regard the entire doctrine of eternal punishment, and prevent them from viewing it as incompatible with God's essential attribute of mercy. At the same time, it must be granted that the whole subject is mysterious, and awful in the extreme—so mysterious and so awful that the greatest caution is needed lest we dogmatize upon it beyond the teaching of Scripture. Here, if anywhere, the warning of the preacher applies, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou on earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccles. v. 2).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5.—*Spiritual and unspiritual worship.* I. THE ORACLE OF JEHOVAH. "The heavens are my throne." What majestic poetry in that word! How sacred, then, the heaven! How profane, if once we rightly think of the force of what we say, to use the adjuration, "By heaven"! So Jesus teaches (Matt. v. 34; xxiii. 22). It is natural to "look up" when we think of God; and then to "look down" on the "things of earth," which is but his footstool. "What manner of house would ye build for me?" The Infinite cannot be defined; God may not be localized. All forms may represent him; none can adequately set him forth. "His abode is not known; no shrine is found with painted figures; there is no building that can contain him" ('Records of the Past,' vol. iv. p. 109). Herodotus says that the Persians impute folly to those who raise statues and temples and altars to the gods, "because they do not think the gods to be of human nature, as do the Greeks" (i. 131; cf. Acts xvii. 24). But why should God despise the beautiful temple? Is anything more beautiful or true than the work of art? To disparage art we have to give way to dark superstition. Everything that proceeds from the mind God has made, he must delight in—it is his work. But, above all, he delights in the humble, throbbing, trembling human soul. "The most acceptable temple is a pious mind." The allusions which follow are to some of the darkest features of heathen worship—the animal sacrifice, and the animal worship—a form of religion hardly intelligible to ourselves, but once widely diffused in ancient times, and prevailing still in some parts of the world. According to the religion of Jehovah, man is made in the image of God, and in the *logos* or reason of man must be found the true reflection of him. To worship an animal must be to lower the intelligent and spiritual tone of

religion. And some consciousness of this we must believe to have been dimly present in such worshippers' minds.

II. THE DENUNCIATION OF JEHOVAH. False worship is rooted in the depraved will. They have "chosen their own ways;" they "have pleasure in their abominations." For religion is either stagnant or progressive. The soul rests in sloth upon custom, upon the clear and apprehensible object, or it strives and strains after the higher and yet higher and invisible good—not to be found in the creature, but only in the Creator. God will exercise retribution upon such idolaters, sending on them calamity and terror. "The man who places all his confidence, hope, and comfort in his estate, his friend, or greatness, so that upon the failure of any of these his heart sinks, and he utterly desponds as to all enjoyment or apprehension of any good or felicity to be enjoyed by man, does as really deify his estate, his friend, or his greatness, as if in direct terms he should say to each of them, 'Thou art my god,' and should rear an altar or temple to them, and worship before them in the humblest adoration. Nay, it is much more; since God looks upon himself as treated more like a deity by being loved, confided in, and depended upon, than if a man should throng his temple with a whole hetacomb, sacrifice thousands of rams, and pour ten thousand rivers of oil upon his altars" (South).

III. WORDS TO THE FAITHFUL. "Men who tremble at his Word." It is another way of describing those of humble and contrite heart. They are hated by their brethren; they have suffered in the cause of true religion. They are exposed to taunts—Where is their God? Let Jehovah show himself glorious! Nevertheless, his fiat has gone forth, "They shall be ashamed." Shame and pain are the inseparable effects of sin; the "wages assigned to it by the laws of Heaven;" the rightful inheritance of the sinner. Nor is there anything which the nature of man does so abhor as these. They are destructive of all our enjoyments. They touch both soul and body—shame being the torment of the one, and pain of the other. "The mind of man can have no taste or relish of any pleasure in the world while it is oppressed and overwhelmed by shame. Nothing does so intolerably affect the soul as infamy; it drinks up and consumes the quickness, gaiety, and activity of the spirit; it dejects the countenance made by God to look upwards; so that this noble creature, the masterpiece of the creation, dares not so much as lift up either his head or his thoughts, but it is a vexation to him even to look upon others, and yet a greater to be looked upon by them" (South).—J.

Vers. 6—9.—*The enemies of Jehovah and his people.* I. HE IS HEARD FROM HIS TEMPLE. With "a sound of uproar, a sound from the temple." He is issuing forth to render their deserts to his foes. "He will render to every man according to his deserts" is a great leading word in religion. God must be feared as well as loved—nay, cannot be truly loved unless feared. From that same seat whence go forth the sweet sounds of reconciliation, the sound of the gospel's silver trumpet, go forth the thunders of the God who appears to execute judgment upon human guilt. He is a "consuming Fire." His wrath may be "kindled;" we need to beware "lest he be angry." He is an awful God of whom, nevertheless, it may be said, "This awful God is ours."

II. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL. With great energy the thought is put before us that Israel in these last days has sprung into new birth and life. The gift of male children was especially dear to the Israelitish heart. Now there is to be a great and sudden increase of Zion's children. "This refers, probably," says Barnes, "to the sudden increase of the Church when the Messiah came, and to the great revivals of religion which attended the preaching of the gospel. Three thousand were converted on a single day (Acts ii.), and the gospel was speedily propagated over the known world." Something *unlike the usual course* of nature and of human affairs is hinted. Slow is the growth of vegetation, slow the growth of human institutions. Here an event as startling as the breaking forth of the tree out of the seed in a single day is contemplated; "a nation born at once!" In fact, Christianity is such a wonder. A plant out of a dry ground, mysterious in its origin, despised in its professors, humble in its early associations, yet speedily, almost suddenly, overshading the lands with its branches, and yielding fruit and healing for the nations. "The expansiveness of Zion is such that nought but Omnipotence will be able to check it; and as Omnipotence has no motive for checking it, Zion has nothing to fear in heaven or earth" (Cheyne).—J.

Vers. 10—14.—*Sympathy with the Church's joy.* I. SYMPATHY SHOULD BE FELT WITH THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH. Zion stands for the Church of the ages; in her weal is wrapped up the weal of the world. If we love humanity, we love the institution created for the good and salvation of humanity. Every revival of religion at home, every fresh conquest in the fields of heathendom, affords fresh occasion of such joy. "Those who have no true joy when souls are born into the kingdom of God; when he pours down his Spirit, and in a revival of religion produces changes as sudden and transforming as if the earth were suddenly to pass from the desolation of winter to the verdure and bloom of summer; or when the gospel makes sudden and rapid advances in the heathen world,—have no true evidence that they love God or his cause. They have no religion. Such scenes are fitted to excite the highest joy and praise. They awaken deep interest in the bosoms of angels, and of God the Saviour, and they who love that God and Saviour will rejoice at such scenes, and mingle their joys and thanksgivings with those of the converted and saved" (Barnes).

II. THE IDEAL OF THE CHURCH. She is like a mother, and the blessings she imparts are like mother's milk (cf. ch. xlix. 23; lx. 16). "They who sympathize with her shall be nourished by the same truth and comforted with the same sources of consolation." She is a mother full of tenderness, even of caressing, towards her children; full also of sweetest power to comfort. Such is in every age the true ideal of the Church. All that is rich and sweet, deep and tender, should be associated with her; and in her the hearts of weary men should find full expansion and rest. *Peace* is also strongly associated with the Church; and that in the comprehensive sense in which the prophet uses the word—for all manner of prosperity (ch. ix. 6, 7; xxvi. 12; xxxii. 17; xlv. 7; xlvi. 16; lii. 7; liv. 13; lv. 12; lvii. 19). The image seems to be that of a broad majestic river, like the Nile, overflowing its banks, and producing prosperity on every hand. Another image is that of the bones, dried up like the branches of a withered tree, now full of sap and vigour (ch. lviii. 11; Prov. iii. 8; xv. 20; xvi. 24). It is true religion which causes the family, the home, the ecclesiastical institution, the state, to flourish. Religion stimulates all that it touches—morality, art, political life; and decay of patriotism and of morals may be traced to the languor of religious life.—J.

Vers. 15—24.—*The manifestation of Jehovah.* I. IT IS A MANIFESTATION IN FIRE. Very common is the representation of this coming by or in the element of fire. Its associations are of *judgment, vengeance—devouring* fire (Ps. l. 3). So it is associated with the *pestilence* (Hab. ii. 5). It consumes God's enemies (Ps. xcvii. 3). Nor can we deny that such representations do in part enter into Christianity (2 Thess. i. 8; Heb. x. 27; 2 Pet. iii. 7; cf. also Ps. xviii. 8; ch. xxix. 6; xxx. 30). The whirlwind is poetically congruent with the fire: a swift and sudden descent is thought of (Ps. civ. 3; Jer. iv. 13). The image of the charioteer is full of warlike energy (cf. Hab. iii. 8), and the furious and fiery anger of his advance points to the same conception; and the slain will fall before him in multitudes. Do these figures strike us as inconsistent with the Christian conception of God—the "Father of Jesus, God of love"? How are we to reconcile them? If there is a Providence in the violent revolutions of the nations; if "the wrath of man praises him;" if no terrible war but becomes the means of a purification;—then these figures may be taken as the poetic representation of a great truth. We can hardly conceive deep-rooted evils giving way except to some violent agency of change.

II. THE DENUNCIATION OF IDOLATRY. This is the great evil, in all its forms, which draws down God's fulminations. Men are seen undergoing purifications preparatory to initiation into heathen mysteries, probably of some licentious god or goddess. Unclean things have been indulged in, contrary to the Law of Moses. We may, perhaps, take the general description of idolatry and of idolaters as pointing to the enemies of God, who are destined to be consumed by his vengeance. These enemies are to be gathered together—in some valley, perhaps (Joel iii. 2); and the glory of his judicial splendour will be unveiled to them. The section closes with vague adumbrations of coming judgments.

III. VISIONS OF FUTURE WORSHIP. Amid all that is obscure in the imagery, we may discover some great leading thoughts. 1. There is *the universal effulgence* of Jehovah's glory, which is to shine among distant lands, and those that have not hitherto heard of

his Name. And this is equivalent to the spread of one religion throughout the earth. 2. *There is to be unity of worship.* Jerusalem and the sacred hill of Zion are to form the great centre. From all quarters, and by different modes of conveyance, the dispersed ones are to come thronging thither. There will be a renewed *consecration* of the chosen people to its God; they will be like the sacred meal offering. 3. *Exclusiveness will be broken down.* The strict Levitical system, it seems, will give way; and Gentile converts as well as Jews will be admitted to share in the sacred ministry of the temple. For the Jewish priestly system was only for a time, was provisional; and the people were one day to be, as a whole, "priests of Jehovah" (ch. lxi. 6). 4. *The permanence of true religion.* The seed and the name of the people shall stand, even so the new heavens and the new earth. No more of the old order changing and giving place to the new, the successive efforts of men after frivolity in religion being successively defeated; but at last fixity and rest. 5. *Simplicity of true religion.* "The old forms of religion have been reduced to the utmost; new moons and sabbaths alone remain." For the multitude of times and seasons and of ceremonies is burdensome to flesh and blood, and they tend to obscure the spirituality of true religion. We are reminded of the first chapter, where it is said that "Jehovah cannot away with them." 6. *Universality of true religion.* We take the language as poetical, symbolic, to be understood in the ideal and inward sense. *Where* is the true seat of worship? Not on Mount Gerizim, nor even on Mount Zion (John iv. 21). The spirit of man is the true temple. And who, in best and most loving moments of worship, does not feel that the heart of humanity beats with one pulse, is stirred by one faith, is secretly gathering around one spiritual centre? Let us cease with this verse, which we are told the Jewish readers repeated to correct the sad impression of the last.—J.

Ver. 13.—*Tender condition.* "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." These are the analogies of truth that reach the heart through the life-experience when mere intellectual disquisition is vain.

I. THE MOTHER-IDEAL CREATES THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF TENDERNESS. God is the great Mother as well as the great Father of all flesh. Therefore Christ, who came to reveal the Father, was perfect humanity. In taking, as the Divine Son of the Father, our flesh, he revealed in "humanity" not only perfect manhood, but perfect womanhood too.

II. THE MOTHER-IDEAL REVEALS WHAT TRUE COMFORT MEANS. 1. *Sympathy with our frailties and mistakes.* 2. *Succour at supreme self-cost.* 3. *Hopefulness even to the last.*—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—(*Vide* homily on ch. lvii. 15, 16.)—C.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The rebuke of unrighteousness.* We have—

I. FOUR OFFENCES SPECIALLY HATEFUL TO THE HOLY ONE. 1. *Insincerity.* These worshippers who brought their bullocks, their lambs, their prescribed oblations, were as guilty in the judgment of God as if they brought to his altar that which was an abomination in his sight. Their guilt lay in their insincerity; their heart was far from God when their feet were nigh his house. 2. *Heedlessness.* When God calls and we pay no heed to his voice, we commit an aggravated offence against him. 3. *Wilfulness.* The "choosing of our own ways," instead of submitting to the Divine will, is a perpetual disobedience, a sustained disloyalty. 4. *Arrogance.* "Doing evil before mine eyes," though conscious of the presence and the observation of God.

II. GOD'S GRAVE REBUKE OF THIS UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. *He will make the fears of the guilty to be fulfilled*—will "bring their fears upon them." The apprehensions of guilt may safely be taken as prophecies of evil. Sin is at least as mischievous as it seems to the sinner. If men who are living in obdurate rebellion against God have impressions or intimations of evil consequences, they may be sure that ruin is on the road, and will before long confront them. 2. *He will visit with unexpected sorrow.* "I will choose their delusions [calamities]." Not that God ever arbitrarily punishes his children, but that he does often bring down upon the guilty sorrows and calamities which they did not apprehend—from which, indeed, they imagined themselves to be secure. No man can possibly foresee where a sinful course will lead him, and in what it will land him.—C.

Ver. 13.—*God our Comforter.* It is the province of the teacher to instruct, of the father to direct, of the elder brother to lead, and of the mother to console. She is the comforter of the troubled heart. God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is to us all of these in one. Like as a mother comforts her children, he comforts us.

I. AS TENDERLY AS SHE. In a way so gracious and considerate that one who had received much of his healing ministry could write—

"Oh, 'tis a blessed thing for me
To need thy tenderness!"

II. AS UNFAILINGLY AS SHE. No child feels that the number of times he (or she) has come before us is any reason for doubting the welcome that he will receive if he comes again. There is an inexhaustible supply of sympathy in that pitying heart.

III. AS EFFECTUALLY AS SHE. The true mother knows in what way to comfort, whether in silence, or by speech, or by action. God, who knows our hearts as even a parent does not, will adapt his comforts to our natures and our necessities.—C.

Ver. 16.—"*The slain of the Lord.*" While it is doubtful as to what special juncture the prophet refers when he says that "the slain of the Lord shall be many," it is painfully and practically certain that at all times these slain ones *are* many. For—

I. THE VICTIMS OF SIN ARE THE SLAIN OF THE LORD. The laws which work the penalty they suffer are God's laws. It is under his administration that pain, weakness, impotence, trouble, sorrow, death, slay guilty souls. These are his sword, and they do his work, his "*strange* work," but yet his.

II. THEIR NUMBER IS TERRIBLY LARGE. Who shall count the number of those that have fallen, or of those that are falling now? In every city, town, village, hamlet, men are to be found who, through their folly, or their vice, or their crime, or their ungodliness, are suffering pitifully from the sword of Divine retribution.

III. WE MAY BRING THEM INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE HEALER. Many of the slain survive. Our mission is to bring these to that merciful and mighty One who can and will "make them whole."—C.

Vers. 19—23.—*A vision of the future.* From these verses, which present us with a glowing vision of future triumph and blessedness, we learn—

I. THAT GOD MAY CALL US TO UNWELCOME BUT EXCELLENT SERVICE. The Jews could not have anticipated, nor would they have desired, such a disposition of themselves, and such a use of their powers as is indicated in the nineteenth verse. It was strange to their thought, alien to their sympathy. Yet it was a most admirable service, with which they might well be contented. Thus God often blesses us now with opportunities we do not court, but which prove to be excellent and admirable indeed. Possibly he may deal with us in a way very similar to that before us. As the persecution of the early disciples resulted in their going everywhere, away from home and friends, preaching the gospel (Acts viii. 8), so some providential ordering which is unpleasant at the time, removing us from scenes that are inviting or from persons that are dear to us, may place us in conditions of great usefulness and blessing.

II. THAT GOD INVITES US ALL TO A NOBLE VICTORY. There had been bitter hatred and bloody strife between Jew and Gentile; each had sought to triumph over the other on the battle-field; each longed to have his feet on the other's neck. The peaceful picture of the text (ver. 20) supplies a beautiful and blessed substitute. One is to bring the other, in friendly and honourable conveyance, and to present him in holy sacrifice to God. Not to wreak vengeance; not to obtain civil supremacy; but to bring to God's house and to introduce to his service, is to gain the true victory over our brother.

III. THAT GOD IS EFFECTING A WONDROUS AND LASTING RENOVATION. He is creating new heavens and a new earth which will endure (ver. 22 and ch. lxv. 17). He will make all things new. This kingdom of sin and folly which has so long prevailed shall disappear, and in its place shall be seen a kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy;" a far greater change, more wonderful, more difficult of accomplishment, more to be desired, than the displacement of the material elements and the substitution of others in their place. This new kingdom is one which will be *essentially Divine.* 1. It will

be *of God.* He "will make it." 2. It will be *characterized by reverence for him,* and one of its main features will be regular and universal worship (ver. 23). It will be *durable as the strongest of his handiworks.* It "shall remain."

IV. THAT GOD WILL RECEIVE THOSE FURTHEST AWAY TO NEAREST INTERCOURSE WITH HIMSELF. Of the Gentiles themselves God would take "for priests and for Levites" (ver. 21). This was a startling promise, and never was literally fulfilled. But it finds a glorious fulfilment in the kingdom of Christ. Now we (Gentiles) who were afar off are brought nigh. We worship and serve in the sanctuary; we sit down at "the table of the Lord;" we have freest and fullest access to God; every barrier in the way of perfect intercourse has disappeared; we are admitted to the royal presence, and "stand before the King;" nay, we ourselves are "kings and priests unto God." That which once seemed hopelessly impossible has become a constant privilege under Jesus Christ.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The place of God's rest.* This passage should be associated with that second temple which was raised by the returned captives from Babylon, at the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah, and under the inspirations of the prophets Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. A subtle peril lies in building any house for God. That peril lay in the building of the first house. It still lies in the erection of every new house. It is the danger of thereby limiting and materializing our idea of God. If, in our thought, God actually comes to dwell in any earthly temple, we limit the infinite; we lose that wide, sublime, spiritual, unnameable glory that properly belongs to the Deity. We are in danger of making him take a place among the idol-gods who are attached to a certain mountain, or stream, or wind, or country, or shrine. To this peril the people were exposed who watched the second temple arise from amidst the ruins of the first. Though cured of their idolatries by their sufferings in Babylon, they yet might fail to retain those nobler thoughts of God which were the treasure of their race. Therefore Isaiah pleads with them as in this text.

I. GOD REVEALING HIMSELF. By the aid of outward, sensible figures God discloses his spiritual nature, his moral attributes, his character. "The heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool." We are bidden to look for help towards realizing God from the great, the solemnizing things of nature. All creation with which we have to do was made to serve the moral and spiritual culture of God's reasoning and free creatures. Everywhere around us *things* are full of God. They are pictures, illustrations, words, suggestions, of the Divine. The great, the majestic, the oppressive, is around us. The noonday sky, with its serene height of blue; the midnight sky, with its myriad worlds crowding the infinite depths; mountains rising to pierce the clouds, or hanging in frowning precipice; the great floods of water rolling in their ceaseless tides;—all compel us to say, "How marvellous are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy greatness." One instance, illustrating the figure "Heaven is my throne," may be given. A star in the far depths attracted the attention of an observer. It seemed to be a single star, but to his educated eye it resolved itself into two stars. Those two proved to be each a star, centre of a planetary system like our own. Those two stars, which seemed but one, were really distant from each other five hundred times the distance separating our earth and the sun. Who of us can conceive such sublime spaces as are thus unfolded? What must he be who walketh among the shining lights, whose throne rises higher than these stars, whose canopy is gemmed with myriad suns! And if the telescope can put such meaning into the figure of the heavens, the microscope puts equal meaning into the figure of the earth. God needs this whole earth for a "footstool." This great earth, with its giant trees, and inaccessible mountains, and unfathomable waters, and millionfold forms of life, cannot hold God; it is but a resting-place for his foot.

II. GOD APPEALING TO MAN TO FIND HIM REST. "Where is the place of my rest?" We should not have dared to represent God as seeking rest. The marvel of his condescension is, that he does need his creatures, and even seeks his rest in them. If God were only the embodiment of wisdom, greatness, and power, then his rest might be found in some of the everlasting hills. But every being seeks rest according to his spiritual nature, his character. The infinitely pure One can only seek rest in goodness. The infinitely condescending One seeks rest in humility. The infinitely loving One

seeks rest in love. The eternal Father finds his satisfaction in his sons and his daughters.

III. MAN VAINLY OFFERING GOD REST IN THINGS. The first shrine for human worship was the open firmament of heaven. It was the only worthy one. The only befitting walls were the distant horizon and the eternal hills; the only suitable roof was the illimitable sky. Yet, from the first of human sin, this temple has proved too vast, too glorious, for man to use. So he has planted groves to circle God to a space; and consecrated mountain-peaks to fix God to a point; and built temples and churches to narrow the Infinite to human grasp. Too often man has offered his temples as an act of sacrifice. He has given them to God in the vain hope that, satisfied with them, God would cease to ask for higher and holier things. We, indeed, in these days, flood no altars with the blood of sacrifices, yet do we not think to offer God rest in the beauty of our churches and the charm of our services? Are we not, even under this spiritual dispensation, offering God things instead of persons? And yet even we men cannot be satisfied with things; then how can we expect our God to be? Our hearts cannot rest in the artistic fittings of our dwellings, the creations of genius, or the associations of culture. We want love; we must have persons. Lord Lytton expresses our deepest feeling thus—

"O near ones, dear ones! you in whose right hands
Our own rests calm; whose faithful hearts all day
Wide open wait till back from distant lands,
Thought, the tired traveller, wends his homeward way!

"Helpmates and hearthmates, gladdeners of gone years,
Tender companions of our serious days,
Who colour with your kisses, smiles, and tears,
Life's warm web woven over wonted ways.

"Oh, shut the world out from the heart ye cheer!
Though small the circle of your smiles may be,
The world is distant, and your smiles are near;
This makes you more than all the world to me."

We are "the figures of the true;" shadows in our feeling of the feeling of God. He, too, puts aside all the *things* we offer him, be they temple, or gold, or work, and persuasively pleads thus with us, "My son, give me thy heart." We may give him our things, if we have given him ourselves. Things dead cannot please him. Things alive with holy love, quickened by the humble, contrite, thankful heart, may find for him the rest he seeks. We may give him our buildings when they are alive with the spirit of consecration, our services when they are filled with the spirit of reverential worship, our works when they are animated with gratitude and devotion. Of the *living* temple he will say, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread."

IV. MAN SUCCESSFULLY OFFERING GOD REST IN HIMSELF—IN THE POOR AND CONTRITE HEART. The one thing towards which we must think God is ever moving, ever working, by creation, by gracious providences, by the mission of his Son, is to sway the heart of man towards himself, and constrain him voluntarily to say, "This God is our God for ever and ever." But it is only the man of poor and contrite spirit who will ever thus turn to God, and give himself over to him. Bruised and broken, in the sense of our ingratitude and sin, penitent and contrite alone, shall we ever be found willing to turn our faces towards our Father. We can give God nothing. We can bring him just our consciously unfaithful and sinful selves. A man can come, unreservedly exposing his whole heart to the eye of God. He can say, "Slay me, O God, if thou wilt; I deserve it. I am miserable, but leave me not sinful thus. Put me to shame; I am shameful. Behold! I hide nothing. Thou art Light; expose my darkness. I will not palliate. I am worse than I know. Show me all that I am. I cannot heal myself. If I must die, I will die in thy light." "In this lies the simplicity of faith. He has trusted himself to the Judge of all the earth; he has abandoned all self-justification; his heart is broken, and is ready to welcome mercy undeserved. Guilelessness (the contrite, humble heart) is the whole secret of Divine peace."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—"*Peace like a river.*" "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river." The prophet used the image of a *river* by intention, and in contrast with the figure of the *sea*. In ancient times, and Eastern lands, the sea was a terrible thing; so the prophet figures the wicked as like the "troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The sea is restless, is storm-tost, is a devourer. In ancient times there seemed to be no music in her ripple, her wave-swell, or the bass of her ceaseless moan. We feel quite differently, because for us the sea is almost conquered. It is a servant whom we may employ, and not a vague mysterious god whose trident we must fear. The state of mind and heart, the conditions of relation and circumstances, for those who know the redemption of God in Christ Jesus, will not go into any figures taken from the sea. Their peace is like a *river*. How does a river differ from a sea? We note that their peace is like a river; it is—

I. SUPPLIED FROM EXHAUSTLESS FOUNTAINS. The peace and joy of the worldly and the wicked can only be likened to the "crackling of thorns under a pot," very noisy, very short-lived. At the back of the good man's peace is the "God of all peace;" and "when he speaks peace, who shall make trouble?" Christ's peace is given to us. "My peace I give unto you." It—

II. FLOWS ON THROUGH A WHOLE LIFE. You cannot stop the rivers. Dam them up a little while, and they are sure to gather, and flood the land until they can find the stream again and flow on. So the cares and sorrows of life may seem to stop the good man's peace. But it cannot be; over and under and round the Divine waters will flow, find their way back to their channel, and flow on again. It—

III. REFRESHES AND BLESSES ALL THE LAND THROUGH WHICH IT FLOWS. The bordering fields are rich with grass and flowers; the trees drink up its moisture, and hold out great leaf-clad branches, and the "little hills rejoice on every side." So the good man, the man of peace, the peace-lover, and the peace-maker, sweetens, soothes, sanctifies, all the society in which he takes his place. He makes a reviving, delightful atmosphere wherever he may be. We rejoice in him, even as thirsty lands rejoice in the sweet pure river, that day and night flows on unceasingly, past bank and brae. —R. T.

Ver. 14.—*The Lord's indignation; or, the Divine goodness and severity.* "The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies." Here two sides of the Divine nature are declared, which we find it difficult to conceive as harmonious in one person. It is not only true that God is gracious toward his people, and angry with the wicked; it is also true that in dealing with his people he is both gracious and severe.

I. IN THE GOD OF REVELATION WE FIND BOTH MERCY AND INDIGNATION. Nature blends rains and storms, sunshine and hurricanes, spring breath and volcanoes. The revelation to the Jews provides illustration. 1. See the early traditions of the world preserved by the Jews—Eden—the Flood—Sodom. 2. See the story of the great Patriarchs of Jacob, of the Israelites in the wilderness. 3. See the records of the Jews as a nation. Raised to heaven with privileges, crushed into the deep with judgments. 4. See the condition of the Jewish nation, as now scattered over the earth. Every scattered, landless, homeless Jew, against whom the world's byword is cast, is set forth before men to plead with them and say, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." 5. See the last revelation made to men in Christ Jesus. (1) Note how the Messiah was described beforehand in prophecy (ch. lxiii. 3, 4). (2) Note the exclamations of those who saw the babe Messiah. (3) Note the outbursts of righteous indignation during the ministry of Christ. (4) Note some sentences used in his public teaching (Matt. XXV.). The following words were characteristic of Christ's teachings: "everlasting punishment;" "destruction;" "death;" "fire;" "worm that never dies;" "gnashing of teeth;" "thirst;" "torment;" "outer darkness." (5) Note the apostolic doctrine of Christ. In it there is a place for the "wrath of the Lamb."

II. IN THE GOD OF OUR APPREHENSION WE FIND BOTH MERCY AND INDIGNATION. 1. Give the testimony of man's *reason*. It recognizes that the good man will be sure to blaze into indignation at wrong-doing. 2. Give the testimony of man's *fear*. What is man afraid of if he has no notion of God as able to, and bound to, punish transgressors? Men do not tremble before a God who is *all mercy*. We fear the God of

indignations, who can cast body and soul into hell. How wicked it is for any of us to go on in sin, presuming upon God's mercifulness! What sinners have to do with is *God's indignation*.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Vain attempts to sanctify self.* "They that sanctify themselves . . . shall be consumed together." The prophetic allusion is to those who attempted to secure themselves by "fearing the Lord, and serving other gods." They wanted to secure all possible Israelite privileges, yet wanted to sanctify themselves by means of the heathen rites which were the fashion of their times. "Such a blending of incompatible elements was eminently characteristic of the reign of Manasseh." The things specially noticed are wilful throwings off of all the restraints of the Mosaic Law. These mistaken ones dared to indulge in swine's flesh, and eat even other unclean foods. Van Lennep has a curious note on eating the mouse. "The mouse is extremely common in Western Asia, and the Mosaic prohibition of its flesh continues to be generally observed. We have reason to believe that those who have tasted the flesh of the mouse acquire as great a relish for it as the Frenchman does for his frog diet, or the German for *sauerkraut*. We once had a servant from one of the Greek islands who was addicted to this habit, and could be induced to relinquish it neither by expostulation nor by ridicule." Swine are always spoken of in both the Old and New Testaments with horror and disgust, especially for their close association with pagan rites.

I. ATTEMPTS TO SANCTIFY SELF. Explain the forms such work has taken in old times, and is taking now. There is a proper sanctifying of self, which goes with due dependence on God's sanctifying, and is our "working out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" but what is reproved here is trying to sanctify one's self in one's own strength, in one's own way, and for one's own ends.

II. THE VANITY OF ATTEMPTS TO SANCTIFY SELF. We cannot. It is running after a "Will-o'-the-wisp." It is hurrying to drink of the "mirage." Solomon tried to satisfy, if we may not say to sanctify, himself, and ended with a wail, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!"

III. THE DEGRADATION OF ATTEMPTS TO SANCTIFY SELF. We are sure to come down from trying high things to trying low ones. We come at last to making much of some tree, or eating swine's flesh, or abominable mice, or counting beads, or grovelling among stones, or drinking of so-called "holy wells." And there is no hope in God for any of us until we are wholly willing to give up all these attempts, and just take God's way of sanctifying us, which is at once the only way, and the best way.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The universal worship.* "From one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord."

I. IN MEETING TOGETHER FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP WE FOLLOW THE NATURAL IMPULSE OF OUR OWN HEARTS, AS WELL AS OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF OUR GOD. To look up and pray is one of the most original and essential impulses of humanity, one of the commonest characteristics of the race. Prayer is properly associated with the whole circle of our relations with God. As *spirits* we are God's children, and God's erring, wilful children; we must find expression for our conscious need of spiritual blessings. Our bodies are the Divine creation, the care of Divine Providence, and out of the sense of the relation of our bodily life to God we are impelled to pray for temporal blessings. We are set in close associations one with another, as families; and as those having similar preferences and convictions; out of such relations come our united family and sanctuary worship. There are even larger associations into which we enter as fellow-citizens, fellow-countrymen, fellow-men. Our welfare in all these relationships directly depends on him who is Lord of natural laws, Lord of storms, Lord of pestilences, Lord of harvests, Lord of sunshine, Lord of the wrath of men, and Lord of their wealth. So far as we feel this aright we shall be impelled to say to every fellow-creature, made in the image of God, and made for God even as we are, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." We have not to seek for reasons that may prove persuasions to worship. What men have to seek for is *excuse* for their neglect of the universal worship. It is not sufficiently recognized that God deals with us collectively here on earth. We have no reason for assuming that there are separate churches in heaven; or organized families; or towns with local interests; or nations

with national interests and national characteristics. These are all *earthly* conditions; and in these conditions is laid the basis for collective prayer, for public and united worship. The man that refuses to unite in public worship is breaking away from the claims of his common humanity; refusing to recognize the conditions under which God has placed him; and withholding the sympathy which his fellow-creatures have a right to demand from him. Further, it may be shown that in meeting for public or universal worship, we do but follow the indications that have been given us of the Divine will. In Jewish history great importance attached to large national gatherings for acts of worship. From the time of the great meeting between the Mounts Ebal and Gerizim down to the times of Messiah, there were three great religious meetings of the people every year, besides occasional special gatherings. The Jewish service included praise and prayer, in which the whole people might unite. The best men, such as David, turned from the joys of private devotion to the yet higher joys of God's house and worship. Our Lord set the example of private prayer, but the evangelists are careful to remind us that "he went, *as he was* wont, into the synagogue on the sabbath day." And the apostles urge the early Christians "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together."

II. IN NEGLECTING PUBLIC WORSHIP WE HAVE TO DELUDE OURSELVES BY MAKING VERY UNWORTHY EXCUSES. To put our reasons out into the light, to get them fairly expressed, is to make us feel ashamed of them. Some incline to say, "Your worship is not intended for *us*; it is meant only for those whom you call specially Christians, and we do not call ourselves by that name." Our worshipping arrangements have certainly been made on this principle; but the worship of God is for *men*, all men, everywhere. Whether men agree with our ideas or not, let them come and worship the God that made them, clothes them, feeds them, cares for them, loves them, and would save them from their sins. Perhaps most of those who stay away from worship do so in sheer heedlessness; they yield to the indifference which settles down on men who are simply living to self and sin. The real evil is that sinful man is indisposed to worship; the only shrine he cares for is the shrine of ease and self-indulgence. We must try to make God more *real* to men, and so get the persuasion of his love as the constraint, urging men to offer to him their "gold, frankincense, and myrrh." We must try to make the services of our sanctuaries more suitable for the expression of the universal dependence and the universal praise. Christian worship should be the best possible medium for lifting up the hearts of men, as men, unto God; the best utterance of the universal sense of the Divine Creator-hood. It should be man's acknowledgment of God, our God, the one God, the holy God, the redeeming God. It is "he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." It is he that "redeemeth our life from destruction." It is even he "that sent his Son into the world, that we might live through him." "Let us kneel," let us all kneel together, "before the Lord our Maker."—R. T.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

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